

Converting local cultural heritage

Into a tourism place resource:

The case of AIT BOU GUEMMAZ Valley in the Moroccan High Atlas

Mohammed Sguenfel¹

Hassan Khallaf²

Abstract:

The AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley, one of the most reputed mountain destinations in Morocco, has undergone a remarkable decline in tourists' arrival over the last two decades. Its cultural heritage assets has not been mobilized enough to contribute in boosting tourism place attractiveness. Therefore, the aim of the present paper is to explore the hypothesis according to which the construction of a customized and far-reaching discourse about local cultural heritage will lead to a diversification of the valley's tourism product. Tourism local stakeholders are supposed to mobilize both tangible and intangible aspects of the local heritage through the elaboration of a “thick and appetizing” discourse that will appeal to all classes of tourists. The results of the following paper will not only inspire local stakeholders in designing tourism products, but will also help switch interest towards the vital importance of cultural heritage in local development

Key words: cultural heritage - stakeholder - tourism place - discourse - local development

¹ Director of a Research team on Territory and organizational Innovation ENCG, University IBN ZOHR, Agadir, Morocco. Email: mohamedsguenfel67@gmail.com

² PhD student, Department of Sociology, Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Social Sciences, University IBN ZOHR, Agadir, Morocco. Email: hassankhallaf13@gmail.com

Introduction

In the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ Valley, the story of tourism has been closely linked with trekking. The centrality of this tourism product was mainly dictated by the state stakeholders' strategy in developing mountain tourism, and which was dominated by the exploitation of the valley's landscapes and topography. Local cultural heritage, no matter how rich and diverse it is, wasn't given due attention and enough investment. The belief was that cultural heritage is the lucrative business of imperial cities such and outstanding urban areas considered as a sources of job opportunities, small business development and foreign currency earning (SCHEYVENS, 2002; PAHOS, 2010; SILBERMAN, 2013). Nevertheless, all stakeholders that are involved in tourism planning and development should take into account that all tourism destinations, regardless of their location, be it in an urban or rural area, possess and enjoy some sorts of valuable cultural heritage that can be converted into a tourism place resource. This type of cultural heritage of great importance in the sense that it will enhance and diversify the tourism product in a Moroccan Atlas valley where the main motive for tourism is trekking. Hence the importance of local cultural heritage as a tool to get hold of a precious past most likely to improve the present and help build the future (PEACOCK and RIZZO, 2008) of a valley still suffering poverty and relegation.

The present state of local cultural heritage in the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ Valley is still lagging far behind. Both state stakeholders and the local council view this heritage as a heavy burden on their budget and considered it among the last issues to worry about since cultural heritage-based tourism products require huge investments and their revenue leakages are so low for local economy (ZAN and LOUIZIANI, 2011). More troubling still is the avidity of local tourism stakeholders (tourist guides and the owners of mountain self-catering homestays). They are mainly driven by the will of commodifying local cultural heritage for the sake of achieving financial profit-making aims while some local NGOs are continuously struggling to conserve and preserve this local wealth. Amidst such situation, local cultural heritage requires a radical shift in attitudes and discourse towards this cultural heritage by these stakeholders. Throughout their professional practices, they should focalize on and activate different aspects of their local cultural heritage through a far-reaching discourse that will appeal to different types of tourists (the purposeful cultural tourist, the sightseeing cultural tourist, the serendipitous tourist, the casual tourist and the incidental tourist as they were classified by (MCKERCHER and DU CROS 2002). Yet, such local heritage use shouldn't blur the lines to be respected. That is to say local tourist stakeholders have to be aware not to fall in the trap of commodifying the local community heritage to meet the needs and expectations of certain class of tourists. The community pride and dignity are to be deeply respected and not to be turned into voyeurism and exploitation (GIBLIN, 2017). So, the present paper aims at exploring and highlighting the role that discourse can play in weaving smooth synergies between local cultural heritage and tourism place. No less important is its impact, that discourse, in reinventing and improving local tourist stakeholders towards this local heritage which is an additional source and value in enhancing the tourism place attractiveness and competitiveness. This discourse will not only contribute in raising awareness on the importance of local cultural heritage among community members and stakeholders, it will also reinforce and enhance mutual respect and recognition between tourists and the local community.

I/ Cultural Heritage and Tourism place³: the challenge of weaving a smooth synergy.

The contribution of cultural heritage to economic and place development might have once been under evaluated and underestimated by both planners and decision makers. Heritage advocates and decision makers seem to be an incompatible pair. The first claims investments for preservation and safeguarding purposes whereas the latter tend to advance the argument of the scarcity of resources, the competing needs in other ‘prior’ sectors and most pragmatically the high cost of investments in heritage when compared to its economic benefits and payoffs. These two stakeholders do not share then the same views and attitudes about this past transmitted patrimony. While conservationists struggle had to preserve heritage and prevent its deterioration by the relentless forces of modernity, developers and planners see heritage as effort and budget consuming, especially in some urban areas where it can delay or hinder certain development plans (FANG and ZHANG, 2003, GOTHAM, 2001).

Nevertheless, the shift in the World Bank attitudes towards heritage and the lobbying of the UN body, UNESCO in favor of patrimony seem to lay the basis and pave the way for the elaboration and development of new attitudes and representation of this inherited past. The World Bank policy change towards heritage shows clearly in inciting states and NGOs to invest, value it so as to proceed in a later stage to harvest its economic payoffs.

“Far from being just a liability to national budgets, as some one-sidedly regard it, the patrimony is – and can increasingly become- a “value adding” industry. “Heritage management add value to existing assets that have either ceased to be viable or that never were economically productive.... Heritage organizations ensure that places and practices in danger of disappearing because they are no longer occupied, or functioning, or valued.... will survive (KIRSHENBLATT, 1988: p150 a cited in CERNEA, 2001: 45)

Despite the World Bank’s economic rationale, its shift in attitude sounds like signaling the decline of some old tendencies regarding the deep and considerable contribution of heritage to development and economic growth as somehow anodyne, even worse and bridling. Thus, patrimony should be considered as a sector that yield a variety of distinct and incremental benefits, ranging from economic to noneconomic values and impacts. Such benefits can enhance heritage management strategies as well as help develop other sectors such as tourism.

After decades of skepticism and friction, patrimony and tourism seem to have found a common ground. Even the most reluctant academics and working professionals of heritage conservation sector have ended up accepting the need to collaborate with tourism stakeholders and operators so as to include well and carefully-elaborated tourism product that should respond to community expectations and needs. Mutual respect and esteem should stand for those bonds supposed to strengthen and foster the links and correlations between heritage and tourism especially in an era where communities are subject to the effects of globalization and homogenization. Heritage can be a rich source of narratives on

³ In this context, tourism place matches the French notion of ‘ le territoire touristique ‘

both tangible and intangible heritage that tourism stakeholders can mobilize and have recourse to in designing tourism products or in marketing tourism places. As far as tourism is concerned, it is a precious opportunity that can help safeguard heritage and bring it into the spotlight so as to enable it to benefit both from tourism payoffs and also encourage public administrators to give it due attention in terms of investments and planning. However, tourism which is supposed to save patrimony shouldn't, as is the case of some avid tourism stakeholders, contribute in bringing about destructive effects through a commercialization that goes beyond the carrying capacities of local communities. That is to say that tourists stakeholders ought to wisely handle the question of heritage and not to be mainly driven by financial benefits. Mass tourism is most of the time a cause of heritage alteration and deterioration through overexploitation and voyeurism. Needless to remind that cultural heritage is one of the most important and vital sources of cultural tourism. That accounts for an estimated 40 per cent of total tourism revenue

II. Research Methodology:

It is widely agreed that any social fieldwork enquiry, be it of a quantitative or qualitative form, is supposed to design and select its sample. In the case of our present research, the parent population is made up of a category of tourism stakeholders, the local mountain guides in the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ Valley. No matter how small our parent population is and limited our area of research is, a decision is still to be made about the quantity and quality of the data to collect before figuring out the method to rely on for the analysis in order to clarify and illuminate our research questions. So, the sample unit chosen among the parent population to serve the aims of our study is based on certain prescribed criteria (Being natives of the valley under study even if they come from different fractions of the AIT BOU GEMMAZ tribe, sharing the same professional activity and presenting certain demographic and social features). All these characteristics are taken into account in selecting the members that will make part of our qualitative sample to achieved diversity and relevance to the subject matter under study, two aspects that are required in any symbolic and purposive representation or sampling (RITCHIE and LEWIS, 2003)

Based on a list of local guides provided by the provincial directorate of tourism in AZILAL, we designed a small-scale sample. Qualitative samples aren't mainly concerned with the issue of prevalence and incidence as is the case with quantitative research. Add to this, extended qualitative data analysis is more likely to take to be time, effort and resources consuming. So, the smaller and more representative the sample is, the better and more fruitful our research results will be. So, our sample is made up of Local guides belonging to different categories and status and coming from different villages of the valley.

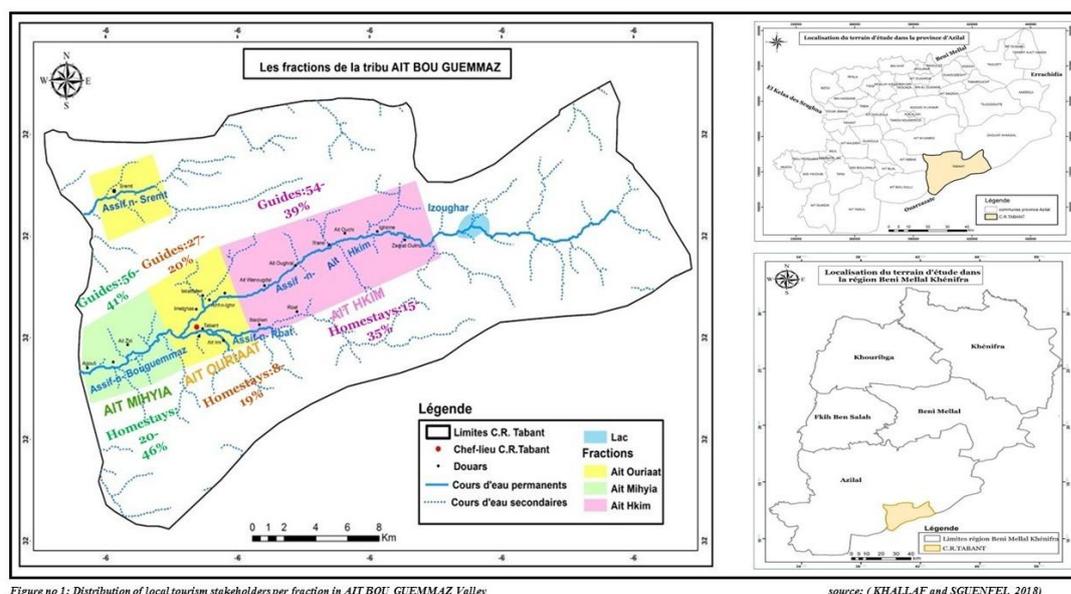


Figure no 1: Distribution of local tourism stakeholders per fraction in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ Valley

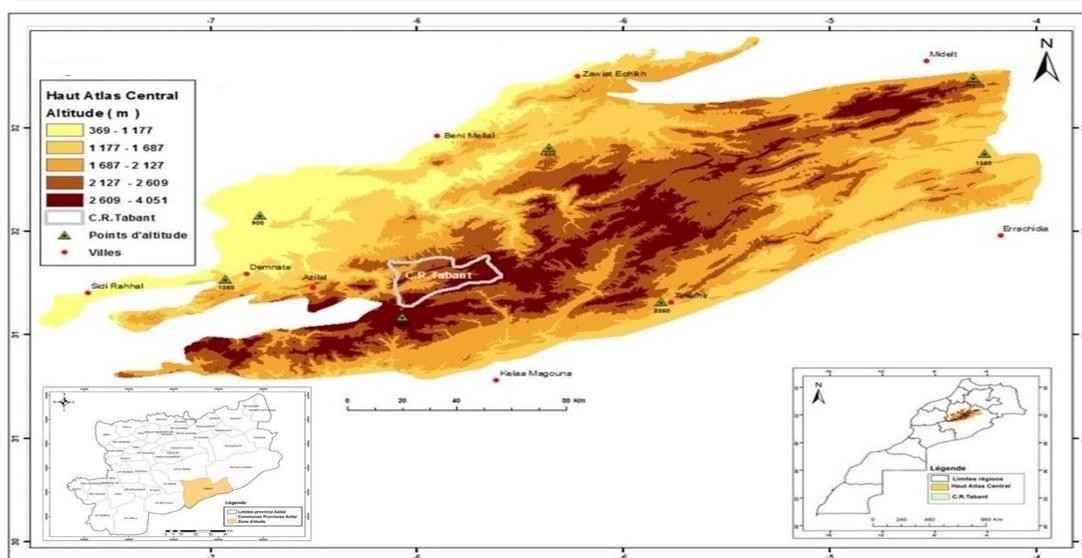
source: (KHALLAF and SGUENFEL 2018)

As mentioned before, the guides to be interviewed were chosen purposively. We grouped the questions according to themes with prompts and cues in case our respondents should dry up. These interviewees respond to the set of prescribed criteria and which helped inform the subject matter under study. The proximity of our fieldwork area and the availability of our respondents during peak tourism seasons (spring and summer) contributed a great deal in facilitating the administration of face to face semi structure interviews. Our qualitative data collection took place in very smooth conditions thanks to the positive collaboration and involvement of the largest majority of the interviewees targeted by our enquiry. A total number of 20 local tourist guides, including different categories and professional status and coming from the three fractions making the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ tribe, were interviewed. These sample respondents were surveyed about their knowledge and familiarity with the different local cultural heritage assets of the valley and the degree of their mobilization in tourism activities. Other question also focused on the ability of local guides to convert these potentialities into a tourism place resource so as to make them contribute in boosting the attractivity of the valley.

To analyze the collected data, we had recourse to content analysis as a tool to analyze the the transcribed interviews. Thanks to NVIVO: a type of CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Data Analysis Software), we coded and broke down our texts (the transcribed guide interviews) into categories so as to carry out both conceptual and relational analysis. That is to say, to analyze the frequency and the occurrence of certain words and concepts and to capture the dominant theme present in the text before proceeding with the analysis of the relationships between them. The categories analyzed in the case of the present study have focused mainly on how much local guides invest their discourse with notions related to local cultural heritage. In addition to that, content analysis as a technique helping to disclose internal meaning of guides verbatim revealed the extent to which these guides include local cultural heritage in their professional practices and how they conceive of it as a resource that can enrich and boost the local tourism territory.

III. Area of study

Figure no 2



Location map of study area in the Moroccan Central High Atlas

Our present field work was carried among tourist guides in the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley located in the northern slope of the Moroccan Central High Atlas. It is 30 kilometers long and situated at an altitude ranging from 1800 meters downstream if the village of AGOUTI to 2200 meters upstream the valley in the village of ZAWIAT OULMZI. AIT BOU GUEMMAZ belongs to a CAIDAT called TABANT and which represents a local administration subdivision of the province of AZILAL. Also referred to as “LA VALLEE HEUREUSE” “The happy valley” stands amidst and surrounded by Mont TIZZAL and AIT OURIAAT to the north and Mont WAWOUGOULZAT and IGOUDDAMEN to the south. Westward, the valley heads towards both FETOUAKA and OULTAN tribes; and towards IHANSALEN tribe in the east.

The history of AIT BOU GUEMMAZ can be traced back to the mother tribe called AIT WASTER that was believed to have stretched its supremacy over a huge and vast territory including the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ and AIT MESSAT tribes and parts of TADLA in the region of BENI MELLAL. Towards the ends of the seventeenth century, this powerful tribe went through series of defeats due to the alliance of AIT ATTA, one of the most powerful tribe of the Atlas, and IHANSALEN. To believe local oral records, the history of AIT BOU GUEMMAZ is a recent one. It just goes back to the end of the nineteenth century.

Successive waves of settlements coming from both slopes of the Central High Atlas helped shape the social history of the tribe. Other families settled down in the valley through exogenous marriages and formed then allogenic linages. In short, the past history accounts for the diversity of linages (besides natives, we have households who still claim their origins from: AIT DRA, IHANSALEN, IGOURRAMEN, parts of AIT ATTA, etc.) that constitute the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ tribes.

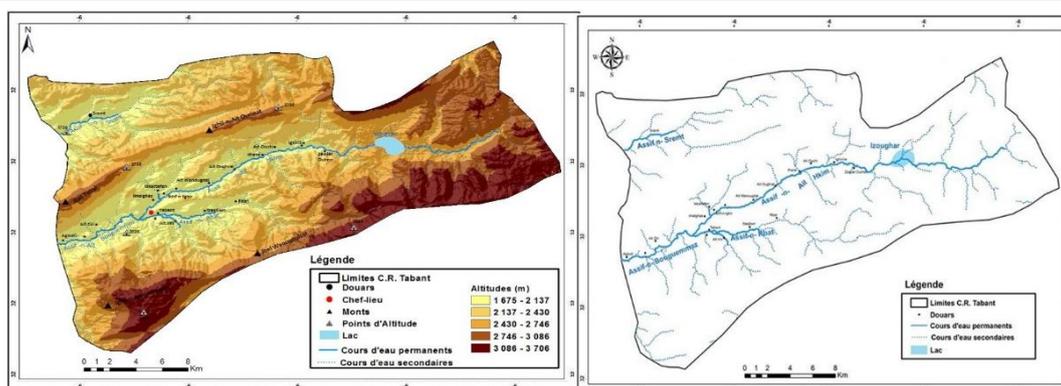


Figure 3: Altitudes map

Figure 4: Water resources map

The thirty villages and 1870 households that make up AIT BOU GUEMMAZ used to rhythm their social and economic lives around customary law *azref* to manage and regulate the tribe's internal as well as its external affairs. The local community relied on varied and complementary economic activities. The high-altitude pastures and the agricultural lands along the main rivers of the valley (Assif n'AIT HKIM, ASSIF n AIT OURIAAT, Assif n SREMT and Assif n BOU GIEMMAZ, see figure no 4) along with slope forestry represented the major and vital economic resources of the tribe. The adoption and implementation of these 'mixed forms of verticality' (CRESSWELL, 1987, as cited by ROLLIER, 1992; p 79) in the local economic life was intended to wisely use and manage their territorial scarce resources. It was until the mid-1980s that the Moroccan state started to implement some developing programs to help boost this mountain economy

IV. Results and Findings

Over the last few decades, the democratization of tourism has incited and motivated the majority of countries, including the less developed and les safer ones, to promote themselves as tourism destinations. The aim is certainly to get their share of a continuously increasing market (URRY, 1990). The alleged economic payoffs generated by this sector is what actually accounts for “this avid rush” to adopt tourism as a tool for development. So, countries are so tempted by this “manna providential” that they mobilize whatever assets and resources they have to invite

“large numbers of people to visit or tolerate the inevitable consequences such as environmental degradation or the disruption of the daily life of local communities, were it not for the benefits that potentially accrue from development of tourism. (SHARPLEY, 2002:10)

Regardless of its repercussions, tourism is warmly welcome as long as it generates economic and social benefits (foreign currency earnings, improvement of GDP, job creation, poverty alleviation etc.).

In terms of tourism planning and management, Morocco, and in compliance with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, relied on two main tourism trends: Seaside and culture tourism. Combined with agriculture, as the two key economic sectors, tourism was expected to considerably contribute to the country's development. Presently it represents 11% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and it creates the total number of

532 000 jobs, about 5% of the whole jobs created by all the different sectors⁴. This type of tourism management was implemented only in imperial Moroccan cities (Meknes, Fes, Rabat and Marrakech) and the major seaside resorts along the Mediterranean Sea (Tangier, Essaidia, Tetuan, El Housseima) and the Atlantic Ocean (Larach, El Jadida, Essaouira, Agadir, etc.)

It was until the mid-1980s that The Moroccan state tourism planners started to mind about developing an already existing mountain tourism. The Program of Mountain Tourism Development (PMTD) designed to complete the Project of the Central High Atlas (PCHA), implemented in the four Atlas valley⁵, was considered as a pilot experience of tourism development in the Moroccan mountain ranges (The Rif and the Atlas mountain ranges). Initially, it was aimed to generate an additional economic and improve life quality of these mountain communities, that up to then, relied on ancestral activities such as agriculture, cattle breeding and forestry as their main economic resources.

IV. 1. Local tourist guides: A dominantly trekking-oriented discourse

In collaboration with French authorities, the Moroccan government piloted a leading experience in the field of mountain tourism development. One of its major aims was to boost mountain local economies of the four targeted Atlas valleys, by enabling local communities to make extra income and therefore improve their daily life. Yet, any tourism development plan should be based on strategies and resources that help achieve established goals. In the case of our area of research, AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley, the local cultural natural assets and potentialities were supposed to be converted as resources to invest in tourism products and activities. The scope of this research paper doesn't allow enough space to delve different aspects related to local assets conversion into a tourism resource. Our attention will focus on local cultural heritage and the ways it was invested by local tourism stakeholders (local guides) within the context of their professional practices.

Since the early days of the program implementation, much attention was aimed to the valley topography and the beauty of the scenery. The tourism product that was overwhelmingly dominant was that of trekking. Tourist who indulge in physical effort, adventure and the pleasure to enjoy picturesque and exotic landscape were attracted the valley. It represents a wonderful setting for the practice of a wide range of activities such as hiking, climbing and fishing without forgetting to experience some aspect of local community life, though not deep enough. These components have to a large extent shaped the guides' discourse. Much of their interest lied in improving both their linguistic and knowledge skills in terms of spatial relief, fauna and flora in an attempt to meet the tourists needs and expectations. Most of our interviewees identify tourism in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley with trekking as an experienced guide admits

⁴ The Moroccan Ministry of tourism figures. See the official website : [www.tourism.gov.ma/ fr/tourism-en-chiffres/chiffres-clés](http://www.tourism.gov.ma/fr/tourism-en-chiffres/chiffres-clés). Consulted on December 1st, 2018.

⁵ The four Atlas valleys are : The AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley, The Valley of IHANSALEN and the valley of AIT BOULLI in the northern slope of the Central High Atlas and the Valley of MGOUN in the southern slope

“In AIT BOU GUEMMAZ, trekking is our key tourism product. We feel proud of receiving tourists in our family houses and take them on tours to discover and enjoy the beauty of our landscapes, the relief and the diversity of our ecosystem. Most visitors indulge in such trips and we do our best to respond to their needs since we are mountaineers and we do master the topography of the area”

This point of view is so revealing in the sense that it obviously reflects the philosophy of this tourism program planners. The main local tourism highlights brought forward were then going to be the major fields where guides would make huge efforts in terms of local geography mastery and pertinent discourse production. Yet, It should be underlined that these resources mobilized in developing tourism is far from reflecting the wealth and diversity of ‘the basket of goods and services’ that AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley enjoys (PECQUEUR, 2001). A Valley endowed with rich resources can’t continue to rely on a single-oriented tourism product; trekking. Otherwise tourism activity is likely to suffer as is the case in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ. The number of tourist arrivals and the continuously shrinking number of nights spent in local tourism homestays despite a respectable hosting capacity is a sign that the fact a visible natural resource-oriented discourse isn’t an effective and efficient tool that can help boost tourism place attractiveness in this valley, especially in a world and national context marked with stark rivalry over one’s tourism place attractiveness and marketing. The development of such tourism will not help achieve the pre-established goals of the implemented tourism development program. It should be taken into account that over the last few decades, the income generated by tourism in the valley is continuously decreasing even among those guides believed to hold control over the tourism local market. For tourism homestay owners, things seem to go worse. Most of them can’t help displaying their dissatisfaction and complaint. Tourism payoffs aren’t enough to recoup the investment cost of their business even in high peak tourism season. The following figures reflect the ill state of tourism in the valley.

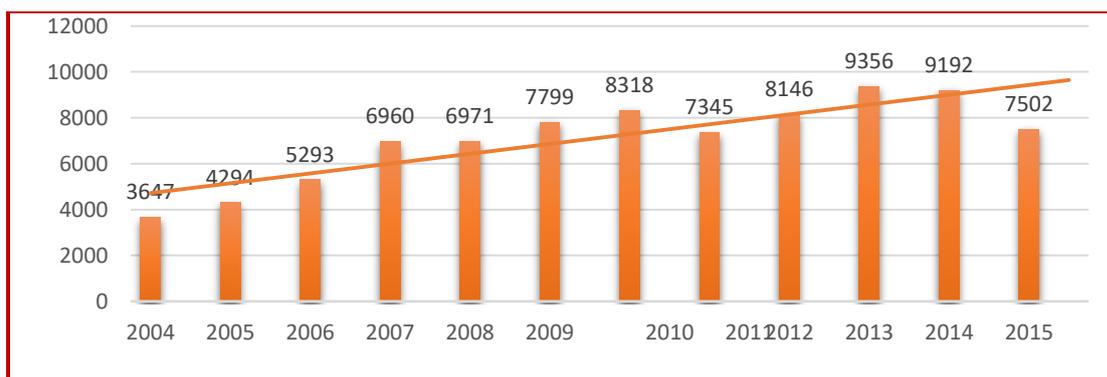


Figure 5 Tourist arrival in the valley

Source: Provincial directorate of tourism, AZILAL, 2016

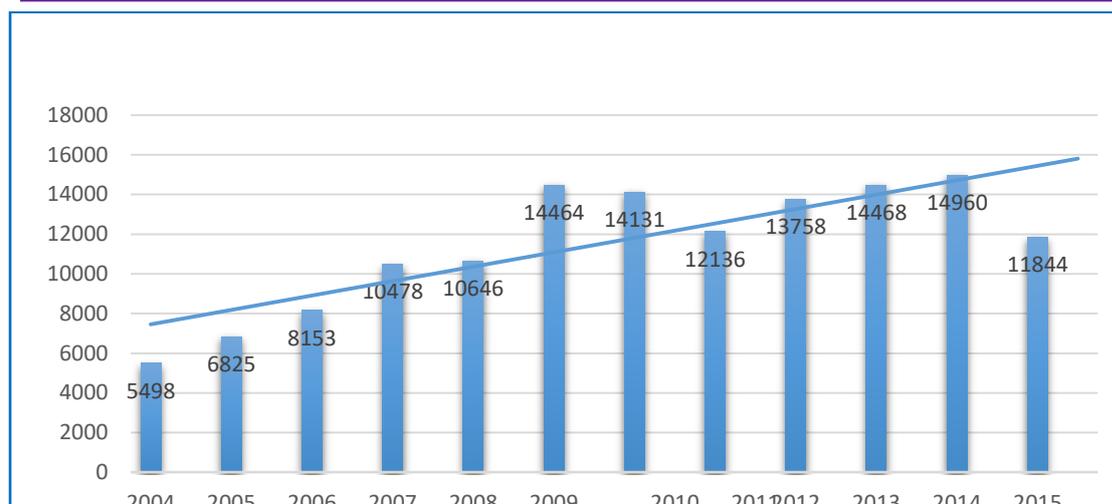


Figure 6: Tourist homestay nights in the valley Source: Provincial directorate of tourism, AZILAL, 2016

A quick look at these two graphs may leave room for optimism. The tendency is towards a continuous growth. Nonetheless, a deep scrutiny of these figures may prove the contrary, especially when they are related to local tourism stakeholders and the rest of the community. If we proceed with finding out the annual mean of tourist arrival per guide or the annual mean of nights per tourism homestay owner, the results are alarming

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
60	53	59.4	68.2	67	54.7

Figure 7: Number of tourist per guide per year (SGUENFEL and KHALLAF, 2017)

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
344.6	297.2	335.8	352.8	364.8	288.8

Figure 7: Number of nights per homestay per year (SGUENFEL and KHALLAF, 2017)

More troubling still was the social effect of such circumstances when a local community life was to some extent disturbed by tourism stakeholders who were avid to gain money anyway regardless of its shared interests and expectations.

VI. 2 Guides’ discourse on Local cultural heritage: The cost of overshadowing.

In one of his articles, the Moroccan anthropologist described AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley as a large warmly welcoming cottage enjoying a silent heritage that badly needs due attention so that it can be appropriately and adequately uttered. In the case of our present research study, the cultural heritage is understood according to the definitions provided by UNESCO and academic circles. In their recent assumptions, cultural heritage shouldn’t be understood mainly in terms of built heritage like historical monuments used largely for tourism purposes. Instead, emphasis is also to be laid on intangible cultural heritage “such as, language, dance, religion, folklore, art forms, traditional knowledge, gastronomical traditions, social relations, rituals, hunting methods and ceremonies’ (TIMOTHY, 2014). Combined together, the tangible and intangible dimensions of cultural heritage contribute valuable parts in providing tourism places with a myriad of assets and resources (STEFANO

and al.,2012). AIT BOU GUEMMAZ is endowed with all those aspects of cultural heritage. Yet, its tourism place doesn't fully benefit from these rich and diversified assets. Cultural heritage, in its major parts, is mute, silent, inaudible because, for some reasons or others, the involved stakeholders in situ haven't been able to bring it into the spot light and help acquire more importance and value. Local cultural heritage badly needs to be heard, understood, experienced and enjoyed and finally be promoted and perpetuated. In so doing this heritage can converted into a resource whenever in need. Who is supposed then to assume such a hard and challenging task?

Basically, in such situations, everyone tends to lay the blame on the other; try as much as possible not to be held responsible for what local cultural heritage is going through in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley. Whoever may be blamed isn't the core of the matter. The way and the tools to be used to mobilize this heritage in tourism activities is what really counts. While doing our field work, we targeted local tourist guides in the valley as the stakeholder who is directly involved in accompanying tourists on tours in the valley. Our major concern was to see and study the way in which these guides conceive of local cultural heritage and how much of this heritage is invested in this discourse and narratives. In other words, how is the story of local cultural heritage told by these guides? Does it stand as a well elaborated tourism product or is considered as a simple and accidental component of the trekking product?

As far as local cultural heritage is concerned, most guides refer to it as local traditions and customs. When asked to elaborate on this question and clarify using examples, local guides evoke examples that belong to the built cultural heritage such as the granary of SIDI MOUSSA or the geological site of dinosaurs prints in the village of IBAQLIWN near TABANT. Out of the twenty interviewees, only two local guides, with a relatively high educational background, were able to distinguish between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

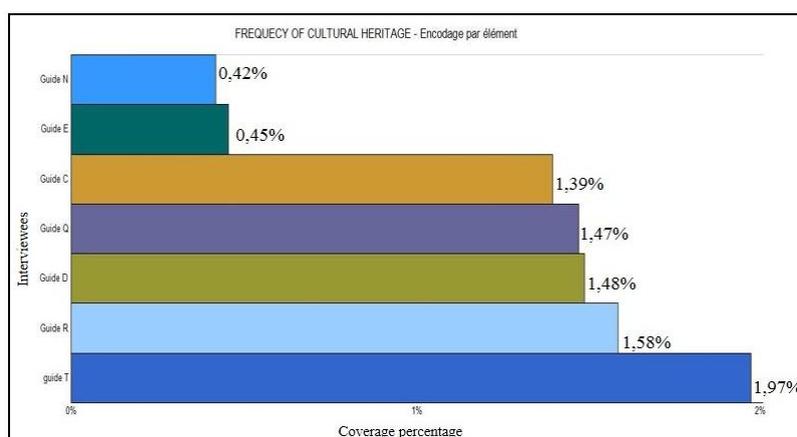


Figure 8: Cultural heritage frequency in 1st generation⁶ guides interviews source: fieldwork

⁶Based on our field work In the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley, we divided local guides into two categories: the 1st generation refer to the early guide who joined CFAMM the Professional Center for Mountain guides. At this stage, access didn't use to require a high educational degree. This group of 'precursors' includes guides

The figures in the previous chart show how frequent the occurrence of cultural heritage in their discourse is. A fact that justifies lack of cultural heritage- oriented tours all long their professional practice. Local heritage is given stank attention. If ever they happen to deal with it for the sake of meeting tourists’ needs, they often do it in a superficial way. Even if some of them show interest and motivation, they lack a certain background and some linguistic skills that would enable them to make that cultural heritage be heard and therefore bring it out of the mire of oblivion. As a local guide recognize it:

“we know that tourists come to our valley to discover our local culture. Our traditions and customs attract them a great deal, but we don’t have enough skills to convert this heritage into a tourism product and make our supply in adequation of the tourism market demands.”

If the largest amount of tourist guides’ discourse is centered on ‘the built environment, landscape, fauna and flora, some artefacts and a range of other physical objects and material’ (BOWERS and CORSANE, 2012) without being able to classify which is natural from cultural heritage nor distinguish between tangible and intangible patrimony, these local guides must suffer from some limitations and inadequacies most of which can be attributed to their personal cultural background as well as to the quality of in-training service they received in CFAMM (Centre de Formation au Métiers de Montagne), a professional training center for local guides. No course on cultural heritage was designed to enable trainees acquire, at least, basic skills that can help them elaborate a pertinent and far reaching discourse. Thus, most local guides kept on sticking to a form of tourism overwhelmingly dominated by a discourse oriented towards relief, topography and all the activities that go with it. Lack of alternative forms of tourism based on local heritage doesn’t encourage and pave the way for any attempts aiming at showing the place specificities and its true authentic identity.

IV. 3 Local Cultural heritage: An unfairly overshadowed tourism place resource

Any tourism place, no matter how attractive and famous it can be, continuously needs new and sustainable resources. This process is dictated by the significant changes and challenges that tourism is undergoing at the present era (STAMBOULIS and SKAYANNIS, 2003). Both cultural heritage and tourism place are the outcome of a renewed social construction. In the fact, neither of them exists ex nihilo. This way, the stakeholders closely involved in their construction and reconstruction should at the heart of any attempt aiming at their identification, identification and valuation within the context of tourism place development.

In terms of resources, AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley enjoys, as we have mentioned before, a variety and mixture of built, transmitted and living cultural assets. The beauty of its sceneries, agricultural landscapes, local architecture, handicrafts, Amazigh artistic heritage, local rituals, social relations and local farming techniques are cultural potential that certainly appeal to tourists who are mainly interested in indulging in the other’s cultural experience. They can also pave the way for the development of culture-based tourism. An alternative form that can bring additional sources of income both to tourism stakeholders as well as to

who graduated between 1984 and 1998. After 1998, access to CFAMM was limited to candidates holding at least a senior secondary school degree (Bac) or a university degree (BA: a Bachelor of Arts)

local community members. In spite of all that local cultural wealth, AIT BOU GUEMMAZ is still lagging far behind in terms of tourism products supply. They are still too weak to meet the diversity of tourists’ tastes, interests and needs. The following chart provide a clear crystal view about the place of local cultural heritage in local tourism activities. Where do local guides lay emphasis when they get involved in mobilizing local assets and resources.

Resources mobilized by local guides	Percentage
Relief and topography	100%
Geological sites (Dinosaur footprints and rock carvings)	80%
Landscape and scenery	20%
Local cuisine	20
Water attractions (fishing and swimming)	15%
Fauna and flora	12%
Tangible heritage	11%
Intangible heritage	8%

Figures 9: Nature-based tourism product

In spite of this growing interest in culture, guides’ discourse on their local cultural heritage is far from responding to a new emerging trend of tourists who claim ‘consumption’ of an authentic local cultural heritage far from any touch of artificiality. Recently, much criticism has been aimed to the claims of those who are mainly interested in financial benefits at the expense of local community authenticity and specificities. They engage in some kind of stage-directed authenticity to attract tourists and expose them to what may seem or sound like a real and true local tourism (ATELJEVIC and DOORNE, 2005). The responsibility to assume by local guides when producing a discourse or when relating the story of their local cultural heritage sounds too challenging. They are supposed to be armed with a wide range of tools and skills that can enable them to transmit this heritage story and make tourists live it in an authentic and much more plausible way. A fifty-year-old guide, with a fair amount of experience recognized that

“All of us admit that culture is of great importance. We know that it will considerably contribute to improving our income. Local culture is our pride, but to be honest we need some training and some skills”

Guides’ attitude towards local cultural heritage is positive. The problem lies in the level of their knowledge of this heritage and the skills that can help them make it a fruitful resource in their professional activities.

Cultural heritage skills	The first generation of guides	The second generation of guides
High	2	1
Medium	3	2
Low	7	5

Figures 10: Cultural heritage skills among the two generations of local guides in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ

Local guides’ skills and sufficient knowledge about local heritage is may partly account for their focus on sport and nature -based tourism. In so doing, they have in a certain contributed in overshadowing the importance of culture-based tourism boosted by the new development that the world tourism market is undergoing. Recent calls for more recognition of marginalized local communities ‘cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, in the elaboration and designing of alternative tourism products. This form of culture-oriented tourism aims at making poor communities, still excluded or given scant attention and consideration in planning and policy making, to benefit from the different payoffs of tourism instead of simply undergoing its repercussions. All that local tourism actors, like tourist guides or homestay managers, need is

Figure 11: Cultural heritage as a resource among

Participants	Reference	Coverage %
Guide B	1	12,15 %
Guide C	3	15,66 %
Guide E	2	8,39 %
Guide I	2	10,89 %
Guide K	2	13,77 %
Guide P	4	26,84 %
Guide Q	4	28,08 %
Guide R	3	16,08 %

The second generation of guides in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ

Participant	Reference	Coverage
Guide A	2	13,01 %
Guide D	2	6,68 %
Guide F	3	24,77 %
Guide G	2	6,10 %
Guide H	2	6,99 %
Guide J	2	22,65 %
Guide L	1	8,26 %
Guide M	2	18,59 %
Guide N	2	16,88 %
Guide O	4	16,34 %
Guide S	2	7,41 %
Guide T	3	8,39 %

the first generation of guides in AIT BOU GUEMMAZ

building and boost their own abilities and acquire necessary techniques and skill so as to get their own heritage out of an unfairly imposed lethargy and mutism. One of the tools to help achieve such a goal is the construction of a well customized and far-reaching discourse that can convert this local cultural heritage from a long-ignored resource to a real potential that is likely help boost tourism place attractiveness and generate more economic benefits that can in turn help “alleviate poverty and spread tourism income to more sector of society. Built heritage, living culture, and well-made arts and handicrafts are an important part of these efforts.....on which community can base their development”(TIMMOTHY and NYAUPANEG, 2009). If Local cultural heritage can generate all such important fruitful outcomes, why should it be marginalized or overshadowed?

V. Discussion

V. 1. High time for a discourse of ‘heritagization’ and not a discourse of commodification

The research question we set out to study in the present research paper is related to the role and contribution of local guides’ discourse in converting local cultural heritage into a viable

and sustainable tourism place resource, in the AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley. We focused mainly on the language local guides have recourse to as a linguistic tool to vehicle and tell the story of their local tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We wanted to identify how much room these local guides devote to it in their discourse and whether this latter contribute in converting local patrimonial assets into a tourism place resources that is likely to boost the attractiveness of their valley.

If we take into account the results and findings of our survey, local guides' discourse is overwhelmingly oriented towards nature and sport-based tourism. When analyzing vis NVIVO (a qualitative data analysis software), at the sage of looking for word frequency, the most recurrent items are those related to trekking (Hiking, climbing, landscape, vallée heureuse – pastures in the high patches, like TARKDIT or those located at the foot of Mont. AZURKI. When it comes to local cultural assets, in the best cases, guides make reference to local heritage high lights as the granary of MOUSSA and SIDI CHITA, or rock carving sites near TABANT, and dinosaurs foot prints in IBAQLIWN. These are, in fact, the most frequently visited spots in the valley. The rest of the constituents making up the local cultural heritage are seldom or rarely evoked. In terms of natural resources and spatial geographical locations, guides seem to a relatively well-honed discourse. The more often they got involved in tis type of nature-based tourism, the more improved and more additional discursive skills they acquired. To relate the story of a trail, a description of a site or geographical relief don't prove to be a challenging task. In such situations, tourists are allowed to experience and consume a dominantly nature-based product. Relying on a single product is likely to lead to a decline in the attractive potential of the tourism place.

However, when it comes to local cultural heritage, and more particularly its invisible or latent resources, local guides' discourse has a wide range of limitations. Both their intellectual and linguistic potentials didn't help present and narrate the full scope of this rich patrimony. Suffering from such weaknesses in terms of local heritage knowledge and the lack of adequate linguistic tools bridle guides I defining their own community historical and cultural identity; and thus, prevent tourists who are culturally motivated from living a novel and authentic experience. Some guides even go further and consider local heritage as a commodity and a merchandise to be used and exposed for purely lucrative purposes regardless of their community interests and well-being. Such practices turn discourse into a threat to the authenticity and genuineness of a socially constructed local heritage. For them, tourists are an easy target to listen and consume a discourse that consists in prefabricating and designing a fake version of a locally genuine and credible patrimony.

To overcome this process of commodifying local heritage, all the stakeholders in situ should get actively involved in providing and making effectively efficient suggestions. Local cultural heritage Tourism place are a local community property and affair. Their development and their promotion are more unlikely to be achieved unless operational collective actions are taken. Community control and intervention in constructing and reconstructing a viable authentic discourse about their local heritage is an urgent need.

“Local control is vital because residents have a greater tendency to do it in a way that is in harmony with cultural traditions, which may assist in building ethnic pride.” (TIMOTHY, 2002)

It is a crystal-clear indication that local guides shouldn't be the only leading stakeholder in producing discourse about local cultural heritage. All along their professional practices, they are supposed to act in compliance with the recommendations of exogenous actors, foreign or national travel agencies. Most of the time, these external stakeholders, who are professionally linked to local guides, do not have a deep insight and understanding of the local community perception and view to local cultural issues and the way they should be respectfully managed and dealt with. Their main motive are tourism economic payoffs no matter how tempting is the discourse they produce about sustainability and responsibility. If they are driven by the interest of converting local cultural heritage into a commercial commodity to be sold, local community have a different and opposite view since they are the bearer and the holder of this heritage and it is up to them to decide the genuine authentic discourse to construct and the wise way in which it is to be used so as convert it into a useful tourism place resource.

Conclusion

In this present research paper, we modestly attempted to question the issue of local tourist guides' discourse on local cultural heritage in The AIT BOU GUEMMAZ valley. What aspects and how much of these local heritage assets make part of their professional discourse and did they manage to convert them into a tourism place resource so as to boost the valley attractiveness in a global context undergoing stark and unbalanced competition among tourism destination. The results and findings of the following study reveals and highlights the nature of guides' discourse that overwhelmingly dominated by items and themes semantically linked to a trekking-based tourism. Natural resources, topography, relief and geographical site represent the major lexical repertoire guides have recourse to tell the story of the natural setting while hiking around the valley or while indulging in other related activities. This unidimensional approach adopted by guides in discourse production allow tourist to enjoy and consume only one aspect of a rich and diverse local experience.

When it comes to discourse local cultural heritage, local guides have less experience and not enough adequate skill. Our study revealed that they deal with this local patrimony as one the constituents of their hiking experience. That is to say, tangible and intangible cultural heritage questions are evoked in superficial way during hiking tours. Even if these local guides express positive attitudes towards local heritage and recognize its role and importance, they admit that they still lack in-training services in the field of designing and constructing a well-established and genuinely authentic culture-themed discourse that will help diversify local tourism products and therefore enhance and boost tourism place attractiveness. Once they make appropriate and pertinent use of local cultural heritage assets, their discourse will hen perform the role of promoting not only tourism place through an interaction with tourists and visitors, but will also reorient attention to that local heritage who has un to now received scant attention. Thus, the double role of discourse in tourism

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and cultural heritage promotion and development. This last statement is a path towards more in-depth research and reflection on how tourism can in its turn be a resource for local cultural heritage in remote mountain valley such as AIT BOU GUEMMAZ.

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