

'You Should Not Go, it is Dangerous': (Re-)Constructions of Algeria From the Perspectives of the British Media and British Tourists

Nour-elhouda Lecheheb

University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, United Kingdom, Email, nour-elhouda.lecheheb@uws.ac.uk

Henry Maitles

University of the West of Scotland, Paisley, United Kingdom, Email, henry.maitles@uws.ac.uk

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract

Destination images have a significant impact on individuals' travel decisions. Algeria sees few foreign tourists and a large proportion of these are expatriate Algerians or traders from neighbouring countries. This research examines the formation process of Algeria's image(s), through examining the discourses of Algeria produced by the British news media between 2011 and 2019 – a negative neo-Orientalist image –, and how our participant British tourists who visited Algeria from 2011 to February 2020 challenged the news discourses of Algeria through their lived experiences, developing a counter-discourse, the discourse of Algeria-Society, that produce positive images of Algeria. Methodologically, this research is in a social constructionist tradition, adopting a qualitative approach, Foucauldian in inspiration. Said's (1978) Orientalism and the paradigm of neo-Orientalism helped situate the analysis. The research findings can serve as a useful reference for policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, as to potential ways to challenge the dominant Western discourse. Future research recommendations are suggested.

Keywords: Algeria; Western news media; (neo)Orientalism; destination image; tourists' lived experiences

Introduction

Algeria is the 10th largest country in the world in terms of size (Zoubir, 2020) with a pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history that left the country with a diverse ancient heritage. Hence, the country is distinguished by a diversified range of tourist potential, including natural, geographic and historical/cultural resources.

After its occupation by France in 1830, travel and leisure activities flourished in Algeria and were largely integrated into France's imperial project using them as propaganda for supporting its occupation of the country (Zytnicki, 2013). However, after eight years of the brutal war of independence, the Algerian tourism industry was left in a deteriorating situation (Widmann, 1976; Bennoune, 1988; Zoubir, 2001; Kouache, 2004; Abdi, 2018) and the aftermath of the war did not encourage tourists (Widmann, 1976). Although the Algerian government engaged in a series of reforms, the country still has not emerged as a tourist destination despite its varied tourism potential. The number of international tourist arrivals is still relatively low. The highest peak reached in almost two decades (2000-2019) accounts for 2.73 million in 2013 and it largely consists of Algerian repatriates or neighbouring traders (MATET, 2017; UNWTO, 2022). The number of UK tourists who visited Algeria, which is the focus of this study, is low according to data obtained from UNWTO. Despite increasing from 935 in 1995 to 9,114 in 2019, the number did not ever reach 10,000 tourists, including Algerian migrants in the UK; the two highest peaks were in 2009 and 2018 during which the number of tourist arrivals reached 9,375 and 9,969 respectively (UNWTO, 2022).

Destination image plays an important role in potential visitors' travel decision-making, and it is extensively studied in the literature. However, concerning the Algerian context, most previous studies focused on the use of secondary materials, specifically travel guidebooks, and similarly focused on a single timeframe: the 19th century and/or early 20th century. These studies either focused on the images of Algeria – or certain aspects of Algeria such as women or architecture - or examined the images of the Maghreb/North Africa in general, including Algeria produced in the (female) Western discourse of the 19th century and/or early 20th century (e.g., Heggoy et al., 1982; Alloula, 1986; Benchérif, 1997; DeRoo, 1998; Cherry, 2003; Ma, 2012; Crowley, 2017; Chamekh, 2018; Seddiki, 2019; Bia 2022). There have been studies which investigated the images of certain aspects of contemporary Algeria in Britain such as those relating to political violence (civil war) in the news discourse (e.g., Richardson, 2004; Mundy, 2010) or certain aspects such as gender, violence or religion (Islam) yet through the examination of (Algerian) postcolonial discourse such as literary works (e.g., Moore, 2003; Almond, 2007; Bergenmar, 2021). Further, the phenomenon of destination image is often examined quantitatively, and therefore there is a lack of studies that look at gaining an in-depth understanding of Algeria's destination image formation process. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by exploring the images of present Algeria from both the perception and projection perspectives relating to images of tourism. We decided to examine Algeria's images projected by the British news media as compared to the British tourists' lived experiences.

In this article, we review the pertinent literature on the concept of destination image, its importance and the formation process, with a focus on the role of news media and tourists in this process. In the methodology, we argue that social constructionism was the most suitable framework to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and that the qualitative approach is similarly best suited for achieving the aims of this study. We opted for using a mixed-method approach. Further, we used discourse analysis to help our understanding of the media. We discuss the findings obtained from the gathered data in relation to the theoretical and analytical frameworks used. Finally, we concluded by revisiting the aim of this study and summing up the findings in addition to highlighting research limitations and some important recommendations addressed to the relevant tourism stakeholders and policymakers in Algeria.

Literature review

The importance of destination image is widely acknowledged in tourism literature (Calantone et al., 1989; Gartner, 1994; Gartner, 1996; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; 1999b; Gallarza et al., 2002; Tasci et al., 2007; Park & Njite, 2010; Greaves & Skinner, 2010; Ahmad et al., 2020; Hunitie et al., 2022) and there is a consensus in tourism research that a positive destination image leads to increased tourist visitation as it positively impacts travellers' decision-making processes, particularly in the context when there is limited knowledge of a destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; 1999b; Buhalis, 2000; Hall, 2003; Uysal et al., 2011; Alcázar et al., 2014). Conversely, negative destination images are claimed to negatively affect tourists flow and “repeal” tourism development (Avraham, 2016, pp. 42-3). For this reason, the understanding of how the destination image is constructed is very important and, therefore, it is largely examined by tourism researchers and destinations promoters and managers who attempt to create an effective image(s) for their destinations amid increasing competitiveness between tourist destinations.

The concept of destination image is still “nebulous” (Hughes & Allen, 2008) which “has not been understood in a unified way” (Kim & Richardson, 2003). Some scholars consider destination image as simply the tourist's perceived image, residing in his/her mind, of a destination (see Gallarza et al., 2002), while other scholars viewed destination image as both

projected and perceived, taking into consideration both the production and consumption perspectives (e.g., MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997). In this context, Palou (2005, cited in Marine-Roig, 2014: 7) noted, “the destination image formation is the result of a complex and relative process, where receiver and transmitter send stimuli to each other and constantly change that image.” The complex nature of the destination image suggests the complexity of its formation process. Thus, considering the double-sided nature of the destination image and the influence of different factors on its formation process is necessary for gaining a fuller and more in-depth comprehension of this phenomenon. However, there seems a general agreement among many destination image scholars that personal factors (motivation, demographic characteristics and previous experience) and information sources are the two factors affecting the formation of the tourists’ perceived image.

The intangibility of tourism products coupled with the absence of actual visit experience makes tourists highly reliant on information generated by external information sources. The information generated by autonomous agents including news media plays a substantial role in the formation of people’s perceptions of destinations and similarly affects their travel decisions. Tasci and Gartner (2007) contended that news media information has a significant impact on people's perceptions of destinations, particularly when it is negative. Further, positive media coverage is also largely claimed to enhance the destination’s image and is likely to persuade potential visitors that they are making the right decision in choosing the destination (Leslie & Black, 2006; Govers et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the pre-visit images remain uncertain until they are confirmed or challenged by real travel experience (Arefieva et al., 2021). Further, in the post-visit phase, tourists became an information source themselves as they communicate their post-visit images to others, and their transmitted image becomes a projected image which shapes people's perceived images of a destination through (online) word-of-mouth (Marine-Roig, 2014).

The scripting of Algeria as the “Orient” (Said, 1978) in the Western discourse dates to the 19th century. The French invasion of Algeria, and the subsequent establishment of colonial authority, enabled Western writers and artists to travel widely within Algeria whose depictions and accounts of the country fitted with exoticist understandings of North African culture at that time (Zytnicki, 2016; Wilford, 2016; Chamkheh, 2018). The Western discourse of the 19th century was characterized by its clear support for colonialism and imperialism as it asserted the claims made by the occupying powers through a large constellation of textual and visual discourses. Algeria, as Dunwoodie (1998:50) stated, combining the three elements at once: the Orient, Africa and France, attracted several travellers who “turned Algeria into their personal Orient” and portrayed it as “a land of endless exoticism which had the irreplaceable advantage of being within easy reach, (relatively) cheap [...] and French” (Dunwoodie, 1998: 50). The British/Western “tourist gaze” (Urry, 2002) perceived the lands of the Maghreb and Algeria as the “land of Romance, mystery and charm” (Cook & Son, 1930 as cited in Chamekh, 2018:274) and a place where the old world could be discovered (Cherry, 2003; Perkins, 2013). Algeria was viewed through the lens of the strange and the exotic in which spaces and places were perceived as being from a different historical era (Chamekh, 2018:4), often associated with “strange sounding names” and exotic people. The latter were portrayed as living amid the remnants of a distant Roman imperial past and a more recent (and, for the British, more alien) present shaped by centuries of Arabo-Islamic culture (Perkins, 2013).

This denigrating vision, used to justify the civilization mission, was not restricted to the people and their qualities but extended to the local architecture, language, dance/fetes, names and others. For instance, the local architecture, particularly the Arab and Ottoman architectural heritage, was often portrayed as old, dirty, steep, and crowded and often contrasted with European architecture (e.g., Herbert, 1871; Scott, 1914). Moreover, in their travel writings,

Western travellers equated the Arab race with Islam as they often referred to the Arab people as “Mahomedan,” derived from the name Mohammed, the prophet, particularly when they explain strange or “barbaric” acts or stories (e.g., Scott, 1921). This naming itself evokes and reinforces the idea that the people's religious culture was the main problem and part of the West’s tradition of “othering” the country.

In summary, Algeria was framed within a selected time and space through the repeated references to the imageries and tropes that, in turn, fixed a certain knowledge of Algeria and its people, who were mostly considered inferior and backward, and especially in need of this civilizing mission from the Occident, thus, legitimizing the colonial presence.

Methodology

Tourism research has been traditionally dominated by the positivist paradigm and has been criticised for crystallising around “the business interdisciplinary approach” (Tribe, 1997; Franklin & Crang 2001). Wight (2019) suggested that this reluctance amongst tourism researchers might be that they are either more convinced of safe prescriptive research approaches or adhere to the held perception of tourism as a purely economic phenomenon. Nevertheless, he (2019) stated that the growing popularity of discourse analysis in the social sciences, in response to the increasing criticism of the field of tourism as being historically positivist in nature, has led to a substantial increase in recognizing discourse analysis as a research strategy in tourism. As the aim of this article is to examine the differences in perceptions of Algeria from the perspectives of the British media and lived tourist experiences, social constructivism was the best method. Social constructionists argue that knowledge and reality are constructed through discourse or conversation (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018) and that multiple versions of the world exist and that discourses are open to multiple readings (White, 2004). For this study a qualitative, interpretive methodology was used. Its purpose is to understand a particular phenomenon, not to generalize the findings to a population (Farzanfar, 2005, as cited in Antwi & Hamza, 2015). This enables rich and detailed description of social phenomena by encouraging participants to speak freely and understand the investigator’s quest for insight into a phenomenon that the participant has experienced (Merriam, 2009; Antwi & Hamza, 2015). Further, it is inductive in nature (Brunt et al., 2017) where the aim is to induce knowledge from the participants themselves (Brunt et al., 2017).

Qualitative research has limitations that need to be acknowledged. It is time-consuming and rarely involves large samples of data since researchers use approaches such as narrative and discourse analyses, among others, to ensure validity of data that require multiple interpretations and cannot easily be summarized (Neuendorf, 2002; Newbold et al., 2002; Stepchenkova et al., 2009). Further, the qualitative approach relies largely on the researchers reading through the data and developing their interpretations and, therefore, typical samples of data are small, and results are often too subjective (Mehmetoglu & Dann, 2003; Opoku, 2006; Stepchenkova et al., 2009). Thus, this approach is often considered as unscientific or of little reliability (Macnamara, 2003). We tried to establish reflexivity throughout the research by recognizing the challenges and limitations of the research methods and the strategies used to reduce them and maintain research rigour and trustworthiness. Since “an analysis of the tourist image based solely on a single source could give a biased view of the tourist reality of the country” (Paul i Agustí, 2022:204), a mixed method design-triangulation was used to help generate in-depth insights into the formation process of Algeria’s image(s) in Britain in addition to providing a strategy for enhancing the quality of the research findings.

We selected five British mainstream media outlets, namely *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, *The Times* and *BBC* to analyse the online articles that were published in the same period of study outlined for selecting potential tourists (2011-2019). In

total, 575 articles were examined. The selection of the news articles was made based on careful screening and observation of the titles and bodies of the news articles to make sure that they were related to Algeria. It is worth noting that among the selected articles are articles that have only a section about Algeria and it was important to consider them. Further, both online and printed articles were considered for analysis.

Our discourse analysis methodology is derived from Michel Foucault. Foucault (1972:49) perceives discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” in the sense that discourse produces knowledge through language and “since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do - our conduct - all practices have a discursive aspect” (Hall, 1997: 44). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault introduces his archaeological approach to discourse which is concerned with examining the ways of knowing and the legitimated historical knowledge (discourse) of a given time. He (1972: 138-40) calls for the uncovering of the governing rules and systems of thought which govern the creation of particular discourses within particular historical periods, and which allow certain discourses to be accepted as truth. Foucault refers to these rules as the “discursive formations” (Foucault, 1972). This approach is useful when analysing the formation of knowledge and discourse in a particular field. This makes it relevant to the field of tourism and research on destination image for the latter is produced by different (competing) knowledges “through rule-bound discourses, rituals and praxes” (Wight, 2019: 10). Finally, Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) concepts of “field” and “capital” helped us to further examine how institutions shape discourse orders, and how education, culture and society contribute to resisting the news discourses of Algeria.

The very nature of discourse analysis necessitates its major limitation which is that all analyses are based in some way on subjective observation (Aydin-Düzgüt & Rumelili, 2019:300). Further, since much of the analysis is qualitative, the reliability and validity of the results cannot be exactly determined as they are in quantitative approaches (Aydin-Düzgüt & Rumelili, 2019). The theoretical underpinnings of discourse approaches, however, generally deny the possibility of full objectivity (Aydin-Düzgüt & Rumelili, 2019: 301). Further, among the limitations of this study, it does not examine the ways news articles interact with and/or are perceived and used by social media platforms and vice versa.

In terms of tourists, we enrolled a number of participants and used semi-structured interviews (SSIs), which included the components of both structured and unstructured interviews. We asked structured questions to all interviewees, yet the interviewees are given much scope to elaborate their answers, particularly through additional follow-up questions for further elaboration of certain points and themes highlighted by the interviewees. Brinkmann (2020: 437), in his comparison with both structured and unstructured interviews respectively, argued that SSIs can make better use of knowledge production by allowing both the interviewer and interviewees to participate in the process itself by following up on every point they consider important to them without being constrained by a guide. Simultaneously, unlike unstructured interviews, SSIs enable the interviewer to keep the focus of the interview around the issues that are relevant to the research project (Wilson, 2014). The flexibility and adaptability of SSIs provide the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to be more responsive, probing and asking the interviewee to expand and develop their response (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). As a result of this flexibility, researchers can also obtain more comprehensive answers to complex questions (Cohen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, this method still has its weaknesses and challenges that should be noted. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research in general including SSIs, as Denscombe (2014) noted, there might be a discrepancy between people's ways of thinking, their words and actions behaviours resulting in a degree of inaccuracy in their responses. This made some scholars sceptical about the interview method. For example, one

of the major criticisms levelled against this method of data collection is that it produces “unnatural” data since the interviewer influences their production (De Fina & Perrino, 2011). To this end, qualitative researchers (interviewers) do not claim any objectivity or naturalness of their research data and findings but rather they follow an emic approach to research, acknowledging both their influence as well as the research participants’ (interviewees) influence in the (co)construction of knowledge.

In order to recruit participants, two sampling strategies were used, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The latter is described as “ascending” sampling strategy based on the use of participants’ contacts to continue data collection (Kowald & Axhausen, 2012) In this context, Drăgan and Isaic-Maniu (2012: 214-15) argued that snowball sampling is substantially useful for registering the “hidden population” -- “very rare” population, or “difficult to identify” population. Drăgan and Isaic-Maniu's claim is relevant to our sample. Identifying British tourists who visited Algeria proved to be a difficult task due to the low numbers or “rareness” of British tourists to Algeria. Therefore, snowball sampling was used in this study as some participants were recruited through referral.

Social media platforms were used, mainly Instagram and Facebook, and travel websites, to find potential participants, particularly the forum section of some UK leading travel websites namely TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet. However, recruiting participants this way was not that rewarding as only three replied on Lonely Planet, and only one was feasible. Concerning TripAdvisor, although there were several messages back from some British tourists, who met the requirements and expressed their willingness to participate, it was impossible to message them back and get their contact information as the account was disabled and the post was deleted, as using the website for research purposes goes against the website policies. However, we were able to recruit a further 10 participants mainly through social media or Google search and two of these participants referred to others who also took part in this study, giving a total of 13 interviewees.

Findings and discussion

In this section, the findings of the data gathered from the units of analysis selected for this study - the British news media and the British tourists’ interviews – are discussed. The analysis of the collected news articles revealed that there is a consistent tendency of the British broadsheets to repeatedly produce two negative discourses: a dominant discourse about Algeria as a political entity – we named the discourse of Algeria-Polity - and to a lesser extent, a discourse about the Algerian people, which we named the discourse of Algeria-Society. In addition to their apparent negativity, the news discourses are marked by their derivation from the Western political field - the American and French political commentators - and mediated by the British “political, academic and journalistic “fields” (Bourdieu, 2005: 33-40) alike, because of Britain’s alliance to the West/Europe. However, both British fields, political and journalistic, echo the Algerian political views in certain respects when their produced discourses are aligned with the statements constituting certain news discourses. The American and French or Algerian political and news commentators are either frequently mentioned by name and their discourse is reproduced. On the other hand, the images/discourses generated by the tourists’ interviews often countered the news media discourses.

First, the theme of danger/threat is one of the most prevalent discourses of Algeria, (re)produced by the British news media at different events and of different forms. For instance, the terrorist threat/danger or what Tuastad (2003) referred to as the “new barbarism” is one of the most prevalent forms within which Algeria is viewed as an inherently dangerous place for Western foreigners, interests and a threat transiting to Europe. Terrorism incidents in Algeria

are often viewed as an “unsurprising” phenomenon rooted in the country's past conflict, implying that it is usual for terrorist attacks to happen in Algeria, as in the extract below.

“It's unsurprising that we've heard so much about the supposedly pathological history of a country of which little else is known, and of the threat apparently posed by al-Qaida-linked Islamism, growing in a propitiously violent environment, to the region and to Europe.” (McDougall, The Guardian, 2013)

Likewise, violence as a possible risk during times of political instability around or within Algeria is one of the most repeated themes in which present Algeria is produced as a dangerous and unstable place. For example, major uprisings, which happened in the period selected for this research, namely the Arab Spring (2011) and the Hirak (2019), are often (re)constructed as breeding violence. This is in tune with Shihade et al. (2012: 1-2) claim that there is still a homogeneous discourse of old “Orientalist” and “neo-Orientalist” narratives that continue to present the Arab world as dangerous, violent, or stagnant: when revolutions erupt, instant claims of Western influence shape much of the discourse as Western media constantly shows reservations and fear of the unknown, of possible chaos, or the danger of “radicals” taking over governments in the Arab world. Further, at times of uprisings, Algeria is viewed through a prism of exceptionalism, with Algerian people often being constructed as passive, accepting dictatorship and anxious about political change, unlike their neighbours who are rising up. Further, Algeria is viewed also through a prism of risk of violence/danger of Islamism; when the protests erupt in the country, the news often constructs Algeria as a country that is facing a possible threat of Islamism, reinforcing the discourse of historical violence (civil war) by rooting violence in the country's past to social movement and authoritarianism or local culture or religion. This is consistent with Khodadadi and O'Donnell's (2017) study which shows that the British news constantly associated Iran with the discourse of terrorism and the latter, as they argued, is the only theme in which the issue of Islam was expressly (rather than implicitly) raised.

Additionally, when protests stopped or were quelled, the British news media commentators were quick to explain what happened in terms of the state's strength. In this, the state is viewed as always holding a stronger status and having the upper hand, highlighting the discourse of trauma and historical violence alike. Images of violence were often produced through repeated references to the clashes between people and the state police or references to the risk of instability and terrorist violence and dangerous uncertainty.

“A sharp surge in terrorist attacks, attributed to al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (Aqim), is threatening pro-western Algeria's political stability even as it struggles to defuse popular discontent sparked by the Arab spring.” (Tisdall, The Guardian, 2011)

“Africa's largest country faces a choice: reform or risk civil strife” (“Battle of Algiers; Africa's Largest Country Faces a Choice: Reform or Risk Civil Strife”, The Times, 2019)

Similarly, the tourists' pre-visit images of Algeria often associated the country with the discourse (terrorist) danger /threat. This theme was formed by multiple sources including the British news media. For instance, Participant 10 said that all he imagined was “*all manners of danger and horror*” while Participant 2 said, “*considering that my first trip in 2016, given what was continually happening in Syria and Iraq. There was a lot of hysteria in the West about travel in Arabic countries.*” This implies that the image of danger is widely produced by multiple sources in the West, and it is often tied to wider constructions of the MENA countries. The latter are essentially seen as dangerous countries, suggesting that the image of danger is an essentialist image generated about a whole region, encompassing Algeria, which is inherent in the Western “neo-Orientalist” tradition. On the contrary, in their post-visit discourse, most tourists often associated Algeria with the image of reassurance/safety. For example, Participant

1 said, “*I never felt at threat and in contrast, the locals were genuinely helpful*” and participant 5 overtly contrasted the news discourse with what he experienced in Algeria:

“I have read about atrocities of the 1990s and 2000s that horrific war of independence [...] that kind of things, you hear in the news, I taught it is going to be a bit more severe and less preserved [...] but when we went there I found is a very modern, easy, and relaxed country.”

Nevertheless, despite viewing Algeria as a reassuring place, the tourists often expressed a sense of confusion and feelings of not being welcomed as they experienced structural and procedural challenges travelling to and within Algeria such as visa issues and state suspicion among others. These travel challenges were expected by these tourists before their actual visit which, in turn, confirmed these preconceptions. Thus, they were one of the most repeated themes.

“The major problem for us was getting the visas, it seems to be a very haphazard approach [...] They [the embassy] literally slammed the door on my face [...] the whole procedure is unwelcoming and unclear. Again, when I arrived at the airport the guy, the police officer was hostile and ridiculous [...] The bureaucracy is not very inviting to the tourist industry at all.” (Participant 7).

This was perhaps the only area where the tourists experienced some challenges that support the dominant theme in the media of Algeria as a dictatorship/bureaucracy.

Further, the news media often associated Algeria with its colonial history. In this theme, the country was repeatedly referring to it as “former French colony” (“Battle of Algiers; Africa's largest country faces a choice: reform or risk civil strife”, The Times, 2019). Algeria is often viewed as a troubled post-colonial nation that has not yet healed from its colonial wounds and the legacies inherited from the policies implemented by Algeria’s post-colonial regime, associating the country with certain discourses such as the complex and tense relationship of Algeria with France. This was often (re)constructed through repeated references to constant subthemes such as diplomatic rows, tensions and disputes between the two countries as in the extract below.

“The desperate and permanent crisis in Algerian-French relations, like the refusal of a divorced couple to accept an agreed narrative of their sorrow [...]” (Fisk, The Independent, 2015)

With respect to the Algerian society, the news media often repeated the discourse of social conservativeness, viewing Algeria as a “conservative” and “patriarchal” society.

“There is no law against bikinis in the country but women are increasingly stigmatised for wearing them and face growing pressure to switch to burkinis.” (Sage, The Times, 2017)

However, in their post-visit discourse, most tourists expressed their surprise at certain elements such as the availability of alcohol and seeing female workers everywhere in Algeria in contrast to what they expected - a male-dominant society and a more conservative and severe country.

“Generally, in an Islamic country I do not personally drink it and stay respectful. But it was surprising that there was an international hotel in the south of Algeria where they were seemingly serving alcohol.” (Participant 2).

“I was surprised [...] there are more women working, like everywhere [...]. It was quite surprising and nice because in London, we have Algerians, and they like to show that the Algerian women stay at home.” (Participant 4).

Additionally, the news discourse often associated the Algerian locals/migrants with negative images that revolved around socio-economic issues such as historical trauma, political apathy, poverty, unemployment, illegal migration and violence/terrorism. Two extracts are demonstrated below.

“The fact that Cherif and Said Kouachi, the brothers suspected of carrying out the Charlie Hebdo massacre, are of Algerian origin will come as little surprise. For generations, Algeria's agonies have infected Paris.” (Blaire, The Telegraph, 2015)

“Algeria's young are a big source of illegal migrants to Europe.” (Nixey, The Times, 2015)

The first extract above shows how the new media uses tropes to associate Algeria and its migrants in France with a grim image of terrorism. Algeria and the Algerian migrants or Franco-Algerians are viewed as a virus “infecting” France with radical violence. These examples display a xenophobic discourse and a discourse of fear of the Algerian population. Algerian migrants are viewed only through a negative frame of violence, chaos, terrorism, and enmity. References to any positive roles of the Algerian migrants or the North African diaspora in general in France are almost rare. In this vein, Silverstein (2004: 7) argued earlier that the French media often associates Algeria and Algerian immigrants with sectarian violence and terrorism which is in “discursive complementarity” (Foucault, 1972) with the news discourse of terrorist danger/threat. The migrants are often reported in news stories when they fit the image of terrorists or suspects of violence or assaults. This discourse is also reproduced by other news outlets in the West (e.g., “Paris Attack is Europe’s Security Nightmare”, Reuters, 2015) which implies that this discourse is a dispersed “discursive constellation” (Foucault, 1972), generated by multipled sources in the West, which continue to portray Muslim migrants through a globalized discourse of terrorism that combines Orientalism and xenophobia, representing the Muslim “Other” as uncivilized (Dagistanli & Grewal, 2012: 119).

On the other hand, both in their pre-and post-visit discourses, most tourists associated the local people in Algeria with the image of hospitality that encompasses certain images such as generosity, kindness and authenticity. The tourists’ pre-visit images were often based on both personal and information factors such as their education, previous travel experiences in other MENA countries, their knowledge of the country as an “off-the-beaten-path” destination, and/or based on WOM information generated by Algerian migrants in Britain.

“I enjoy my time with Arab and Middle Eastern people. I have imagined the same hospitality in Algeria, especially because Algeria is one of the off-the-beaten-path destinations where people generally tend to be more authentic and friendly.” (Participant 3)

“The Algerian people just look at you in a hospitable manner; it is the most authentic place I have ever been to.” (Participant 13).

In this context, Richardson and Fluker (2004) stressed that authenticity is a subjective and dynamic concept. Similarly, McKercher and Du Cros (2002) claimed that authenticity discourse is often subject to multiple perspectives. This, in turn, explains the lack of a consensual definition of the concept and, similarly, the various meanings generated by the tourists’ discourse of authenticity. This is consistent with the findings from the participants and the blogs’ discourses in which they associated the image “authentic” or “true” “genuine” or “original” with different elements (e.g., historical sites, people, and others) producing different perspectives of authenticity. Further, the findings support Masilela et al. (2023:327) claim that “often the authenticity of the destination determines the decision to visit cultural attractions” as most tourists were motivated to visit Algeria as they perceived its cultural attractions as being “authentic” and its culture as “raw”, not spoiled yet by tourism. Convergent with this finding, Mkono's (2013) study, which examined and compared the perceptions of African tourists and Western tourists towards Victoria Falls along the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe, revealed that Western tourists searched for the authenticity of the experience as their travel motive was to see “real Africa” and test the authenticity of the culture.

Further, the tourists predominantly associated Algeria with the discourse of culture and history which (re)constructed it as a place for cultural and historical heritage. The participants’ answers

demonstrate that this discourse emanated, not from the political/journalistic “field” (Bourdieu, 2005), but rather mainly from the educational “field”- the “educational capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) of these individuals- and from societal discourses in the form of (e)WOM although to a less extent. That is these images are formed through the tourists’ cultural or social “capital” (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986).

“I studied about the subject of Algerian war of independence at university [...] That is how I heard of Algeria and my interest came from.” (Participant 4).

“I was interested to read about the Amazigh culture and the early history of Numidia which inspired me [...] after communicating with real Algerians on social media [...] I learned even more details of places.” (Participant 12).

Based on this discourse, it became apparent from the interviews that most tourists accessed alternative discourses of Algeria which were mainly but not exclusively about the history and the culture of Algeria through reading about its history as amateur readers of history books, Algeria’s culture and history in outdated guidebooks, browsing the Internet, watching films, reading about Algerian popular arts, or taking a university course on the history of the country; that is through their “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1986), built through the process of education: “academic/educational capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) and/or through their cultural knowledge which they built from the various resources, as discussed earlier. Bourdieu (2005: 33), in his comparison between the social sciences and the journalistic field, claimed that the latter resides in a “very weakly autonomous field” as it is ‘increasingly subject to the constraints of the economy and of politics’ (Bourdieu, 2005:40). In this context, Khodadadi and O’Donnell (2017) argued that Bourdieu’s comparison could be applied to education in general. In their study of the British tourists to Iran, they (2017: 61) argued, “the relatively greater (if diminishing) autonomy of the educational field has clearly allowed it to sustain spaces” for the formation of alternative discourses such as the discourse of history-Iran-as-Persia along with a more critical reading to the news discourse in Britain. Similarly, in this study, the tourists’ social and cultural “capital” allowed space for tourists to maintain the discourse of Algeria’s culture and history along with being more critical and resistant to the news discourse: they became not ignorant but less concerned if not dismissive in some cases. In their post-visit discourse, the tourists often associated Algeria with cultural and historical “diversity” and “authenticity.”

“Algeria is blessed with lot of culture and history [...] I found the place a cultural melting point.” (Participant 3).

“This place (Roman ruins) felt totally unspoiled. [...] It was such an authentic part of the journey. Like stepping back in time.” (Participant 12).

The discourse of history and culture constructed through the tourists’ (in)formal education enabled them to challenge the discourses from the Western media and proceed to visit the country; however, it noticeably shaped “the tourists gaze” (Urry, 2002) of these participants. This gaze reduced their vision of Algeria to a romantic image detached from the present Algeria of the locals’ daily lives. This view is relatively inherent in an essentialist Western approach to postcolonial societies which continues to construct them as an inferior, exotic, and backward “Other.” These constructions, as Maddox (2015:333) claimed, “continue to inform Western ideas of what ‘authentic’” and similarly in her study of Western perceptions of yogic authenticity in Mysore, India, Maddox considered the discourses of authenticity “as discourses of power that reinforce difference and reify a nostalgic past” (Maddox, 2015: 333). However, despite “the academic/cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986) of the tourists that might have developed a relatively negative and/or romantic “legitimate culture” (Bourdieu, 1984) about Algeria, tourists who visited Algeria were not only interested in seeing historical sites and what post-colonial Algeria looks like, but also in engaging with the present Algeria

which encompasses the daily life of the Algerians. The latter are predominantly associated with the discourse of hospitality as previously discussed.

Further, from the analysis of the data gathered in the interviews, it was possible to explore the ways these participants could overcome the negative images consumed in their pre-visit phase and proceed to the stage of having an actual travel experience (and be an organic information agent themselves). The findings reveal that there are other information agents and or personal factors that played a key role in persuading these individuals to travel to Algeria such as educational background, personal interests (e.g., general interests in the politics and history of MENA, interest in Algerian music, Algerian desert/Touareg lifestyle, and others), previous travel experiences in neighbouring countries (some tourists trusted their pre-visit positive expectations generated by their previous travel experiences in neighbouring countries in other destinations in the MENA) or Algeria (for those who visited more than once) and interests in off-the-track destinations, particularly in the case of thrill-seeker travellers. The participants consumed alternative cultural and societal discourses generated by different information sources such as overt induced II (local guides in Britain and Algeria) for those who travelled through organized trips, autonomous agents (news, films, and guidebooks (outdated *Lonely Planet* and *Bradt* guides) and (un)solicited organic information generated by other travellers or (e)WOM from Algerian people residing and/or born in the UK or from the local people in Algeria. For example, the effect of past experiences on the destination image and tourists' behaviour has been emphasized by early studies and the findings from this study support the literature. They are in line with the study of Kim, Hallab & Kim (2012) that revealed that tourists' (American college students) perceptions of South Korea as a travel destination and their revisit intention were positively affected in addition to being collectively reinforced by past travel experiences.

Moreover, the individuals who have travelled to Algeria had often developed a prior keen interest in the country through studying a specific subject as part of their education. These tourists consumed the discourse of history and culture of Algeria, which is of a relatively “(neo)Orientalist” nature, in formal settings through taking a university course in Algerian history or through informal learning about the country's history/culture through amateur reading about certain historical periods in Algeria's history (e.g., Roman history), or certain aspects of the Algerian local cultures (e.g., Kabyle music, the Touareg life, food, hospitality) through for example history and travel guidebooks, films or (e)WOM. In other words, the discourse of culture and history was formed by both the tourists' “academic/cultural” and “social capital” (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986), which motivated them to search for other discourses of Algeria and advanced their interest in travelling to Algeria. Further, some tourists were motivated to visit Algeria driven by their passion for adventure and the fact that Algeria is best known as an “off-the-radar” destination and the lack of information about it. These aspects resulted in certain expectations or pre-visit images about travel in Algeria that were appealing to some authenticity lovers and thrill-seeker travellers as they come to perceive Algeria as a place for authentic travel experiences and true adventures.

Further, the findings reveal that tourists' lived travel experiences and perceptions largely influence and were influenced by the experiences of other (British) tourists who had previously visited Algeria in addition to their interaction in the country. These findings are aligned with findings from previous studies such as Guthrie's (2007) study. She (2007: 229) found that even when travelling alone, tourists affect and are affected by other tourists, arguing that each tourist is led towards a destination by a combination of motivations and expectations, neither of which is entirely unique, yet combine in different permutations, influencing the ways tourists' lived experiences at a destination are evaluated, perceived and transmitted to others.

Conclusion

Although the tourists consumed the negative and relatively “neo-Orientalist” discourses produced by the British news discourses or other institutional and societal discourses circulated in Britain that are in turn largely analogical or in “discursive complementary” (Foucault, 1972) with the news discourses. The alternative discourse of Algeria Society, formed through the tourists' academic/social capital, despite its relatively “Orientalist” approach (producing Algeria as a romantic unchanged and, at times, a backward place with a severely patriarchal conservative society) enabled these tourists to resist the negative discourses of Algeria and visit the country.

This research has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample of tourists selected for this study was limited to certain participants with certain characteristics: British tourists who visited the country for travel purposes and their trip(s) took place during the period selected for this study (2011- early 2020) which ruled out other potential tourists. Secondly, as noted earlier, another limitation due to the time constraint is the news discourse examined was limited to the discourses produced by five online outlets only and the analysis of all the discourses in question was limited to both the visual and textual discourses excluding photo-motion discourses (videos). Thirdly, we did not examine the ways news articles interact with and/or are perceived and used by social media platforms and vice versa. Finally, as far as transferability is concerned, the research caveat is that the tourists who participated in this research are by no means a majority, rather they constitute a very narrow market with specific characteristics. Therefore, due to the methodological approach of this research, the lack of previous studies in this area of research in relation to the Algerian context, and the small size of the research sample (tourists), it inevitably means that the interviewees' responses (perceptions) cannot be guaranteed to be representative of British tourists who are interested in Algeria or those who have previously visited the country. As a result, it would be an error to claim that the research findings can be over-generalized. However, the in-depth data generated, and the findings obtained give us some insights into attitudes to Algeria and the lived experiences of the tourists. Also, it will be of use to further research and should help to suggest to tourism agencies how they could challenge the negative media discourses.

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