

***Algeria as a Tourist Attraction in Mobile Apps: The Safarway App Case*****Ratiba Bouzidi^{1,*}, Ahmed Mahdi Zouaoui²****¹ Research and Studies Laboratory in New Media, Mohammed Bouguerra University of M'sila (Algeria), ratiba.bouzidi@univ-msila.dz****² Ahmed Mahdi Zouaoui, Mohammed Bouguerra University of M'sila (Algeria), ahmedmahdi.zouaoui@univ-msila.dz****Received: 31 / 01 / 2024****Accepted: 29 / 04 / 2024****Published: 30 / 04 / 2024****Abstract:**

The current study, which is descriptive in nature, aims to understand the importance of using mobile apps in the development of tourism. This sector is considered one of the most significant cultural and social industries, playing a crucial role in economic development. The study employs a descriptive approach to comprehend the roles and significance of mobile apps, namely the Safarway app, in promoting and providing information about various tourist destinations, thereby providing and facilitating a range of services for users.

Keywords: Mobile Apps; Smartphones; Safarway; Algerian Tourism.

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1. Introduction:

Tourism ranks as a pivotal sector across both economically developed and developing nations, its significance rooted in historical practices of facilitating human movement for diverse purposes. The economic and financial benefits of tourism have come to prominence only in recent years, propelled by the sector's evolution and the advent of modern technology that has eased information and idea exchange. This shift has positioned mobile apps as integral in bridging travelers with the tourism industry. The emergence of the internet's second generation has spurred unprecedented advancements in information and communication technology, profoundly influencing various aspects of life, including tourism.

This technological surge has led nations to vie in integrating information technology and modern tech within the tourism industry, harnessing smartphones for planning trips and selecting destinations, now considered among the most crucial modern conveniences. This is particularly evident in platforms designed for discovering tourist locations through the digital services they offer.

In this context, Algeria, endowed with diverse and distinct tourism assets, stands as a beacon among Arab nations, poised for a leadership role in the tourism domain and emerging as a favored destination for both domestic and international tourists. This backdrop prompts the inquiry: How has the Safarway app enhanced Algeria's appeal as a tourist attraction in mobile apps? To address this central query, the following subsidiary questions are formulated:

- What are the key mobile apps in tourism, and which stand out?
- What features does the Safarway app offer, and what tourist attractions does it highlight?
- Through the lens of the Safarway app, what are the assets of Algerian tourism?

1.1. Significance of the Study:

This research delves into a novel aspect of tourism by examining and analyzing the impact of mobile apps on tourism services and activities. It holds particular value for Arabic-speaking tourists, aiming to elevate their awareness in choosing suitable tourist destinations via such apps, with a spotlight on the Safarway app as a pivotal case study, noted as the inaugural Arab tourism application.

For tourism industry professionals, this study offers an in-depth insight into mobile apps related to tourism, elucidating each app's goals and the content it delivers to its users. These insights are invaluable for professionals seeking to glean ideas from the app themes explored, especially the Safarway app, to craft apps that resonate with their tourism endeavors and cater to user demands.

Moreover, this study underscores the essential role of cutting-edge technology in tourism. It investigates how mobile apps, particularly Safarway, can be instrumental in enriching the tourism experience and providing superior services to tourists.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To identify and highlight key mobile apps in the tourism industry.
- To conduct an in-depth analysis of the Safarway app, focusing on its structure and content.
- To present Algeria as a tourist attraction within mobile apps, specifically through Safarway.

1.3. Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is descriptive, focusing on delineating phenomena and issues, clarifying traits, attributes, and the interplay between variables. This methodological approach is particularly applied to explore the synergy between mobile apps, with a special emphasis on the "Safarway" app, and the tourism landscape in Algeria.

1.4. Literature Review:

The investigation by (Dakkesh, Attallah, & Hussein, 2021), titled "Impact of Mobile Apps on the Performance of 'A' Grade Tourism Firms," aimed to delve into the utilization of mobile apps and their influence on augmenting the operational efficiency and effectiveness of 'A' grade tourism services. This study endeavored to pinpoint the benefits and significance of these apps in the presentation and marketing of 'A' grade tourism companies' services. It further sought to examine the current usage of these apps among the employees of such firms. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach within the framework of descriptive studies, the research utilized questionnaires distributed to a targeted sample of 300 employees from 'A' grade tourism companies in the Greater Cairo area. Key findings revealed a minimal adoption of mobile apps by these companies for service marketing and presentation, despite a customer preference for such digital interfaces for information, amidst numerous challenges and obstacles in leveraging mobile technology for tourism service provision and marketing. This research aligns with our study's thematic direction, albeit with a narrower focus on a singular app, differing in its methodological reliance on quantitative data from questionnaires as opposed to our study's descriptive narrative emphasis without quantitative assessment.

(Attia, Al-Jamil, & Al-Jamil, The impact of using smart mobile phone technology and its applications in tourism marketing operations in Egypt., 2016) study, "Utilization of Smart Mobile Technology and Applications in Egypt's Tourism Marketing," sought to assess the extent of smart mobile technology usage within Egypt's tourism sector and its impact on tourism marketing. The study aimed to elucidate the concept and importance of smartphones and their applications as contemporary marketing tools, determine the prevalence of such technology and apps in Egypt's tourism industry, and gauge user satisfaction. It proposed recommendations to

enhance the use of this technology to fortify tourism marketing operations in Egypt. Methodologically, the study adopted an analytical descriptive approach with quantitative analysis, relying on questionnaires to collect data from smartphone users. Among the notable findings was the predominance of the internet and smartphones as primary sources for tourism-related information, highlighting the significant promotional role of smartphones in Egypt's tourism sector due to their extensive use and impact on consumer decisions. This research mirrors our problem angle by exploring smartphone technology and app usage, yet it focuses on assessing their impact and describes the opinions of the study sample, in contrast to our study's focus on a descriptive examination of the subject through a single app model.

(Ben Aliya & Salami, 2019) research, "Tourism-related Apps in Algeria: A Linguistic Semiotic Study," aimed to explore the effects of linguistic and semiotic communication systems, along with audio-visual elements, in the tourism sector through various electronic apps used in Algeria. The study concluded that inadequate exploitation of these systems, particularly the overlooking of technological tools' crucial importance in tourism, hampers the development of electronic tourism services unless there's an intervention in language support and audio-visual presentations, which are key to attracting tourists and enhancing the quality of electronic tourism services.

- Terminology and Conceptual Framework:

Smartphone: This term refers to a mobile device equipped with extensive functionalities that transcend traditional telephony to include advanced services such as web browsing, email access, and the ability to view electronic documents. Additionally, smartphones function as digital cameras and video recorders, offering voice recording features and a host of other sophisticated services (Abdel Razzaq & Karmish, 2022).

Mobile Apps: Mobile applications are sophisticated software bundles designed for operation on compact, wireless computing devices. These applications enrich the devices with a variety of technical functionalities and features through carefully crafted and advanced code packages, thereby extending the devices' utility and enhancing user experience (Dakkesh, Attallah, & Hussein, 2021).

Tourism: Tourism is recognized by scholars as a hallmark of modern times, distinguished by its unique features and the potential for fostering growth and prosperity. It offers individuals relaxation, a change of scenery, and the opportunity to immerse in and appreciate the natural environment through stays in areas known for their distinct natural beauty. This concept of tourism, one of its earliest definitions, was introduced by German academic Hermann von Schullard in 1905 (Al Dghaim, n.d.)

2. Mobile Apps in Tourism

Recent advancements in mobile technology have transformed these devices beyond their original telephonic functions, leading to the widespread adoption of the term "smartphone." These devices provide users with advanced functionalities, including internet access, far surpassing the capabilities of traditional phone calls. (Attia, Al-Jamil, & Al-Jamil, 2016)

Statistical analyses and market research highlight an unparalleled integration of smartphones across various demographics and social classes, a feat not achieved by any previous technology. The current global user base exceeds 6 billion, with forecasts predicting significant growth. The largest concentrations of smartphone users are found in China, India, and the United States. (Taylor P. , 2023)

Smartphones, powered by operating systems like iOS and Android, facilitate a wide array of applications. Apple's introduction of the App Store for iPhones in 2007 revolutionized the way users discover and purchase apps. Google's Android platform offers a similar range of applications, both free and paid, enhancing user engagement. (Hafez, 2019)

This digital transformation, especially in the last few years, has led to a dramatic shift in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Mobile apps have significantly reduced the traditional reliance on travel agents, now accounting for 40% to 45% of all bookings for flights, hotels, and tours. Travel apps have become the seventh most popular category among users, with over 4.5% of all mobile apps dedicated to travel and bookings, further indicating the role of mobile technology in reshaping tourism marketing and promotion strategies. (Al-Adsani, 2022)

2.1. Global Spread and Usen of Mobile Apps

According to Statista, a leading market research entity, the global revenue from mobile apps was over \$365 billion in 2017. By 2019, the total revenue from app downloads, advertising, and in-app purchases had reached approximately \$461.7 billion, with projections estimating revenues to soar to \$935 billion by 2023. This potential growth of over 113% in the next four years highlights an increasing consumer trend towards greater reliance on and comfort with mobile devices for a range of transactions, including in-app purchases, signifying a deeper integration of mobile apps into daily life and consumer habits. (Dakkesh, Attallah, & Hussein, 2021)

2.2. The Importance of Mobile Apps in Tourism

The motivation behind utilizing mobile apps in tourism and travel primarily revolves around simplifying all aspects of tourist activities. These apps provide direct benefits by facilitating access to location information, making travel and accommodation bookings, such as flight tickets, lodging, and visits to tourist and entertainment venues. Indirectly, they enrich travelers' daily lives by serving as communication tools for calls and messages, offering entertainment through reading, music, and games, and providing information and conveniences across various domains (Attia, Al-Jamil, & Al-Jamil, The impact of using smart mobile phone technology and its applications in tourism marketing operations in Egypt., 2016).

2.3. Top Mobile Apps for Travel and Tourism

Both the Apple App Store for iPhones and Google Play for Android devices offer an array of apps designed to explore tourist destinations worldwide, alleviating financial and psychological burdens through their services. Some of these apps include:

Google Maps: This app is instrumental for navigation, guiding travelers to their desired destinations with its user-friendly interface and reliance on maps and coordinates.

Google Translate: Essential for travelers needing immediate word translations, this app also features image translation services.

Scan Halal: Ideal for those traveling to non-Islamic countries, this app helps identify whether food products are Halal.

Skyscanner: This app finds the most affordable travel options, directing users to airline websites for booking as it does not support financial transactions itself; it functions purely as a search engine.

Booking.com: A leading app that assists travelers in booking hotels or hostels at suitable prices, providing comprehensive information on rates and accommodations, along with a review system for users to share their experiences.

3. Safarway App: Design and Content

Founded in 2018, Safarway is a Palestinian-European company headquartered in Ramallah. It employs over 50 individuals within and outside Palestine. The company has launched the first and largest Arabic platform that provides up-to-date content on travel and tourism for destinations worldwide, leveraging artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing technologies, under the slogan "Safarway - The World in Your Hands."

This app serves as a comprehensive guide for Arab travelers, catering to nearly 300 million Arabic speakers globally. It includes a travel-focused social network for users to connect and share their passion for travel, among numerous other features and tools.

3.1. Key Features and Tools

Social Network: A platform for travelers to interact and share experiences.

Destination Information: Detailed insights into tourist destinations.

Top Tourist Spots: Information on the world's best tourist locations.

Maps: Interactive maps to navigate destinations.

Recommended Activities and Attractions: Suggestions for must-visit sites.

Top-Rated Restaurants: Recommendations for dining experiences.

Points Bank: A feature for accumulating and redeeming points.

Reviews and Ratings: User-generated feedback on various services.

Hotel Booking Service: Convenient hotel reservation functionality.

Favorites List: An option to bookmark preferred locations and services.

Travel Articles: Informative articles on various travel topics.

Trip Planner Tool (Under Development): A feature to assist in planning trips.

Business Portal: A gateway for business opportunities within the travel sector.

3.2. Safarway App Download Information

For Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.safarway.app>

For App Store: <https://apkcombo.com/ar/safarway/com.safarway.app/download/apk>

For Windows 11/10/8/7 PCs: <https://napkforpc.com/download/apk/com.safarway.app/>

3.3. Safarway App: Design and Content Overview



Main interface of the Safarway app on an Android device is illustrated through an image showcasing its primary screen, which features ten icons accessible by swiping right.

These icons include:

Tourist Destinations: Tapping this icon reveals seven sub-windows (accessible by scrolling down), displaying popular destinations that periodically update. It also lists continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, North America, Australia, and Oceania), each containing countries with corresponding photographic images.

Surrounding Landmarks: Integrates a Google Maps frame displaying seventeen search frames for nearby landmarks.

Hotels: Offers a search frame for finding the best global hotel deals, with filters for travel dates and the number of accompanying travelers.

Activities: Provides a search frame for activities to engage in.

Top Restaurants and Cafes: Also includes a search frame upon selection.

Business Portal: Offers services for business establishment owners to claim and manage their listings for free, enabling them to update business information, respond to reviews, create QR codes for gathering ratings, enhance their visibility, and build trust with potential customers.

Safarway Partners: Reveals a section on a blue interface followed by a motion graphic video targeting individuals or entities wishing to earn commissions through bookings made by their followers.

Articles: Displays photographic images accompanied by articles.

Travelers Nearby: Contains options to enable or disable visibility to other users and a save feature.

Points Bank: Shows your current points tally.

Returning to the main interface beyond the "Tourist Destinations" window, there's a persistent advertisement promoting the best deals and lowest prices on hotel bookings worldwide. This ad appears across all interfaces. Additionally, the interface refreshes to display photographs of popular tourist destinations prominently.

Scrolling down, the latest reviews from followed individuals appear, followed by follow suggestions and posts from both followed and unfollowed individuals.

At the bottom of the main interface, a fixed toolbar contains five icons (Home, Tourist Destinations, a Plus sign, Profile Picture, and More). The Plus sign is meant for adding posts, including text, images, and videos. The More icon encompasses various options including account settings, badges, choices, For Business, Safarway Partners, help and support, and a logout option.

Observations indicate that the app features straightforward navigation without complexity, high-quality and professional imagery serving as an attractive element for tourists. The app is enhanced with illustrative maps from Google Maps and uses clear Arabic typography that complements the images without any redundancy in paragraph topics.

4. Algeria as a Tourist Attraction in Safarway App

Algeria stands as Africa's second-largest nation, strategically positioned in the western Mediterranean region, serving as a nexus between North Africa and the Middle East. This unique location bestows upon Algeria a diverse array of climates, ranging from the coastal Mediterranean to the semi-arid highlands and the expansive desert climes of the south,

punctuated by lush oases. The topographical diversity extends from the fertile plains of the Algerian Tell in the north, across the mountainous belts, to the Sahara Atlas in the south, adorned with palm groves, dunes, and rock plateaus. Rich in historical depth, archaeological treasures, therapeutic mineral springs, and captivating tourist locales, Algeria presents a multifaceted destination for explorers (Ouainat & Bashi, 2012).

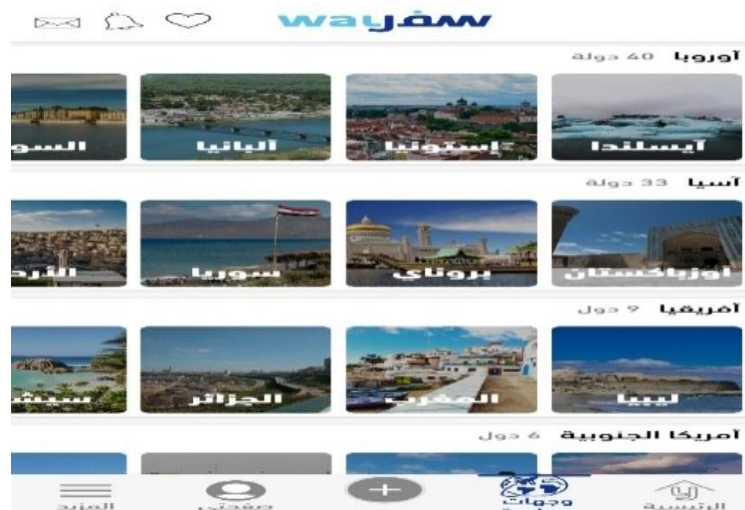
4.1. Representation of Algeria in the Safarway App

When accessing the Safarway app, users are immediately greeted with the "Tourist Attractions" button prominently placed beneath the search function.



Screenshot of Safarway Top Interface

Upon selecting this feature, users are directed to a display showcasing tourist destinations, beginning with the continent of Europe, which comprises 40 countries, led by Iceland. Following Europe is Asia, with 33 countries starting from Uzbekistan. Next in the sequence within the app is Africa, which includes 9 countries, with Libya, Morocco, and then Algeria presented in the order of their appearance on the platform.



When clicking on Algeria, the following interface appears:



An image illustrating the interface of Algeria in the Safarway App

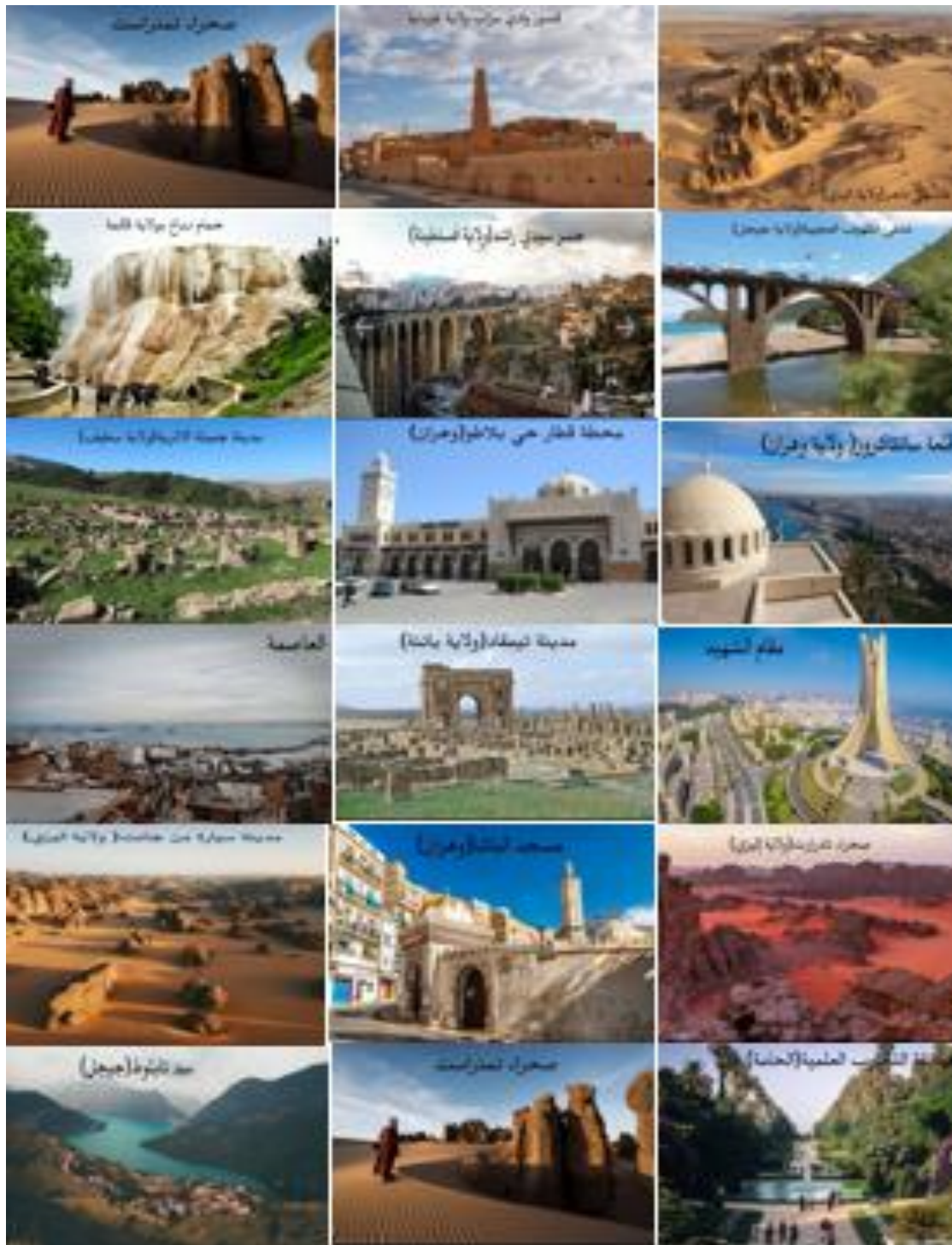
At the top of the interface, there's an image of the Martyrs' Memorial, under which 23 hidden images are tucked away. Clicking on the photo icon reveals some of the most iconic features of Algeria, yet the images are not labeled. This prompted an investigation to identify the names of the places and landmarks depicted in the photos, to enable readers to recognize them.

Additionally, the image is accompanied by a clock displaying Algerian local time and the temperature. Below this is a search bar labeled "Choose the city," followed by the Algerian flag alongside the country's name in bold, dark black font. Beneath this, there is a brief ten-line paragraph introducing the aesthetic appeal of tourism in Algeria. The section "Languages" indicates Arabic as the nation's official language, followed by "Currencies," listing the Algerian Dinar (DZD) in French. This is where the journey planning begins, under "Plan Your Trip."

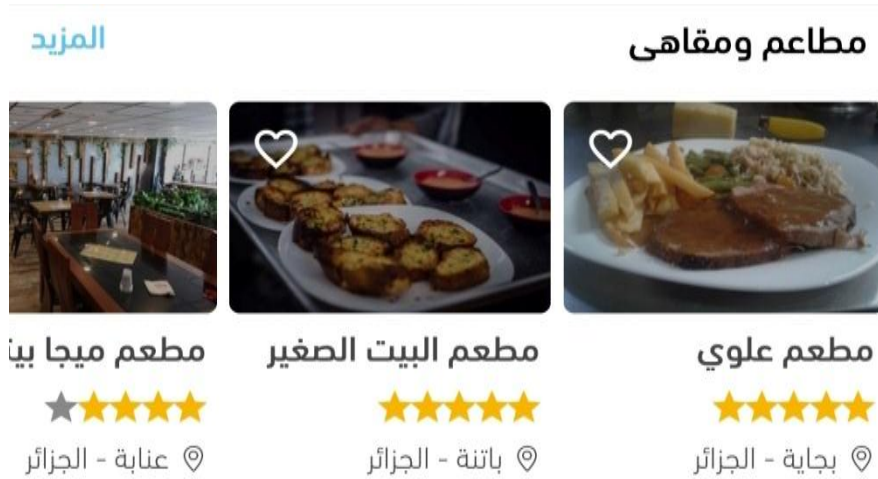
Scrolling further down, the app suggests the best time to visit Algeria. Unlike other countries where certain months might be less ideal for a visit, Algeria stands out for its climatic diversity, making any month potentially the best time to visit, highlighting Algeria's unique weather variations.



The best time to visit Algeria (by swiping right instead of down)

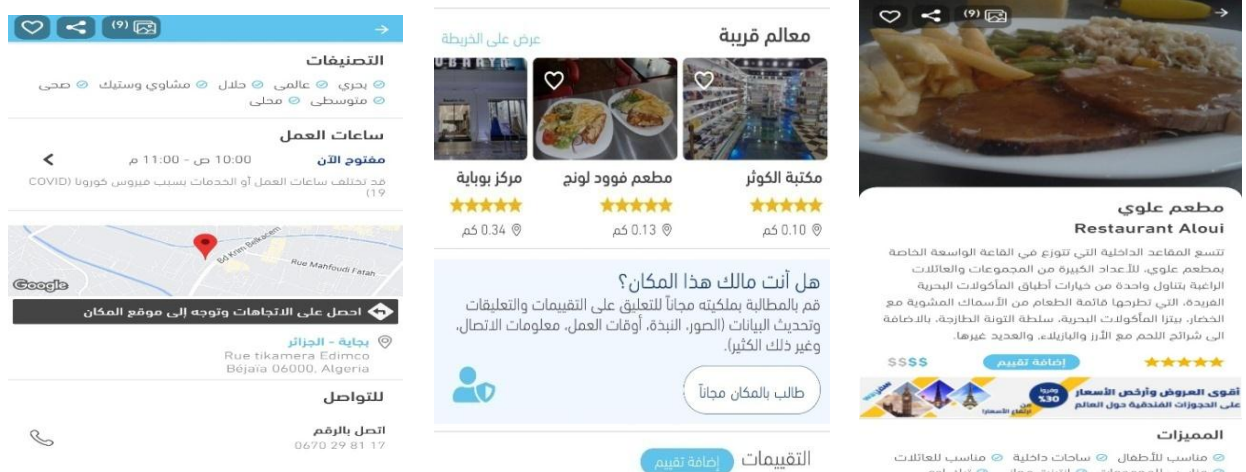


Recognizing that dining is an essential part of the travel experience, the app developers have strategically placed "Restaurants and Cafes" right below the "Best Time to Visit" section, accessible by scrolling down.



Restaurants and cafes available in Algeria

Upon selecting "Aloui Restaurant" located in the Bejaia province, presented as the first option in the list, users will find the following: Beneath the restaurant's image, there's a brief overview detailing the restaurant's features, followed by additional information.



Following the restaurant's image, users are presented with a list of its features, then its categories, which include Seafood, International, Halal, Grills and Steaks, Healthy, Mediterranean, and Local cuisine. This is followed by the restaurant's operating hours. A Google Maps integration then provides the exact location of the restaurant, complete with a contact phone number. In testing the serviceability of this number, it was confirmed to be operational. Below this, "Nearby Landmarks" are listed, offering tourists convenient sightseeing options close to the restaurant. There's also a note for the establishment's owner to respond to reviews, comments, and update information (photos, description, operating hours, contact info, etc.).

At the bottom of this interface, visitor ratings for the restaurant are displayed.

Scrolling further down reveals "Best and Popular Activities to Do (in Algeria)," providing users with more options for exploration and leisure.



Upon scrolling past the image of "Tassili National Park," users are provided with an introductory overview of the destination. It's noteworthy that with each entry into a new section, the app offers increasingly detailed explanations about all aspects related to it, adhering to the comprehensive approach taken throughout.



This includes:

- Museums
- Archaeological Sites
- Parks and Nature
- Tourist Attractions
- Shopping
- Adventures and Activities
- Transportation
- Offers and Deals
- Zoos and Aquariums
- Amusement and Water Parks
- Accommodation and Camping Sites
- Spas and Health Resorts
- Articles Specific to Algeria

5. Conclusion

In light of the extensive proliferation of smartphones and their applications within the tourism sector, and with specific regard to the Safarway app, recognized as the pioneering Arabic platform offering a plethora of tools and services that significantly contribute to the promotion of international tourism and the portrayal of Algerian tourism on its platform, this study yields several key insights:

- The imperative integration of information technology, chiefly through electronic applications, is undeniably essential in the evolving digital landscape of tourism.
- Raising awareness about the significance of tourism-centric mobile apps as contemporary promotional tools is crucial, underscoring their ability to streamline processes, save time, and reduce costs efficiently.
- Proficiency in navigating tourism applications is vital for both tourists and tourism industry stakeholders (including the Ministry of Tourism and travel agencies) to enhance the efficiency of their operations.
- The development and customization of tourism applications specific to each country, with Algeria as the focal point of this study, is warranted. A review of Google Play revealed a limited presence of Algerian tourism apps, contrary to findings in previous research.
- Incorporating the Arabic language in the design of electronic applications is deemed necessary for user accessibility and engagement.
- The meticulous documentation and sharing of images and information pertaining to Algeria's diverse tourist locales on the Safarway app, especially by Algerians, can significantly enhance the app's appeal to a broader audience, both domestically and internationally, thereby aiding in tourism promotion.
- Despite the myriad advantages and features offered by the Safarway app, ongoing assessment is required to adapt to the dynamic needs of the travel and tourism sector, ensuring the app maintains its esteemed status among leading tourism applications.
- A constructive proposal includes liaising with the Safarway app's development team to update and diversify the imagery related to Algeria, addressing the issue of repetitive visuals like the Martyrs' Memorial. Algeria's rich tapestry of cultural and historical sites warrants broader exposure and recognition.

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