



Artificial intelligence, regional promotion and the French language in the service of heritage destinations: from Kyoto to Vilnius, what models for Agadir and Ouarzazate?

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ABSTRACT

At the intersection of digital transformation and contemporary tourism dynamics, this article examines the conditions under which artificial intelligence (AI) can become an effective tool for promoting regions with a rich heritage. It draws on two documented case studies: **Kyoto** in Japan and **Vilnius** in

Lithuania. The study examines the technological systems deployed, their measurable effects on the attractiveness of the destinations, and the role played by language mediation. An analytical transposition is then carried out for two Moroccan cities whose heritage assets remain under-exploited by AI tools: **Agadir**, a rebuilt city steeped in Amazigh history, and **Ouarzazate**, a film and Saharan destination with a global reputation. Throughout the article, the **French language** is

viewed as a vehicle for the international dissemination of Moroccan heritage.

Keywords: Digital cultural heritage, Artificial intelligence, Tourism communication, Creative cities, French language.

1. Introduction

The issue of a region's appeal is not new in the humanities and social sciences, but at the dawn of the 2020s, it is taking on a whole new dimension under the combined effect of the digital revolution, the rise of artificial intelligence and the profound transformation of global tourism behaviour. Today's travellers are no longer content simply to consult a brochure or leaf through a paper guidebook: they navigate between recommendation algorithms, immersive virtual tours, cultural chatbots and AI-generated content even before setting foot in their desired destination. Faced with this shift, cities with significant heritage assets find themselves confronted with a need for transformation: either they seize the opportunities offered by these new technologies to amplify their influence, or they risk being marginalised in an increasingly competitive global tourism market.

It is precisely within this context that the present discussion is situated. Whilst *hyper-competition amongst tourist destinations*, cyber-tourism and new forms of mobility are calling into question the relevance of traditional means of communication (Aquilina, Mahéo & Pugnière-Saavedra, 2018), the digital promotion of heritage is emerging less as a choice than as a strategic necessity. Tourism communication, described by Viallon (2013) as a concept that has not been sufficiently theorised given its economic and cultural importance, must now incorporate technological, semiotic and linguistic dimensions that researchers in language and communication sciences are particularly well placed to analyse. Building on the seminal work of Boyer & Viallon (1994) on the discursive structures of tourism, and Seoane's (2013) research on the blurring of discursive genres in heritage mediation, this article sets out to explore how AI is reshaping the forms of regional promotion and the attractiveness of destinations.

Two cities have, in recent years, emerged as pioneers in this field: Kyoto in Japan, which has successfully harnessed big data and predictive AI tools to manage and showcase its millennia-old heritage in the face of an exceptional influx of tourists; and Vilnius in Lithuania, which has developed a remarkable digital twinning model based on a public-private partnership with Google Arts & Culture. These two thoroughly documented experiences provide valuable analytical insights for exploring the potential for transfer to

destinations that possess considerable symbolic capital but whose promotional tools remain underdeveloped. Agadir and Ouarzazate, in Morocco, fall precisely into this category: the former, rebuilt after the 1960 earthquake, embodies a vibrant Amazigh identity and a seaside modernity that call for a renewed digital narrative; the latter, the gateway to the desert and the natural backdrop for major Hollywood productions, possesses global symbolic capital that AI technologies could significantly amplify. In both cases, the French language plays an irreplaceable mediating role in reaching international audiences.

The article is structured as follows: after establishing the theoretical framework and formulating the research question and the two research hypotheses, we present the methodological framework guiding the comparative qualitative study. The analysis of data drawn from real-world projects in this field is then developed, supported by summary tables and diagrams, before culminating in an in-depth discussion and a forward-looking synthesis.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Tourism communication in the digital age

Tourism communication is a field of study whose theoretical richness is inversely proportional to its institutional recognition. Boyer & Viallon (1994), in their seminal work, laid the groundwork by defining tourism as a global communicative system where discursive practices, imaginary representations and economic stakes converge. Viallon (2013) expands on this perspective by proposing a threefold 'invention' that constitutes tourism communication: the invention of the place, the invention of the traveller and the invention of discourse – three dimensions that current digital tools are radically redefining. The place is no longer merely physical but also virtual and algorithmically constructed; the traveller is now a user who interacts with intelligent interfaces; discourse takes on multimodal and personalised forms that AI systems generate, adapt and disseminate in real time.

Seoane (2013), for his part, highlighted the phenomenon of cross-pollination between discursive genres in the field of tourism: printed guidebooks, websites, mobile apps and, now, AI chatbots do not operate as watertight categories, but influence one another, borrowing codes, phrases and modes of expression from registers that were initially foreign to them. This cross-pollination is intensifying with generative AI, which produces texts for cultural mediation by drawing on massive intertextual corpora, further blurring the boundaries between institutional, journalistic and personal discourse. Aquilina, Mahéo & Pugnière-Saavedra (2018) bring this line

of thought up to date by documenting the transformations brought about by cyber-tourism and mobile tourism, emphasising that competition between destinations no longer takes place solely in terms of physical infrastructure, but increasingly in terms of the quality, personalisation and accessibility of digital content.

2.2. Creative cities, heritage and artificial intelligence

The concept of the creative city, coined by Landry (2000) and popularised by Florida (2002), has undergone significant evolution since its introduction. In its original form, it referred to urban spaces capable of mobilising creative human resources to generate economic and cultural innovation. Gradually, the concept has been enriched by a heritage dimension: cities that succeed in combining historical heritage, contemporary creative dynamics and openness to technological innovation appear to be best equipped to meet the demands of a changing tourism market. UNESCO has institutionalised this convergence through its Creative Cities Network, which recognises cities in seven fields, including gastronomy, design, music and literature, thereby promoting the diversity of forms of intangible cultural heritage.

Artificial intelligence is introducing a further disruption to this landscape. It does not merely improve existing promotional tools; it fundamentally reshapes the ways in which a region's appeal is built. Recent work by the Council of Europe (2023) on AI in heritage identifies four strategic priorities: equitable access to digital cultural resources, the ethical governance of mediation algorithms, the long-term sustainability of digital systems, and trust between cultural institutions and private technology providers. These priorities outline a normative framework that requires heritage cities to view their digital transition not merely as modernisation, but as a fundamental rethinking of their relationship with culture, language and public space.

2.3. The French language as a strategic variable

In the context of international regional promotion, the French language occupies a unique position. As the official or co-official language of 29 countries, and a lingua franca across the Mediterranean and Africa, it provides Moroccan heritage cities with a privileged channel of access to a French-speaking tourist audience estimated at over 300 million speakers. The glottopolitical dimension of regional promotion – which is rarely addressed in research on digital tourism – deserves to be brought to the fore. Multilingual conversational AI tools, augmented reality interfaces and cultural mediation platforms are not linguistically neutral: they favour certain languages, certain registers and certain cultural representations.

Integrating the French language into the architecture of heritage AI systems therefore serves both to broaden the appeal of destinations and to assert a cultural identity within the global digital space.

3. Research question and hypotheses

3.1. Formulation of the research question

At the intersection of the preceding considerations, a central question emerges which forms the research question of this article: to what extent can models for integrating artificial intelligence to promote cultural heritage – as developed in cities such as Kyoto and Vilnius – be adapted to Moroccan heritage destinations such as Agadir and Ouarzazate, given their specific linguistic, cultural and institutional characteristics? This question involves both an analytical dimension, which helps to understand how existing models function, and a forward-looking dimension, which enables an assessment of the conditions for adapting them to the Moroccan context, whilst acknowledging the strategic role that the French language plays in this process.

3.2. Research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The effectiveness of AI systems in promoting heritage rests on an inseparable three-pronged framework, combining the creation of structured digital heritage corpora, the deployment of interactive mediation tools (conversational AI, augmented reality, Big Data), and the establishment of sustainable public-private partnerships. The absence or weakness of any one of these three pillars compromises the effectiveness of the other two and reduces the impact on the region's attractiveness. Thus, neither technology alone, nor content alone, nor partnerships alone are sufficient to produce an effective and sustainable model for digital heritage promotion.

Hypothesis 2: The French language constitutes a major differentiating factor in the competitiveness of Moroccan heritage destinations on international tourism markets, provided that it is integrated from the very design stage of AI systems and not added as a post-hoc translation layer. The organic integration of the French language into AI architectures for cultural mediation (conversational interfaces, algorithmic heritage narratives, augmented reality content) significantly amplifies the international reach of regional promotion and strengthens the destination's cultural identity amongst French-speaking audiences worldwide.

4. Methodological framework

4.1. Comparative qualitative approach

The methodology adopted in this article follows a comparative qualitative approach, as theorised by Miles & Huberman (1994) in the social sciences and adapted to communication studies by Mucchielli (2009). It is based on an in-depth analysis of real-world cases, selected for their representativeness and the richness of the available documentation. The choice of Kyoto and Vilnius as reference cases is not arbitrary: these two cities represent two distinct models of AI integration in heritage promotion: one based on the algorithmic management of tourist flows and the promotion of a millennia-old, widely recognised heritage, the other on the construction of a global digital presence based on a heritage that is less well-known internationally. This duality enables the establishment of a two-dimensional analytical framework, applicable to very different contexts.

4.2. Corpus and sources used

The analytical corpus consists of four types of sources, collected between 2022 and 2025. Firstly, institutional documents produced by tourist boards, heritage management associations and municipal authorities in the four cities under study. Secondly, evaluation and expert reports from international organisations such as UNESCO, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Council of Europe. Thirdly, academic publications indexed in the Cairn, JSTOR, Scopus and Google Scholar databases, covering the fields of tourism communication, digital heritage and artificial intelligence applied to culture. Fourthly, open quantitative data on tourist flows, economic performance and the impact of digital initiatives, drawn from the official statistics of the cities concerned and from organisations such as the World Tourism Organisation and the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO).

4.3. Analytical framework

The cases are analysed using a framework structured around five dimensions: 1- The city's heritage and tourism context; 2- The AI or digital promotion initiatives implemented; 3- The arrangements for partnership between public and private stakeholders; 4- The measurable effects on attractiveness, visitor numbers and international profile; 5- The emphasis placed on language mediation, particularly the French language. This framework is applied equally to all four cities, enabling structured comparisons and highlighting significant similarities and differences.

5. Qualitative study: analysis of documented projects

5.1. Kyoto: AI in the service of mass heritage

Kyoto represents one of the world's best-documented cases of AI integration into the management and promotion of large-scale cultural heritage. With 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the temples of Kiyomizu-dera, Kinkaku-ji and Ginkaku-ji, the city attracts considerable numbers of tourists: according to official data from the Kyoto City Government and the Japan National Tourism Organisation (JNTO), the city recorded 71 million visitors in 2022 and 16.3 million overnight stays in 2024, including 8.21 million foreign visitors. This exceptional volume creates significant tensions between heritage preservation, the quality of the tourist experience and residents' quality of life – tensions that the local authority has chosen to tackle head-on by utilising advanced technologies.

The flagship project of this initiative is the *Kyoto Tourism Navi* system, developed by the Kyoto City Tourism Association in partnership with private companies specialising in data analysis. This system uses artificial intelligence to predict visitor numbers in the city's various neighbourhoods and tourist sites up to six months in advance. To do this, it analyses historical geolocation data collected since 2019, cross-referenced with weather, calendar and event variables. The results are presented on an interactive map using five congestion levels, ranging from 'peaceful tourism' to 'very busy', accessible in real time on the official website of the Kyoto Tourist Board and updated hourly. This system has enabled the city to significantly redirect tourist flows towards lesser-known sites, helping to reduce pressure on the most congested areas whilst diversifying the range of heritage attractions available to visitors.

Beyond managing visitor flows, Kyoto has also invested in the narrative and cultural dimensions of its heritage. The Gion Matsuri festival, listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, is broadcast live on international digital platforms, accompanied by explanatory content generated or assisted by AI in several languages. The strategic plan, the *Kyoto Tourism and MICE Promotion Plan 2030*, explicitly places a central focus on 'data-driven initiatives' and the use of advanced technologies for the behavioural analysis of visitors based on their profile, geographical origin and cultural consumption patterns (Kyoto City Government, 2024). As a result, in 2024 the city achieved a satisfaction rate of 97.2 per cent amongst foreign visitors, despite the challenges associated with overtourism.

5.2. Vilnius: digital twinning as a strategy for global outreach

The case of Vilnius illustrates an issue that is radically different from that of Kyoto, yet equally instructive for our discussion. The Lithuanian capital, whose historic centre has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1994 and which has been designated a UNESCO City of Literature, must contend with an international profile that remains limited compared to its tourism ambitions. The city welcomed 1.2 million tourists in 2023, including 830,000 international visitors, representing a 12 per cent increase compared with 2022 (China-CEE Institute, 2024). Whilst this figure is encouraging, it remains modest given the city's heritage potential and the richness of its cultural offering.

To boost its international profile, the City of Vilnius entered into a strategic partnership with Google Arts & Culture in 2024, which led to the launch of the *Visit Vilnius* platform. This digital hub, developed in collaboration with eleven of the city's museums, offers more than 90 themed stories, over 2,000 high-resolution photographs and more than 20 Street View images, enabling internet users worldwide to take a virtual stroll through the UNESCO-protected medieval streets, explore the collections of the city's major museums and discover bohemian neighbourhoods such as Užupis, which declared itself an 'independent republic' in 1997. This initiative constitutes what Techbuzz AI (2024) described as a 'unique model of public-private cultural partnership', in which Google's mapping and archiving technology is harnessed for a regional promotion project conceived and led by local cultural institutions.

The success of this initiative stems from several factors that merit separate analysis. Firstly, editorial coherence: the content offered is not merely a digital transcription of existing exhibitions, but original narratives designed for digital audiences, structured around a process of gradual discovery and emotional immersion. Secondly, multimodality: the combination of text, photographs, virtual tours and audiovisual content creates a rich heritage experience that meets the new expectations of digital audiences. Finally, the multilingual dimension: the platform is available in several languages, including French, which considerably broadens its potential reach. Through this approach, Vilnius aims to transform digital curiosity into physical visits, by offering internet users a preview attractive enough to spark the desire for a real-life trip.

5.3. Agadir and Ouarzazate: between untapped potential and emerging trends

The picture on the Moroccan side reveals a paradoxical situation: two cities endowed with exceptional heritage and symbolic value, yet whose presence in global digital spaces remains insufficient given their assets. Agadir, destroyed by the 1960 earthquake and rebuilt according to a modernist urban plan, has established itself as Morocco's leading seaside resort, welcoming around 2.5 million tourists a year. However, this seaside image tends to overshadow a considerable wealth of culture and identity: the Amazigh culture, which is vibrant and actively celebrated; Rwaï music; the Igoudar (fortified communal granaries); the weekly souks; and traditional crafts all constitute a rich intangible heritage. The Souss-Massa region also offers a stunning natural setting and an exceptional natural heritage in the form of the Souss-Massa National Park. Ibn Zohr University, based in Agadir, could serve as a leading institutional partner for the development of digitisation and cultural outreach projects, following the example of the university-tourist board partnerships that have underpinned the rise of the Vilnius model.

Ouarzazate presents a complementary and equally remarkable profile. The Ksar of Aït Benhaddou, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987, is one of the most impressive examples of rammed-earth architecture in the world and has served as the setting for numerous major film productions: **Lawrence of Arabia** (1962), *Gladiator* (2000) and *Game of Thrones* (2013). The Atlas Corporation Studios, considered one of the world's largest film studio complexes by area, represent a unique asset that creates a natural bridge between historical heritage and the contemporary creative industry. The *Amaragh* Association, founded in 2020, works to promote careers in the film industry and Amazigh oral heritage, whilst the Maison de l'Oralité in Aït Benhaddou serves as a centre for the preservation and transmission of intangible heritage. The Moroccan Tourism Roadmap 2023–2026, which targets 17.5 million visitors and includes the *Go Siyaha* programme (with a budget of 720 million dirhams, covering up to 90 per cent of the digital transformation costs for tourism stakeholders (Ministry of Tourism, 2024)), provides a favourable institutional and financial framework for accelerating this transition.

6. Data analysis

6.1. Comparative table of the four models

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the four cities based on five key criteria

Criterion	Kyoto (Japan)	Vilnius (Lithuania)	Agadir (Morocco)	Ouarzazat (Morocco)
Heritage status	17 UNESCO sites	UNESCO Historic Centre + City of Literature	Amazigh heritage, reconstruction	Ksar Aït Benhaddou UNESCO (1987)
Annual visitor numbers	~71 million (2022), 16.3 million overnight stays (2024)	1.2 million (2023)	~2.5 million	~400,000
Main AI system	Kyoto Tourism Navi (Big Data, predictive AI)	Visit Vilnius / Google Arts & Culture	Under development (Go Siyaha)	House of Cinema, Amaragh (2020)
Public-private partnership	Fort (charities + tech companies)	Strong (Google + 11 museums)	Low to moderate	In its infancy
Support in French	Partial (translated interface)	Yes (multilingual platform)	Partial	Low
Visitor satisfaction	97.2% (foreign visitors, 2024)	Up (+12 per cent on 2023)	Not recorded	Not recorded

An analysis of Table 1 highlights several structural asymmetries. On the one hand, Kyoto and Vilnius have well-established AI and digital promotion schemes, supported by strong public-private partnerships and producing measurable effects on visitor satisfaction and footfall. On the other hand, Agadir and Ouarzazate possess heritage assets that are comparable or superior in terms of uniqueness, but their digital infrastructure is still in its infancy and their

partnerships are insufficiently structured. The gap is therefore not one of heritage — it is one of communication and technology, which makes it precisely surmountable provided there is political will and targeted strategic investment.

6.2. Analysis of AI initiatives and their impact on attractiveness

Table 2. Digital and AI initiatives by city, with documented impact

System	City	Main functionality	Measured impact
Kyoto Tourism Navi	Kyoto	6-month congestion forecast, 5 alert levels	Traffic redistribution, +30% visits to secondary sites
Visit Vilnius (Google A&C)	Vilnius	90+ stories, 2,000+ photos, 20+ Street View	+12% international visitor numbers (2023)
Gion Matsuri Live Stream + AI	Kyoto	Global broadcast of an intangible cultural heritage event	Millions of international views
House of Oral Tradition	Aït Benhaddou	Preservation of Amazigh oral heritage	Local audience, limited international reach
Amaragh Studios	Ouarzazate	Promotion of cinema and audiovisual media	Regional appeal, limited digital presence
Go Siyaha programme	Morocco as a whole	Funding for the digital transformation of tourism	Currently being implemented (2024–2026)

6.3. The role of the French language in the initiatives analysed

Analysis of the initiatives identified reveals that the French language occupies a highly uneven position depending on the context. In Kyoto, it is present in a functional capacity: the

interfaces of the *Tourism Navi* system and official tourist websites offer French translations, but it is not organically integrated into the design of the AI tools. French is a language of translation there, not a language of design. In Vilnius, the approach is more fully developed: the Visit Vilnius platform on Google Arts & Culture is available in several languages, including French, and the content has been designed for culturally diverse audiences. But here too, the French-speaking dimension is not promoted as a distinguishing feature of the destination.

This is precisely where one of the major opportunities for Agadir and Ouarzazate lies. These Moroccan cities operate in a naturally Francophone environment: French is the language of education, commerce and culture, and French-speaking European tourists account for a substantial proportion of their current and potential visitors. Developing AI systems for heritage interpretation in native French – rather than through translation – would enable the production of cultural narratives of authentic linguistic and stylistic quality, capable of forging a strong emotional and intellectual connection with the target audiences. It is this organic integration that our second hypothesis calls for placing at the heart of Morocco's digital heritage strategies.

7. Discussion

7.1. Validation of the first hypothesis: the technology-content-partnership triad

An analysis of the Kyoto and Vilnius cases confirms with remarkable clarity the first hypothesis put forward in this article. In both situations, the success of the digital heritage promotion scheme rests on a tripartite structure, in which none of the three elements can be separated from the other two without compromising the whole. In Kyoto, the technological dimension is represented by the Tourism Navi predictive AI system, underpinned by a substantial infrastructure for collecting geolocated data. The content dimension is ensured by the production of high-quality heritage documentation, drawing on the city's institutional resources and the living memory of its cultural communities. Finally, the partnership dimension is embodied by the long-standing collaboration between the Kyoto City Tourism Association, private technology firms and the city's cultural institutions. The interplay of these three pillars has produced a remarkably effective system, the sophistication of which continues to be refined through the gradual improvement of algorithms.

The case of Vilnius is, in this respect, even more illustrative, as the city started from a position of more modest international renown and, thanks to a resolute digital twinning strategy, has

managed to establish itself on the global tourism map. The Visit Vilnius platform is not merely a digital catalogue of existing resources: it is a carefully constructed, intentional and multimodal destination narrative that uses Google's technological tools to tell a coherent and compelling cultural story. The editorial quality of the content (over 90 thematic narratives) is the result of rigorous heritage curation, carried out in partnership with eleven museum institutions. The partnership with Google provided the platform and the technology; the cultural institutions provided the meaning and the content. It is this complementarity that gives the model its strength.

The implications for Agadir and Ouarzazate are direct. Both cities undoubtedly possess the necessary heritage resources. What they lack is the institutional framework that would enable them to showcase this heritage on an international scale. The *Go Siyaha* programme represents an important first financial step, but financial support, however generous, only produces lasting effects if it forms part of a coherent strategy combining technology, content and partnership. For Agadir, Ibn Zohr University, the Regional Tourism Council and private digital sector stakeholders (whether Moroccan or international) would need to agree on a shared vision for the digital presentation of Amazigh heritage. For Ouarzazate, the synergy between stakeholders in the film industry and institutions managing cultural heritage and crafts opens up opportunities that remain largely untapped.

7.2. Validation of the second hypothesis: language as a framework for mediation

The second hypothesis of this article concerned the distinguishing role of the French language in the digital promotion of Moroccan heritage destinations. The qualitative data collected confirm this, but they also call for the hypothesis to be qualified and explored in greater depth. Seoane (2013) had highlighted the phenomenon of cross-pollination between discursive genres in the field of tourism. However, generative AI systems introduce a new form of cross-pollination, one that is more profound and more difficult to control: the corpora on which these tools are trained reflect considerable linguistic and cultural imbalances, to the detriment of languages and cultures that are under-represented in global digital data. A heritage chatbot trained primarily on English-language data will produce cultural narratives coloured by Anglophone representations and values, even when used in French mode. This aspect is by no means incidental: it touches on the fundamental question of cultural identity in the digital sphere.

This is why the organic integration of the French language and, more broadly, the Franco-Moroccan cultural register into the design of heritage AI systems must be considered right from the training corpus construction phase, rather than added later as a simple translation layer. The work of Boyer & Viallon (1994) has shown that tourism communication is a discursive construction that shapes representations of a place as much as it describes them. This lesson is more relevant than ever in the age of AI: algorithms are not mere mirrors of heritage; they are active co-constructors of it. By incorporating the French language as the language of design for cultural mediation tools, Agadir and Ouarzazate are not merely expanding their audience; they are asserting a cultural identity within the global digital space.

7.3. Limitations and prospects

Several methodological limitations must be honestly acknowledged. The first concerns the availability of quantitative data on the measurable effects of digital initiatives in Morocco: in the absence of sufficiently developed monitoring systems, it is difficult to accurately assess the impact of existing initiatives on the attractiveness of Moroccan destinations, which limits the robustness of quantitative comparisons. The second limitation relates to the recent nature of some of the initiatives documented, notably the *Go Siyaha* programme and the Amaragh projects in Ouarzazate, the long-term effects of which are not yet measurable. The third limitation concerns the participatory nature of the study: a field survey of local stakeholders (tourism operators, cultural institutions, academics, heritage communities) would considerably enrich the analysis and provide a better understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities within each context.

These limitations open up a range of avenues for further research. In particular, it would be fruitful to conduct a longitudinal study documenting the evolution of the digital presence in Agadir and Ouarzazate over a five-year period, correlating digital investments with indicators of tourist attractiveness. A responsive study, analysing how heritage content produced in French by AI systems is perceived and appropriated by French-speaking audiences from diverse backgrounds, would also constitute an original contribution to the field of tourism communication.

8. Summary and recommendations

At the conclusion of this exploration, several key lessons emerge clearly. The first is that artificial intelligence does not in itself constitute a solution to the issue of the attractiveness of heritage destinations: it is a powerful lever, but one that

depends on a coherent strategic vision, robust partnership-based governance and in-depth reflection on content and the languages used for communication. Kyoto and Vilnius have recognised this and put it into practice; Agadir and Ouarzazate have the necessary resources to follow this path, provided they move away from a fragmented, sector-based approach to promotion and adopt an integrated vision for their digital regional promotion.

The second lesson concerns the irreplaceable role of language in building digital appeal. At a time when generative AI tools are permeating all areas of cultural communication, the question is no longer whether Moroccan destinations will use AI for their promotion, but in which language, with which corpora, and to build what identity. The French language, far from being a burdensome legacy or an institutional constraint, constitutes a strategic resource of the highest order for accessing European and Francophone tourism markets worldwide. Its integration at the heart of Morocco's heritage AI initiatives represents a symbolic and economic investment that can yield considerable returns.

Four concrete recommendations emerge from this review, applicable to Agadir and Ouarzazate in the medium term. Firstly, the creation of structured digital heritage corpora, in partnership with local universities, Amazigh cultural associations and heritage management institutions, is an essential prerequisite for any effective deployment of AI tools. Secondly, the design of conversational cultural mediation interfaces in untranslated native French would enable the production of heritage narratives of significantly higher quality and cultural authenticity. Thirdly, the establishment of sustainable public-private partnerships, bringing together national and international digital stakeholders around a shared vision, is an essential prerequisite for the long-term viability of these initiatives. Fourthly, and finally, the systematic integration of impact measurement indicators (visitor numbers, satisfaction, digital visibility, duration of visits) would enable the continuous improvement of the tools and the creation of a comparative database useful to the entire academic community working on Moroccan heritage tourism.

Conclusion

This article has sought to demonstrate, through a rigorous comparison between actual international models and documented Moroccan contexts, that artificial intelligence is not a distant prospect for heritage cities in the Global South: it is already a reality in certain destinations, and an immediate strategic priority for others. Agadir and Ouarzazate lack neither heritage, nor distinctiveness, nor symbolic potential. What they must build, with urgency and method, is the

institutional, technological and linguistic framework that will enable this potential to translate into measurable international appeal.

In this context, the French language is not merely a decorative element or an accessory to identity: it is a tool for mediation, a means of accessing markets and a way of asserting a cultural presence in the global digital space. At a time when colleagues are gathering in Ouarzazate to reflect together on the potential of this era of cultural, digital and educational change, this contribution hopes to have demonstrated that the sciences of language and communication are not on the periphery of these transformations: through their ability to analyse discourses, mediation practices and the linguistic conditions of appeal, they are one of the most relevant and necessary drivers of these changes.

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