

A strategy for the design of a cultural tourist route. Case study of the city of Tlemcen in Algeria

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Abstract: Cultural tourist routes enhance the identity of local communities and stimulate the traditional economic activities of any region. The present article aims to analyze the cultural tourist routes that were proposed in 2011 during the event “*Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture*” in Algeria. Unfortunately, these routes were not realized. For this, a survey was carried out with civil servant representatives, who were active in 2011 in the Tourist and Cultural Administration of the city, using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires for the design of these routes. The primary purpose is to highlight the main causes of the observed failure and to propose instead a protocol that guarantees the conception of any cultural tourist route. The findings allowed us to create a collaborative interactive map via Google My Maps which, in turn, facilitated the achievement of a collective consensus for the proposal for a cultural tourist route in the city of Tlemcen.

Keywords: Tourist route; Cultural heritage; Participation; Google My Maps; Tlemcen.

Una estrategia para el diseño de una ruta de turismo cultural - Un estudio de caso de la ciudad de Tlemcen en Argelia

Resumen: Las rutas de turismo cultural mejoran la identidad de las comunidades locales y estimulan las actividades económicas tradicionales de una región. Este artículo pretende analizar las rutas turísticas culturales propuestas en 2011, durante el evento Tlemcen capital de la cultura islámica en Argelia, pero que no se llevaron a cabo. Se realiza una encuesta mediante entrevista y cuestionario semidirigido sobre el diseño de estas rutas con representantes de funcionarios en 2011 en el ámbito turístico y cultural. El objetivo es poner de manifiesto las principales causas del fracaso observado y proponer un protocolo para garantizar el diseño de cualquier ruta de turismo cultural. Los resultados nos permitieron crear un mapa interactivo colaborativo a través de Google My Maps que nos facilitó, a su vez, la consecución de un consenso colectivo sobre una propuesta ruta turística cultural de la ciudad de Tlemcen.

Palabras Clave: Ruta turística; Patrimonio cultural; Participación; Google My Maps; Tlemcen.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, tourist routes are viewed as the basis of tourism development as they allow maximizing the tourism potential of countries (Abdukhamidov et al., 2022). A tourist route is defined as an itinerary to be followed while suggesting a number of places to be visited and activities to be carried out in a specific area that highlights the gastronomy, the products derived from the region of the inhabitants, as well as their crafts (Del Pilar HurtadoYugcha et al., 2022). The size and scale of these roads vary considerably. For this, some of them can be termed as urban routes while others are territorial routes. Urban routes are limited to the outskirts of the city, while territorial routes connect important cities and towns (Garrido et al., 2015). In addition, they can also vary in their diversity of content, and they all have in common the projection of a territory for tourist consumption through a specific route (Hernández Ramírez, 2011).

Cultural tourist routes (CTRs) are the main lever for promoting tourism worldwide (Calderón Puerta & Arcila Garrido, 2020). Indeed, they are described as real tourism products that are based on the existence of cultural content that is linked to a specific space (Garrido et al., 2015). They include natural heritage, cultural and archaeological sites. These diverse tourist sites, which are highlighted on the CTR ensure the dissemination of the identity and history of the region (Moropoulou, 2021).

During the cultural event “*Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture*” in 2011, two main CTRs with the theme: Historic Sites and Monuments of the Medina of Tlemcen, were proposed by the National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property (OGEBC) (Kherbouche & Djedid, 2019). Unfortunately, these two routes could not be materialized. This article aims to analyze the proposed CTRs and to highlight the main causes of their failure. It also seeks to develop a protocol that can guarantee the design of a CTR because not many detailed methodological proposals can be found for the design, creation and evaluation of CTRs (Garrido et al., 2015). It is also widely acknowledged that tourist route planning proves to be a difficult task for tourists as they have to choose points of interest to visit in cities that are unfamiliar to them (Lim et al., 2018). A well-thought-out CTR could facilitate the tourist stay and make it more pleasant.

In order to carry out our research work, a methodological approach was established. The first step consisted in conducting a semi-directive interview with civil servant representatives who were active in 2011 in the Tourist and Cultural Administration of the city of Tlemcen. The primary purpose was to assess their degree of knowledge of the proposed routes and to identify the members involved in their preparation as well. Afterward, a semi-directive questionnaire was sent to the members who designed the CTRs in order to determine the main hidden elements which constituted a real obstacle to the realization of the proposed CTRs. Then, another questionnaire was sent to other representatives currently working in organizations involved in the field of tourism and culture. They helped us to gather as many useful elements as possible to determine the best possible CTRs. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with groups of local population and producers with a view to check their degree of community participation. Finally, the results collected from the questionnaires previously given to local actors and to the host population were introduced into an interactive collaborative map via Google My Maps, which, in turn, facilitated the achievement of a collective consensus for the proposal for CTRs in Tlemcen.

2. Literature review

2.1. Fundamentals of designing tourist routes

An essential starting point for the creation of tourist routes consists of developing a culture of cooperation. The actors must be partners in order to make possible the synergy deployed by the efforts of all participants (Bourdeau & Marcotte, 2015). However, it is crucial that tourist routes are developed towards attractive and diverse tourist resources, whether natural or man-made (Abdukhamidov et al., 2022). Points of sale of local products can also be established there. Moreover, it should be noted that the fact that a region has a certain density and diversity of attractions in a circumscribed space can promote its attractiveness and also increase tourist attendance (Bourdeau & Marcotte, 2015).

Furthermore, for the routes to function properly and be successful, it is highly recommended that they be provided with basic infrastructure, such as signage, rest areas, and toilets. There is no doubt that routes that are long and intended to accommodate visitors are particularly in need of accommodation facilities (Meyer, 2004).

According to Lourens (2007), community participation and opportunities for small business development are seen as important factors for successful tourism routes. It is worth reminding that since communities are the owners of tourist attractions, they must be involved in planning and decision-making regarding their resources (Thetsane, 2019). It is also important that the presentation of local food and craft products is provided by the indigenous population itself (Abdukhamidov et al., 2022).

The information and promotion of an itinerary are essential conditions for attracting visitors. These two elements are ensured through advertising billboards and posters, and also via promotional tourist maps in advertising leaflets and brochures (Jancewicz & Borowicz, 2019). They can also be exposed via trade fairs, festivals, announcements and internet (Owen et al., 2004). Relevant routes can be promoted on social media platforms and official municipal websites (Duarte-Duarte et al., 2021).

2.2. Methodological approaches for the creation of tourist routes

Several authors have proposed methodologies to be adopted for the creation of tourist routes. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Lourens (2007) who attempted to clarify some aspects of the approach to be followed in order to successfully develop itinerant tourism. To this end, this same author affirms that, first of all, the route must be conceptualized on the basis of its economic profitability. For this, it is necessary to carry out a thorough study of the tourist market with the purpose of identifying key target markets and tourist needs and demands. Then, it is required to carefully examine the tourism assets and identify the unique selling characteristics of the region and its products in order to implement, at the macro level, a strategic plan that allows combines the market demands and tourism assets of the region. It is also important to identify tourism product providers that can complement the unique features mentioned above. Finally, the financial provisions and arrangements must be carefully studied and decided upon.

A second method was used in creating tourist routes while defining the flagship products on James Bay (Eeyou Istchee) which is a subarctic territory of Quebec in Canada (The Cree name for the traditional territory on the eastside of James Bay). During this experience, a participative workshop was organized within the framework of the annual meeting of the Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) in Nemaska, in August 2008. This workshop made it possible to validate the routes previously created and also allowed adding others thanks to a collaborative participatory map on the ground (Blangy et al., 2010). This technique is called participatory ground mapping, which is one of the social analysis system (SAS) techniques for collaborative inquiry and social engagement developed by Chevalier et al. (2013).

As pointed out above, this work is mainly concerned with CTRs. It must be recognized that there are not many methodological proposals for the design, creation and evaluation of CTRs (Garrido et al., 2015). However, three favorable methodological approaches for the creation of CTRs seem to have emerged from our literature review.

The first one is that reported in the work of Holland, Burian and Dixey (2003) in the rural areas of the Czech Republic. This is a project that was initiated by The European Center for Agro-tourism. The first step consisted in establishing partnerships in order to create the CTR. Next, the second step aimed to determine the geographical area as well as the tourist products to be included in the project (heritage, natural and cultural sites, traditional and modern arts, crafts, music, dance, etc.). Then, the next step was to train the route stakeholders and partner organizations in order to guarantee its effective marketing.

The second approach was the one proposed by Garrido et al. (2015). The procedure adopted consisted in evaluating a pre-existing CTR with a view to using it as a possible alternative model. Thus, in the first step, it is a question of selecting the landmarks. In this case, three alternatives are possible. One can either use all the landmarks included in the itinerary, or make a partial selection, or extend the number of landmarks studied by incorporating others that were not included in the original itinerary. Next, a questionnaire must be developed and validated to assess the aesthetic, cultural, environmental and tourism values of each of the selected landmarks. For this, this questionnaire was given to members of the groups of experts that are active in the field of culture and tourism. Then, the results obtained from the questionnaires were stored, manipulated and analyzed through the geographic information system (GIS) in order to present them in the form of data layers. Subsequently, the new results were evaluated in order to design appropriate proposals which, depending on the objectives set at the beginning of the project, led to the decision to create a new route or to make some modifications to the existing one.

For their part, Bolaños and Heredia (2014) tried to elucidate a method that was used for the creation of a cultural tourist route in the cities of Tulcán, Espejo and Mira in Ecuador. For this, before the

development of the tourist route, it was first necessary to identify and evaluate the natural and cultural tourist resources available locally in order to identify and assess the importance of the attractions available in the region, depending on their degree of conservation, their cultural or natural value, and their contribution to tourism as well. These parameters were used to assess the potential of attracting tourists. It should also be emphasized that surveys were conducted among communities near tourist attractions with the aim of obtaining information on the current status of each site to be visited. It is also noteworthy that, thanks to the information obtained during the field survey, it was possible to develop categorization and classification matrices which, in turn, made it possible to appropriately select the attractions to be included in the CTR.

2.3. The contribution of the cultural tourist routes for the development of a region

The CTRs ensure the enhancement and promotion of the cultural potential of a region (Moropoulou, 2021). According to Zouridaki et al. (2022), CTRs also make it possible to create a positive and attractive image. In addition, they represent an important lever for economic and social development because they can provide new jobs, attract new investments and thus ensure an increase in regional income (Zouridaki et al., 2022; Timothy, 2018). They are directly linked to local cultural production, and can help to develop traditional economic activities (Belias et al., 2020). This is how the host communities, whose heritage is exposed along the CTRs, become more autonomous socially, psychologically and economically (Timothy, 2018).

It has been revealed that CTRs have a significant impact on the development of tourism in a region because with the arrival of tourists, the local population has the desire to provide services to tourists and meet their needs, which can certainly help to create small-scale tourism infrastructure at the tourist site and along the CTRs (Abdukhamidov et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that remote and rural areas, whose local heritage and culture constitute the main source for the enhancement and valorization of the territory, can benefit from the advantages generated by the creation of long and territorial CTRs. Sometimes, these CTRs can take visitors away from the usual tourist routes, which can possibly contribute to generate some dynamics in the economic activities of outlying places and to give a positive brand image to the territory (Graf & Popesku, 2016; Bourdeau & Marcotte, 2015).

3. Case study

3.1. Presentation of the study corpus - The city of Tlemcen

Tlemcen is a city of art and history; it was built in Roman times. Thanks to the passage of so many dynasties that ruled its lands, it experienced various cultural contributions, which allowed it to acquire an invaluable heritage value (Hamma et al., 2016). It is also the most representative of the Arab-Muslim architectural heritage of Algeria (Ghomari, 2007). In addition, the intangible heritage is also present in force through the traditions and customs. This cultural richness prompted the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) to designate Tlemcen to host the event entitled "Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture" during the year 2011 (Kherbouche & djedid, 2019).

3.2. A look back at the cultural event "Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture"

It is worth emphasizing that during this event, which was held during the year 2011, a particular attention was paid to prestigious monuments. Unfortunately, several memorials and tourist sites reflecting the architectural heritage of the city of Tlemcen were ignored and disregarded. Moreover, once this cultural event was closed, the city of Tlemcen could not succeed in presenting and establishing itself as a tourist destination par excellence, because even if the tourist sector of the city experienced certain revitalization, the promotion of its image did not last afterwards. One should know that to develop the image of a destination, it is imperative that it be abundantly nourished by cultural events, mediations, interventions, etc. (Kherbouche & djedid, 2019).

Furthermore, in order to facilitate tourists' movements during this event, two main CTRs which branch into other secondary route (Map 1), were proposed in order to expose the monuments of the Medina of Tlemcen (Table 1). Despite the multiple efforts made by the National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property, the CTRs have not been really materialized.

Map 1: Cultural tourist routes proposed during the cultural event of the year 2011

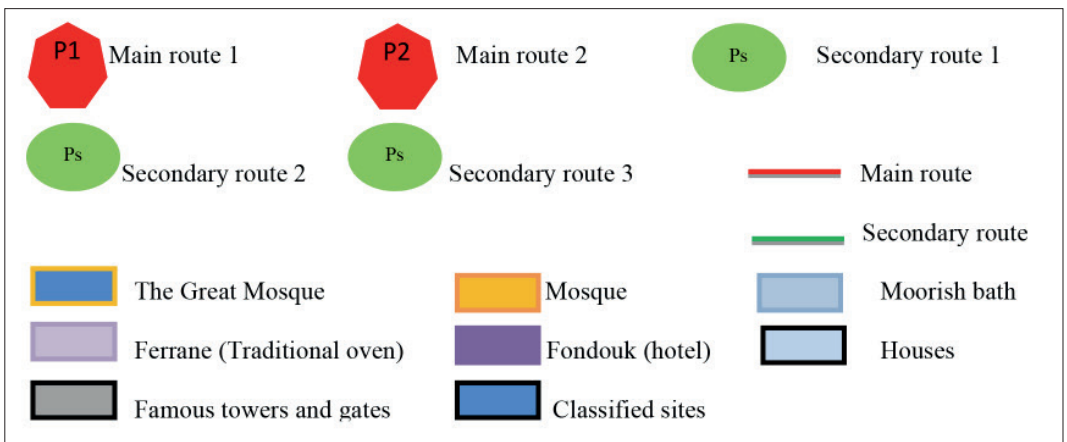
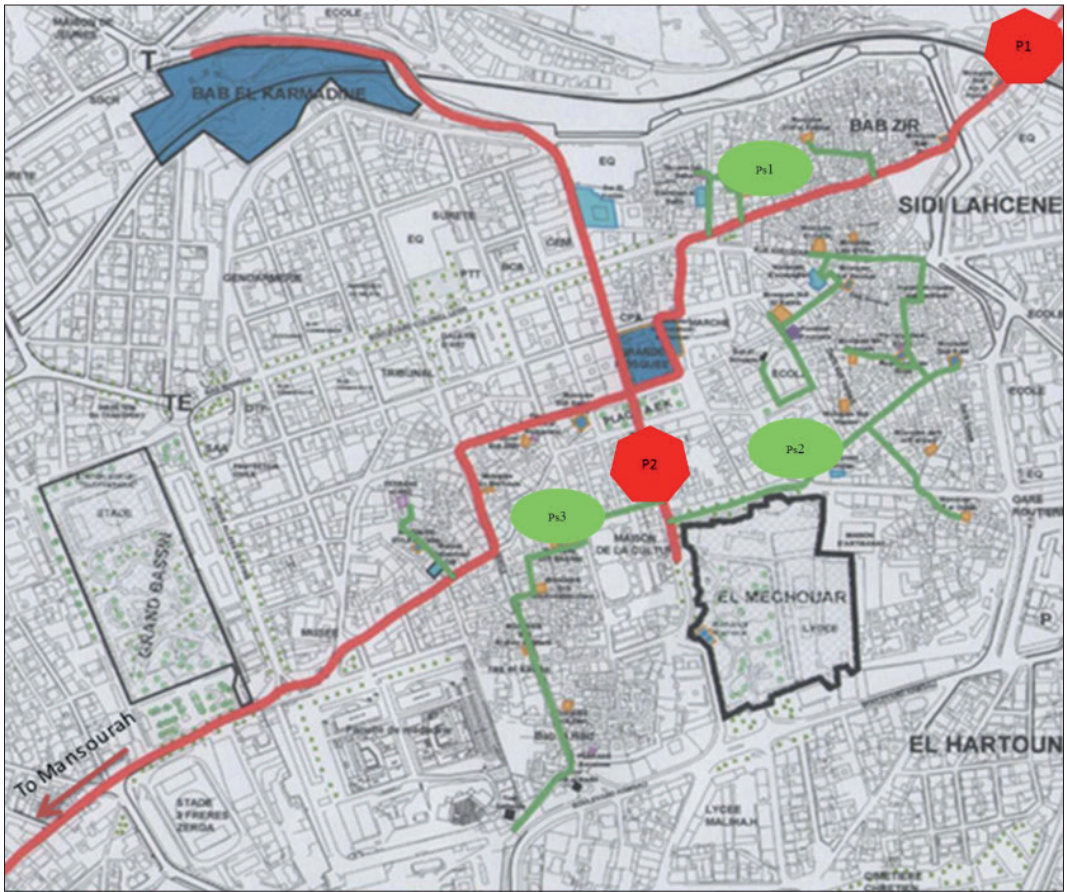


Table 1: List of historical monuments included in cultural tourist routes

Main route P1 : East-West	Main route P2: North-South	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agadir – Bab Sidi Boumedienne – Moulay Sidi Yakoub Mosque – BabZir Mosque – Bab Zir Square – Sidi Eldjebbar Mosque – Sidi El Yeddoune Mosque – Traditional wood-fired oven (Ferrane) Ben Selka – Moorish bath (Hammam) El Hofra – Chorfa Mosque – Lala Ghriba Mosque – Sidi Snousi Mosque – Moorish bath Sebbaghine – Sidi El Benna Mosque – Pondouk (Hotel) Roumana – Emir Abdelkader Square – Sidi BelahcenTenissi Mosque – Derb El Hadjamine traditional oven – Ouled EL Imam Mosque – Mohammed Dib House – French-Muslim Medersa (Koranic school) – Great Basin (Grand Bassin) – Bab (Gate) El Khemis – Mansourah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mechouar – Old Town Hall (Medersa Tachfinia) – Great Mosque – Dar El Hadith – Bab El Quarmadine 	
	Secondary route Ps2	Secondary route Ps3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sidi El Kalei Mosque – Ferrane (Traditional oven) Haret E'Rma – Lalla Roya Mosque – Ibn Marzouk Mosque – Sidi Hamed Mosque – Moorish bath Slimane – Derb Sidi El Kadi Mosque – Sid Elouzzane Mosque – Bab (Gate) El Djiad – Tourist complex of Sidi Boumediene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sidi Brahim El Masmoudi Mosque – Sidi Brahim El Masmoudi Mausoleum – Abou Abdellah Cherif Mosque – Brahim Ghrib Mosque – Sidi Zekri Mosque – Ferrane Benaissa – Bab (Gate) El Hdid – Seffarine Gate
Secondary route Ps1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sidi Abi El Hacem Errachidi Mosque – Sidi Abi El Hacem Errachidi Mausoleum – Sidi El Haloui Mosque 		

Source: National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property

4. Methodological procedures

The figure 1 shows all the steps of the research.

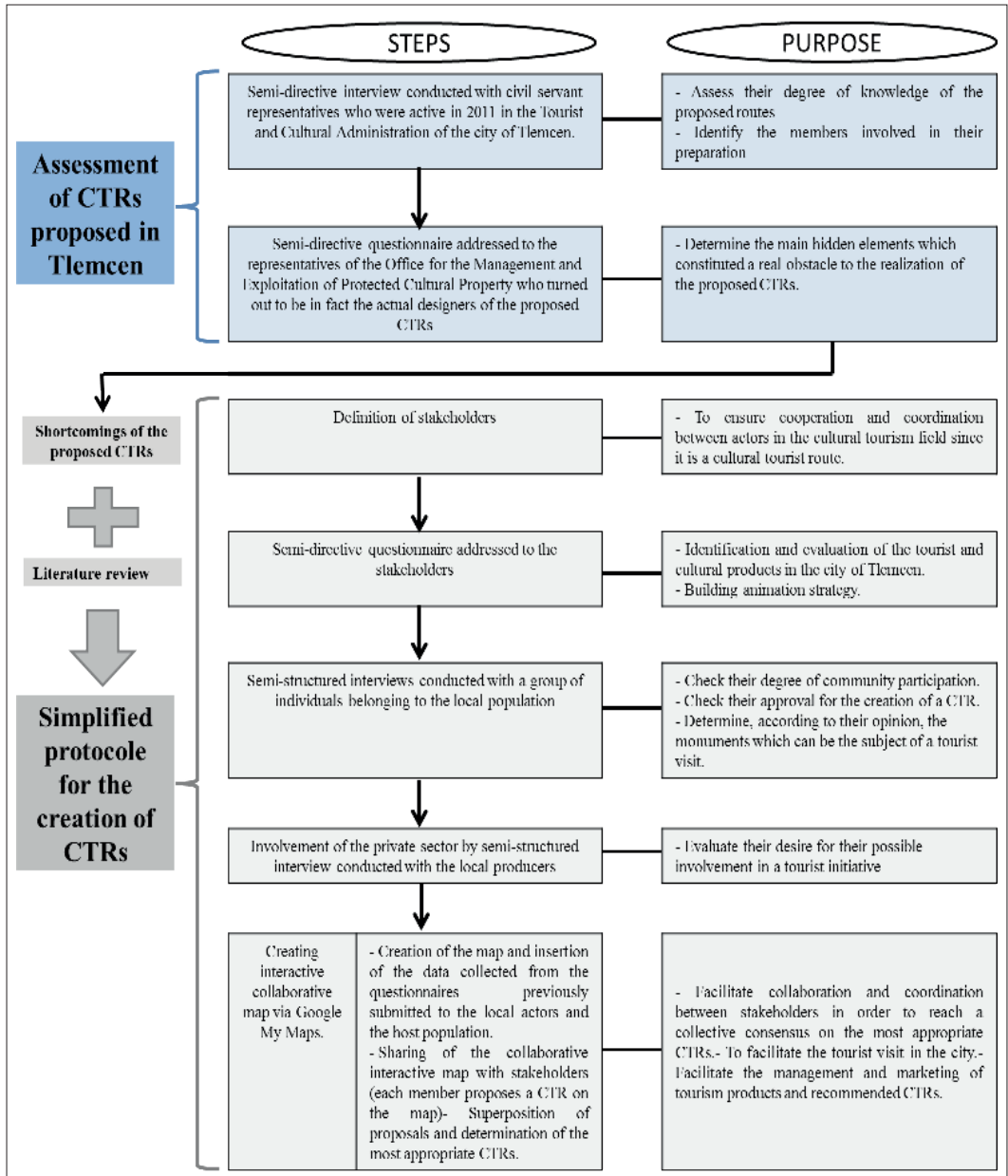
As a first step of investigation, we contacted twenty-six representatives of organizations involved in the field of tourism and culture (Table 2). They were all active civil servants in 2011, and actually participated in the event. It should be remembered that the objective of the semi-structured interview was to assess the level of knowledge of these individuals in relation to the routes proposed in 2011, and to identify, in particular, the designer members among these people.

Table 2: Organizations involved in the field of tourism and culture in 2011

Direction/ Administrative structure or organization	Number of staff in 2011	Percentage of people who participated in the proposal of courses	Percentage of people who know the routes but did not contribute to their cartographic proposal
National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property (OGECB)	9	100%	100%
OGECB Tourist Guides	7	0%	100%
Culture Directorate	4	0%	0%
Tourism Directorate	4	0%	0%
Tourism Office	2	0%	0%
Total	26 people	35%	61%

Source: Elaborated by authors

Figure 1: Methodological procedures



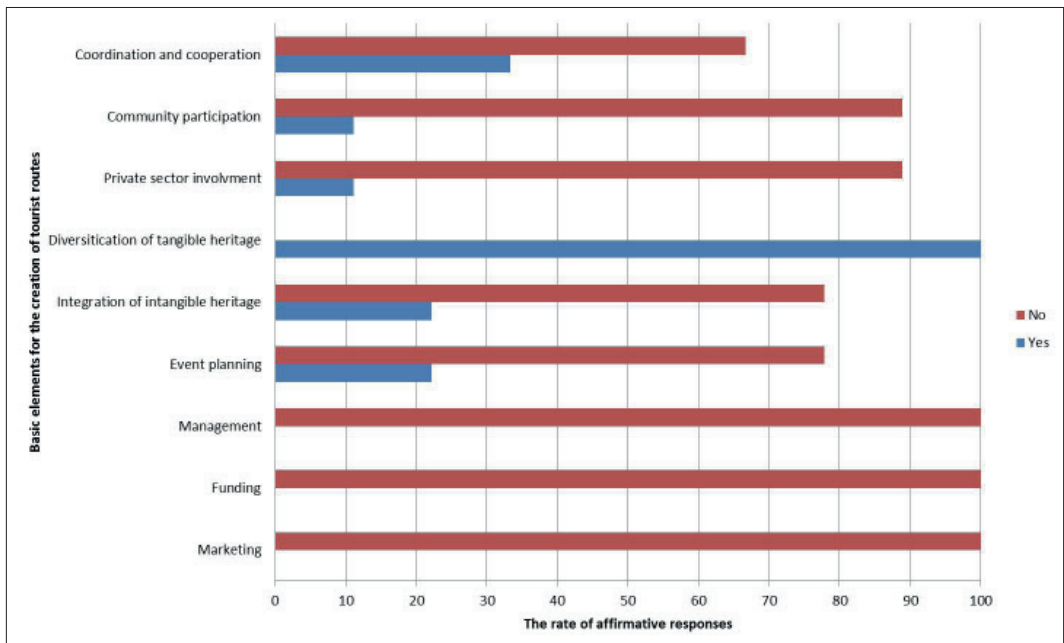
Source: Elaborated by authors

Table 2 presents the main actors who participated or not in the proposal of the mapping of tourist routes. It appears that among all the organizations responsible for culture and tourism in Tlemcen, only 35% of them actually participated in the proposal of these routes. In addition, it should be noted that this percentage is associated with one single body which in this case is the National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property (OGEBC), which reveals that there is a lack of information and marketing regarding the mapping of the proposed routes. On the other hand, there is neither consultation nor coordination between the various stakeholders, since only the tourist guides affiliated with the Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property were aware of the tourist routes offered without having participated in their development.

In order to be able to collect further details, it was decided to send a questionnaire to the nine representatives of the Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property who turned out to be in fact the actual designers of the proposed cultural tourist routes. This questionnaire includes the most essential elements needed for the creation of tourist routes. It primarily addresses the following points:

- The involvement of different actors through coordination, cooperation, community participation and involvement of the private sector,
- The content of proposed routes (diversification of the product; as it is a cultural tourist route, it is about material heritage, integration of immaterial heritage, animation and programming of events),
- Management and promotion through marketing and budgetary financing.
- Graph 1 illustrates the response elements collected from the respondents.

Graph 1: Level of respect for the fundamental parameters needed for the success of the proposed cultural tourist routes, according to their own designer members



Source: Elaborated by authors

The findings showed that there was no well-established upstream strategy that could ensure the realization of the routes (Graph 1). In addition, the main elements for the creation of tourist routes were not all considered with the exception of the diversification of products offered in terms of material heritage (mosque, Hammam, palace, etc.)

According to Figure 2, consultation was quite timid (22%). However, for some actors, such as those belonging to the Culture Department, this component is almost non-existent (Table 2), which confirms that consultation, one of the fundamental elements in the tourist route design process, was not supported as it should be. It is also obvious that without the involvement of the local population and private sector, the cultural tourist route cannot be fully successful.

Furthermore, the intangible heritage, which is considered as a quest that is so much sought after by tourists, is not highlighted. In addition, the monuments that were supposed to be presented to tourists as objects arousing curiosity have unfortunately been exhibited without information, without animations, and even less without socio-cultural activities. Moreover, the management, marketing and financing parameters were totally absent, despite the availability of funds granted for that purpose.

Faced with these shortcomings, adequate adjustments had to be made. In order to efficiently address this issue, it was deemed necessary to propose a simplified strategy that draws its essence from the three processes for creating CTRs which were detailed in the literature review section. This protocol consists of the following essential steps:

- The first step is to define the stakeholders responsible for the city's tourism and cultural domain.
- The second stage seeks, on the one hand, to make an inventory of tourist products by referring to the classification of monuments from the Ministry of Culture and, on the other hand, to evaluate them according to the aesthetic and historical values, their degree of conservation, and their potential for use and attractiveness as well. This assessment made it easier for us to select, in an appropriate way, the attractions that could be offered to tourists.
- The third step is to propose activities and strategies for animating these monuments. This approach would certainly contribute to develop an attractive image of the city.
- The fourth step allows emphasizing and highlighting the importance of community participation in order to propose monuments and sites that possess a particular potential to attract visitors.
- The fifth step is to call on suppliers of local products and local labor in order to offer tourists an Aboriginal trip.
- Finally, the last step lies in materializing the CTR. For this, we used Google My Maps as a tool to help design an interactive collaborative map that can be shared with survey participants. By taking into account the proposals submitted by the respondents, we were able to establish, in common, the most convincing route a priori.

Once our survey process was definitively set up, it was decided to detail the different steps to follow in the methodological approach adopted for our case study:

Step 1: Definition of stakeholders

It is worth emphasizing that, in the present case, the various members concerned by the initiatives undertaken to design the CTR belong to organizations involved in the promotion of tourism and culture (National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property, Department of Culture, Department of Tourism, and Office of Tourism), architects and research archaeologists in the field of cultural tourism, as well as architect-restorers in the city of Tlemcen. These different elements are still in operation in this year 2022; they are classified according to the nature of their activities in Table 3.

Table 3: Actors participating in the collaborative interactive map

Organization and actors involved in the survey	Members by activity	Number of people
National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property	Architect - Head of Maintenance and Restoration	1
	Preservation archaeologist responsible for research and publication activities	1
	Archaeologist	2
	Senior Heritage Technician	2
	Architect	2
	Subtotal	8
Tourist guides	Tourist guides	7
Department of Culture	Archaeologist - Curator and Coordinator	1
	Archaeologist	4
	Architect	2
	Subtotal	7
Direction of Tourism	Architect	2
	Archaeologist	2
	Subtotal	4
Tourist Office	Archaeologist	2
	Architect	1
	Subtotal	3
Academic researchers	Archaeologists	6
	Architects	5
	Subtotal	11
Restoration architects	Restoration architects	2
Total		42

Source: Elaborated by the authors

A semi-directive questionnaire was sent to all the people mentioned in the table above. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather as much useful information as possible for the creation of the CTR. It embraces two sections. The first section concerns the identification and evaluation of the tourist and cultural products in the city of Tlemcen, and the second one deals with the building animation strategy.

Step 2: Identification of tourist products of the city of Tlemcen - Its tangible and intangible heritage

Here, we have inventoried the buildings and sites constituting the material heritage of the city of Tlemcen, based on the classification made by the Department of Cultural Assets of the Ministry of Culture (Direction responsible for the inventory of protected cultural assets, 2018: 34-42).

Table 4: Invenoried monuments of the city of Tlemcen, according to the Ministry of Culture – Algeria

Religious monuments				
Mosques		Mausoleums		Medersa “Religious School”
Nationally classified				
Great Mosque	Tomb of the Princess		Medersa Tachfina converted into the Museum of Art and History	
Agadir Mosque	Tomb of Abou Ishak Tayar			
Sidi El Haloui Mosque	Sidi Boumedienne Mausoleum			
Bab Zir Mosque				
Ouled Imam Mosque				
El Mechouar Mosque				
Sidi Boumediene Mosque				
Minaret of Mansourah				
Sidi Belahcen Errachidi Mosque				
Sidi Brahim El Masmoudi Mosque				
Unclassified				
Sidi El Yaddoun Mosque	Sidi Daoudi Mausoleum			
Chorfa Mosque	Sidi Snoussi Mausoleum			
Lalla Ghriba Mosque	Sidi Yakoub Mausoleum			
Sidi El Benna Mosque	Sidi Brahim El Masmoudi Mausoleum			
Sidi Snoussi Mosque				
Sidi Zayed Mosque				
Lalla Roya Mosque				
Ibn Marzouk Elkafif Mosque				
Lalla Marfouda Mosque				
Abou Abdellah Cherif Tilimsani Mosque				
Sidi El Ouzzane Mosque				
Sidi Zekri Mosque				
Sidi El Djebbar Mosque				
Sidi Lahcen Errachidi Mosque				
Civic monuments				
Palaces	Houses	Fondouks (Hotels)	Ferrane (Traditionnal word-fired Oven)	Moorish Bath
Nationally classified				
El Mechouar Palace				
Palace of sultan Abi El Hassen Ali Elmarini (Sidi Boumediene)				
Proposed for classification by the commission composed of the Culture Department and OGEBC				
	Mohammed Dib House			Hammam Essabaghin

Unclassified				
	Sidi Elheubek House	Fondouk Roumana	Ferrane Haret E'rma	
	Houses in the traditional district of BabZir	Fondouk Ben Mansour	Ferrane Ouled Imam	
		Fondouk Chiali	Ferrane Selka	
			Ferrane Essalihin	
Souks and Squares				
Souks (markets)		Squares		
Proposed for classification by the commission composed of the Culture Department and OGEBC				
Elquaysariya		Emir Abdelkader Square		
		Bachir Ibrahimi Square		
Unclassified				
		Bab Zir Square		
Defensive fortifications				
Classified				
Mansourah Walls and its remains				
Bab Quarmadine				
Bab Khemis				
Agadir remains				
Proposed for classification by the commission composed of the Culture Department and OGEBC				
Bab (Gate) Lahdid				

Source: Directorate for the Inventory of Protected Cultural assets, 2018: 34-42 and authors' elaboration.

Based on the above information, we were able to make an assessment of historic buildings and sites in order to determine the importance of attractions in the city of Tlemcen according to their state of conservation, their potential to be used, their potential to be attractive, and their historical and aesthetic values. We were inspired by the criteria utilized in evaluating tourist attractions mentioned by Bolaños and Heredia (2014). Respondents were asked to assign a score from 1 to 5 reflecting their personal opinions and knowledge.

According to the respondents, it turned out that the listed monuments are among the most emblematic ones of the city, with high historical values and a significant potential to be attractive. In addition, it was noted that all the monuments and sites proposed for classification, as well as four others unclassified, require valorization, as they possess undeniable historical values and a noteworthy potential to be used and attractive despite their bad conservation state. These are Haret E'rma traditional oven (Ferrane), Fondouk (hotel) Roumana, the old houses of the traditional district of Bab Zir, the house of the Algerian writer Mohammed Dib, and Hammam Essabaghin (Table 5).

Table 5: Unclassified monuments and monuments proposed for classification which possess undeniable historical value and high potential for attractiveness and use

Historical sites and monuments with an average historical value score of more than 3	
Proposed for classification	Unclassified
Mohammed Dib House	Houses in the traditional district of Bab Zir
Hamam Essabaghin	Fondouk Roumana
Elquaysariya	Bab Zir Square
Emir Abdelkader square	
Bachir Ibrahimi Square	
Bab (Gate) Lahdid	
Historical sites and monuments with average ratings attributed to their exploitation and attractiveness potential are greater than 3	
Proposed for classification	Unclassified
Mohammed Dib House	Houses in the traditional district of Bab Zir
Hamam Essabaghin	Fondouk Roumana
Elquaysariya	Haret E'rma
Emir Abdelkader square	Bab Zir Square
Bachir Ibrahimi Square	

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that most of the actors participating in the survey emphasized heritage diversity; they also included some historical public squares.

In addition, all actors expressed their agreement to integrate the Tourism Office, museums, craft center and recreational areas, such as the Lalla Setti Plateau and the Great Basin (Grand Bassin), in the proposed routes.

All these data regarding the classification of the Ministry of Culture and unclassified monuments which are worth being valorized and visited are then introduced into the collaborative interactive map created by Google My Maps; this map is then shared with the respondents in order to make the proposal of CTRs easier.

With regard to intangible heritage, it must be noted that this type of heritage is present in force through the traditions and customs of the city. It is also noticed through the local musical art which is well known under the label of Andalusian Music (Tourism Office, 1994). It should be noted that this invaluable heritage is jealously preserved and kept up by the various musical associations that make up the prestigious Andalusian music school of Tlemcen. The traditional culinary art is also included in the inventory of the undeniable intangible heritage of the city.

Moreover, traditional craftsmanship is certainly the most tangible expression of intangible cultural heritage; it represents the major asset of the intangible heritage of the city of Tlemcen. According to data from the Chamber of Crafts of the city of Tlemcen, traditional crafts, such as wood engraving, forging, fantasy, embroidery, sewing, weaving of traditional Mensouj and El-Hambel (Algerian-Moroccan wool carpet), pottery, brassware and zellige (small ceramic tiles) still exist until today.

Step 3: Animation of the buildings

The actors all insisted, through their responses, on bringing these inactive buildings back to life, through:

- Projecting intangible heritage into tangible cultural heritage. This can be done for example by programming public workshops that combine several activities such as the integration of traditional crafts, local gastronomy, Andalusian music, and Haouzi (a popular urban local music).
- Incorporating activities and functions compatible with the building, such as three-dimensional virtual representations.
- Planning theatrical presentations on the history of Tlemcen and its monuments.

Step 4: Community participation

Given the non-involvement of local population in the design of the tourist routes, it seemed useful to us to propose a semi-directive interview with them.

To do this, it was essential to reach the maximum number of representatives of the different categories of the population. It should be noted that the perception of historic buildings can be influenced by the age variable, and therefore the stratified sampling turned out to be quite appropriate so one can reach the different groups of the population. The following table gives an overview of the target sample.

Table 6: Composition of the study sample

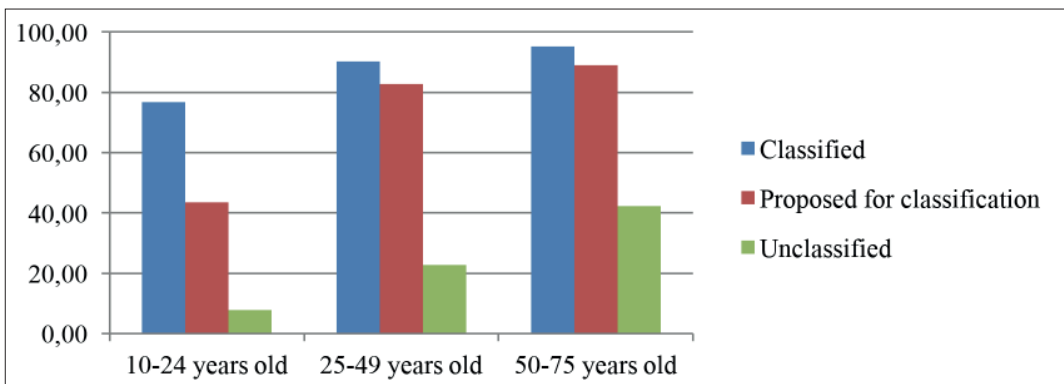
Age groups	Number of individuals in the population of Tlemcen	Percentage of each population stratum	Number of individuals in the sample
From 10 to 24 years old	49 405	29.33%	44 people
From 25 to 49 years old	75 890	45.33%	68 people
From 50 to 75 years old	44 643	25.34%	38 people
Total	169 938	100%	150 people

Source: Technical Department in charge of Statistics, Population and Employment, 2018: 13

The semi-structured interview, which focused on two main points, produced the following results:

- The proposal to create a tangible cultural tourist route reinforced by intangible heritage (local gastronomy, traditional dress, crafts, etc.) was unanimously approved by those interviewed.
- Regarding the monuments proposed by the targeted local population for a tourist visit, it turned out that this visit generally concerns classified monuments. These are building that are usually recognized by the host population as important for their historical and cultural values. One can also mention in this respect the Complex of Sidi Boumediene, the Great Mosque, and the Palace of El Mechouar. It should be noted that different age groups of the local population suggested other unclassified monuments but which are actually proposed for classification. People within the age range from 25 to 75 seem to be more aware and better informed about unclassified or unlisted buildings (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Percentage of different age groups of the indigenous population who agreed to include classified monuments, which were proposed for classification and unclassified monuments



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Step 5: Involvement of the private sector

Moreover, as long as indigenous cultural and artistic experiences represent an integral part of the itinerary, local artisans of Tlemcen were asked to give their views and opinions. Table 7 lists the number of craftsmen according to the 2021 census.

Table 7: Census of handicrafts artisans in the Wilaya (Province) and Municipality of Tlemcen

Number of individual craftsmen inventoried in the Wilaya (Province) of Tlemcen	Number of individual craftsmen inventoried in the Municipality of Tlemcen	Number of craft associations operating in the Wilaya (Province) of Tlemcen
11 823	1 764	04

Source: Department of Tourism and Handicrafts (2021)

Furthermore, a simple random sampling comprising 100 craftsmen from the town of Tlemcen was carried out with 25% dressmakers, 15% weavers of Mensouj, 10% weavers of El Hambel, 14% embroiderers, 14% makers of fancy pieces, 7 % coppersmiths, 5% wood engravers, 5% Zellige makers, and 5% potters. The semi-structured interview conducted with the craftsmen focused on the following points:

- Assessment of their willingness to participate in exhibition events of the intangible heritage of the city of Tlemcen.
- Evaluation of their willingness to offer their learning experience of their know-how in local cultural art to tourists.

It turned out that 81% of the interviewed craftsmen were ready to participate in the exhibition events of the intangible heritage of the city of Tlemcen and 69% of them were willing to offer tourists an indigenous learning experience of their know-how, in their own workshops or in craft training centers.

Therefore, it can be said that craftsmen generally showed great interest in sharing their learning experience and know-how.

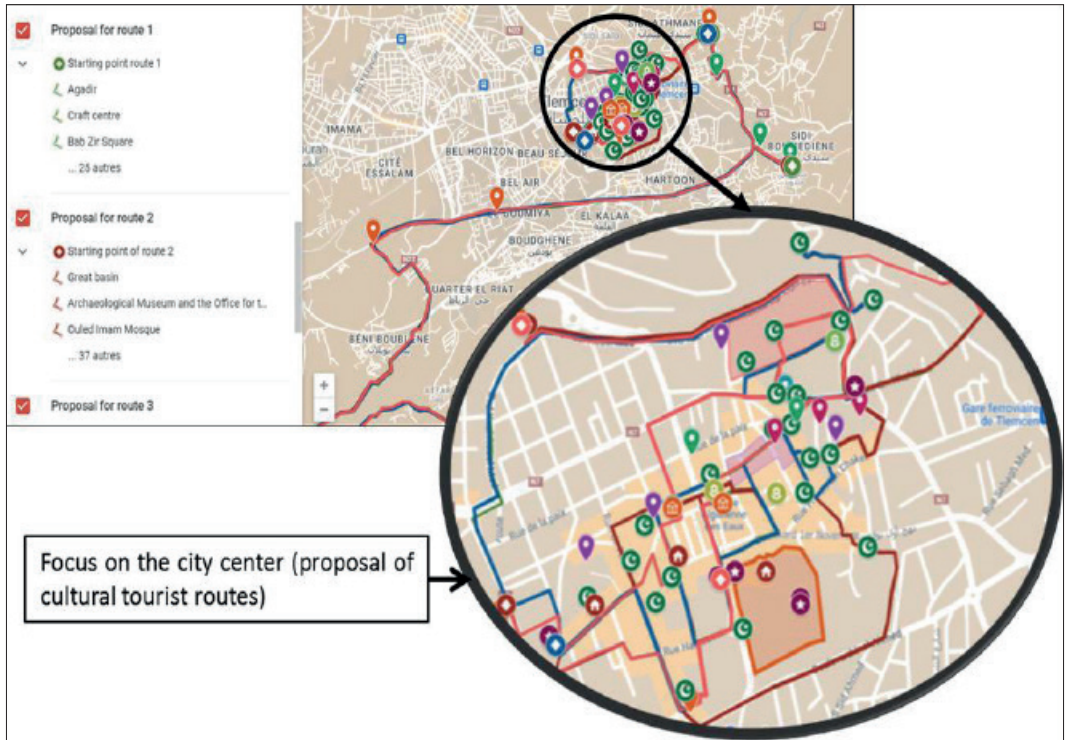
5. Main results and discussion

The last step made it possible to illustrate the results relating to the creation of CTRs using the collaborative interactive map by means of Google My Maps. It is worth recalling that Google My Maps is part of the personalized geographic web services. Its interest lies in particular in the possibility of offering users the possibility of manipulating a set of geospatial data, producing and distributing content, and creating maps as well. Thus, the digital map then changes status and becomes both interactive and dynamic; it can turn into a multimedia tool that can easily be shared on social media (Mericskay & Roche, 2010).

In the present context, it is actually about locating the inventoried monuments, recreational areas, museums, centers of craft trades, exhibition spaces as well as favorable places to obtain information about the city.

The data collected during previously established surveys, like the classification of classified monuments and recognized as such by the host population, unclassified monuments and those proposed for classification and which have a high potential of use and attractiveness and show considerable historical values in addition to other unclassified monuments, have been introduced into the collaborative interactive map which was then communicated to the respondents.

Map 2: Introduction of data in the collaborative interactive map and proposals for CTRs by the actors participating in the collaborative interactive map



Source: Elaborated by the authors

The banner on the left of the collaborative interactive map of Google My Maps shows the collected data that were required for the respondents during the surveys carried out beforehand and the different possibilities of carrying out a CTR (Map 2). To the right of this same figure, the geographical map of Tlemcen is clearly illustrated with the routes suggested by the respondents.

The superposition of the proposed cultural tourist routes allowed confirming that:

- All respondents proposed two routes. The first route for downtown Tlemcen; it is traveled on foot and mainly encompasses the Almoravid and Zianid monuments. The second is by vehicle; it connects the sites and monuments of the Marinid dynasty to the outskirts of the city center.
- 88% of respondents suggested that the route traveled on foot should be a loop (circuit).

We were also able to bring out the common sites that were suggested by all the respondents. These are the salient and invariant sites which highlight the common portion of the route.

Table 8: Invariant sites representing the common part of the proposed CTRs

Invariant sites representing the common portion of CTRs	
Historical monuments and sites	Others (recreational areas, museums, etc.)
The Great Mosque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Museum of Art and History of Tlemcen (Formerly Town Hall) – Archaeological Museum (Formerly Medersa Techfiniya) – Museum of Islamic Calligraphy (Formerly Sidi Belahcen Mosque) – Crafts Center of Tlemcen – Tourist Office of Tlemcen – Lalla Setti Plateau – Great Basin (Grand Bassin)
Ouled Imam mosque	
Sidi Brahim mosque	
El Mechouar	
Sidi Boumediene Complex	
Mansourah	
Bab Karmadine	
Bab El Khemis	
Remains of Agadir	
Traditional district of Bab Zir	
Mohammed Dib House	
Hammam Essabaghin	
El quaysariya market	
Fondouk Roumana	
Traditional oven (Ferrane) Haret E'rma	
Emir Abdelkader Square	
Bab Zir Square	
Bachir Ibrahimi Square	

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The prominent invariant sites do not only include the monuments and classified sites of the city of Tlemcen; they also encompass a diversity of heritage. They thus include all the monuments proposed for classification, except the Bab Lahdid Tower, as well as the unclassified ones that have a high potential for attractiveness and use with an unquestionable historical value. In this regard, one may for example mention Hammam Essabaghine, fondouk Roumana and Ferrane Haret E'rma which, even though they are in a dilapidated state, they are included in the proposed CTRs because they allow tourists to better understand the composition and structure of the ancient city of Tlemcen. It should also be noted that the traditional district of Bab Zir, which encompasses traditional houses that still keep the typical hallmark of the Zyaniid period house, was also included in CTRs as it represents the oldest district of the city of Tlemcen.

Furthermore, according to Mr. A. Chiali, architect-restorer (54 years old), *“The composition of the old district of the city of Tlemcen represents in itself a historical curiosity that attracts tourists. One cannot visit mosques, which are preserved in quite good condition, and neglect the rest of the components of the district such as the Ferrane, the house, the Hammam, and the gathering square.”*

For the respondents, the historical squares represent open-air exhibition areas. It should be noted that around the year 1975, according to the testimonies of the artisans of the city, the Bachir Ibrahimi Square was an area for the exhibition of artisanal products.

Furthermore, the intangible heritage is also omnipresent in the CTRs, not only by the inclusion of El Mechouar as an invariant monument encompassing a large exhibition hall of traditional handicrafts, but also by the incorporation of the Handicrafts Center. Indeed, in this monument, there are several workshops with craftsmen practicing their activities. These artisans all accepted, during the survey carried out with the craftsmen, to offer a learning experience of their know-how to tourists.

Figure 2: Exhibition hall of handicrafts - El Mechouar



Source: Elaborated by authors (2022)

Figure 3: Sewing of traditional outfits



Figure 4: Weaving of Hambel



Figure 5: Embroidery



Figure 4: Weaving of Hambel



Source: Elaborated by authors (2022)

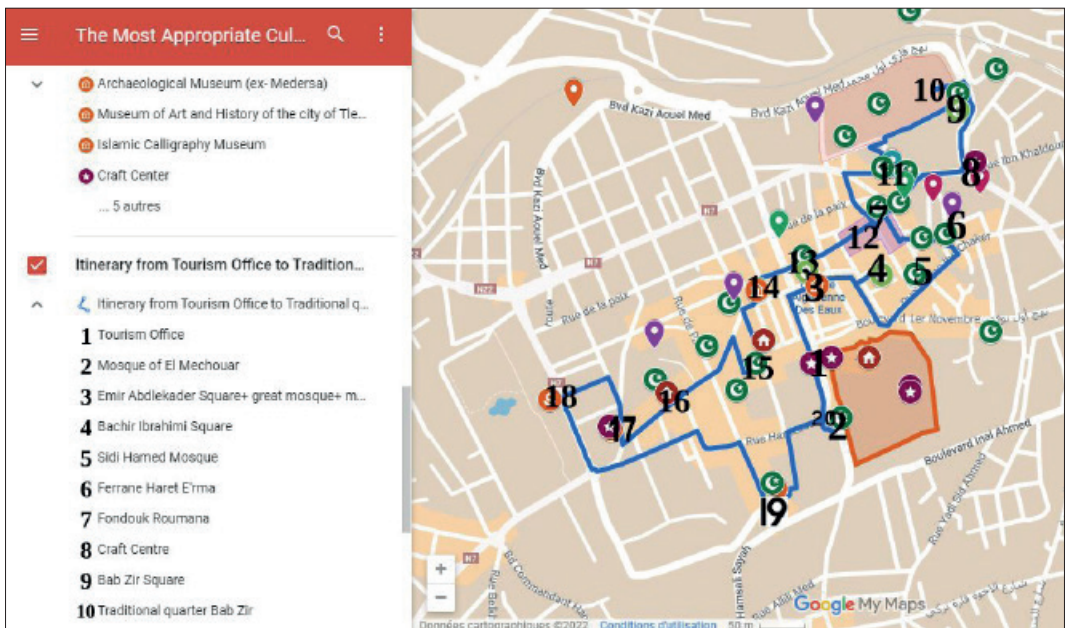
Regarding the starting points of the proposed CTRs, 57% of the respondents chose the Tourist Office as the starting point of the loop circuit for the city center of Tlemcen, 14 % preferred the Archaeological Museum and the Office for Management and Exploitation of Cultural Assets, 17% wanted to start their journey from the Great Basin (Grand Bassin), while only 12% suggested starting from the remains of Agadir.

However, for the second route, which is completed by vehicle, it turned out that 74% of the respondents opted to start the route from Bab El Karmadine, 14% from the remains of Agadir, and 12% from Sidi Boumedienne Complex.

Finally, the superposition of the proposed routes allowed us to choose the most appropriate routes, i.e. the city center and the outskirts routes¹, not only because they were suggested by a large number of respondents but rather because the criteria the respondents based their proposals were quite reasonable and legitimate, such as, for example, the proximity of the starting points to the parking areas and the layout of the sites to be visited.

It is important to mention that proposed CTRs include all classified monuments, monuments proposed for classification, as well as those not classified yet but which require enhancement and valorized because they have undeniable historical values and significant potential for use and attractiveness. The cultural activities organized and programmed within the buildings are also visible on the collaborative interactive map in the descriptive part of the buildings. This would certainly facilitate the difficult task of planning tourist destinations and activities by the tourists themselves who, while visiting an unfamiliar place, must spend some time compiling information on available tourist resources in order to plan their tourist itinerary (Exposito et al., 2019).

Map 3: The most suitable route from the city center of Tlemcen on Google My Maps



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2022)

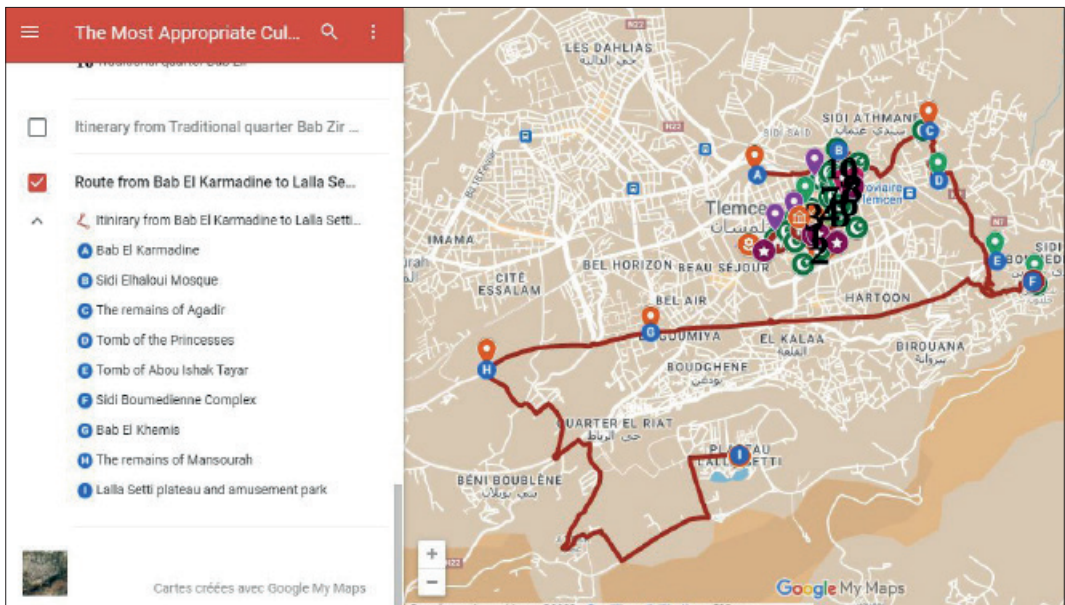
The most suitable road from the city center is 5 000 meters long. Its starting point is the Tourist Office which is considered as the ideal starting point due to its proximity to the parking areas. At the Tourist Office, tourists can also get interesting information before they start their journey; they can consult the city’s tourist brochures as well. The second building that is worth visiting is El Mechouar which hosts the Office of Tourist Guides. Then, from there, the city center route can be completed.

The second route, which covers a distance of 15000 meters, is traveled by vehicle or tourist bus; it starts from Bab El Karmadine, then the sites of the Marinid Dynasty, namely the remains of Agadir,

Sidi Boumedienne Complex, Bab Khemis and Mansourah, and to finish with the recreational area of Latta Setti Plateau which offers a global and splendid view of the city.

It should be pointed out that the process proposed for the creation of CTRs is inspired by the methodological approaches that are mentioned in the literature review. It retraces in a well-defined way all the valid phases for the development of CTRs while taking into account the fundamental and essential elements for their creation. The elements, such as coordination, community participation, private sector involvement, and promotion, are explicitly detailed in the literature review. It should be noted that despite their interest and benefits, they have not been applied in an integrated, complete and detailed manner (Garrido et al., 2015).

Map 4: The most suitable route, by vehicle, linking the sites and monuments of the Marinid Dynasty



Source: Elaborated by the authors

We do agree with Bolanos and Herida (2014) and Garrido et al. (2015) on the point that it is essential not only to identify the tourist potential of a region but also to assess it. As previously done by Bolanos and Heredia (2014), we contacted some groups of the host population, not only to collect information on cultural resources, but also to assess their perception of what they consider as tourism products. To have a final consensus on the proposed CTRs, Google My Maps proved to be the most appropriate tool since it facilitates coordination between several remote actors, unlike the participatory ground mapping that was used by Blangy et al. (2010) which requires the grouping of actors for several days.

6. Conclusion

In order to gain advantage of CTRs, they must be consciously thought out. In the case of the city of Tlemcen, the CTRs, which were proposed during the event "*Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture*" in 2011, were unfortunately not based on a well-reasoned strategy upstream that could ensure their concretization. In this context, Del Pilar Hurtado-Yugcha et al. (2022) pointed out that it is difficult to succeed in the management and development of tourism without planning. On the other hand, the main parameters and criteria, such as coordination, cooperation, community participation, involvement of the private sector and, above all, information and promotion which are essential conditions for attracting tourists and visitors, for the creation of tourist routes were not respected.

Furthermore, the intangible heritage, which is generally sought after by the majority of tourists, is not highlighted due to the lack of contribution of local producers and craftsmen who can offer invaluable Indigenous cultural and artistic experiences to tourists.

It is also worth emphasizing that in order to design a CTR, it is highly recommended to define the different steps to follow, such as the determination of stakeholders in the tourism and cultural field to ensure good coordination, identification of tourism products of the city in consultation with the local population, involvement of the private sector elements, mainly artists and artisans. It should also be mentioned that the process suggested for the creation of CTRs ought to address all deficiencies that were found in those proposed by the National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Property (OGEBEC) during the event “Tlemcen, capital of Islamic culture” in 2011, in Tlemcen. This simplified protocol represents a very important decision support tool for politicians and local authorities when it comes to planning CTRs.

The CTRs developed through Google My Maps as well as the established map can therefore be used as a reliable database by tourism organisms in the city of Tlemcen. They can also be published on the official website of the Tourist Office so it becomes accessible to tourists. This map has the advantage of being able to be updated at any time in order to make it visible to managers and to the public in general.

The superposition and comparison of the proposed CTRs made it possible to identify and retain the most appropriate routes. However, this proposal should be flexible because it is not a question of strictly following recommendations but rather drawing inspiration from them in order to determine and establish the most suitable itinerary for the desired practices and experiences. The layout of the route can therefore be changed according to the wishes of visitors. The most important thing is that the points of interest must be situated and classified. Likewise, the events that are scheduled in the buildings of the CTRs ought to be identified and inventoried as well.

If this approach did not take into account all the factors involved in the CTR, it suggests complementary research in order to apply this approach to similar cases of historical and tourist cities, in Algeria or in other countries with regard to tourism infrastructure (catering and accommodation) which may have an impact on CTR design. Moreover, though our study was limited to a city case, the suggested approach can be, as indicated in the above literature, a framework that could integrate deprived rural areas that possess an interesting cultural potential.

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Note

Link to the collaborative interactive map produced by the authors on Google My Maps. It shows the tourist map of the city of Tlemcen (Algeria) with the two conclusive CTRs resulting from the survey: <https://urlz.fr/jb0W>

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