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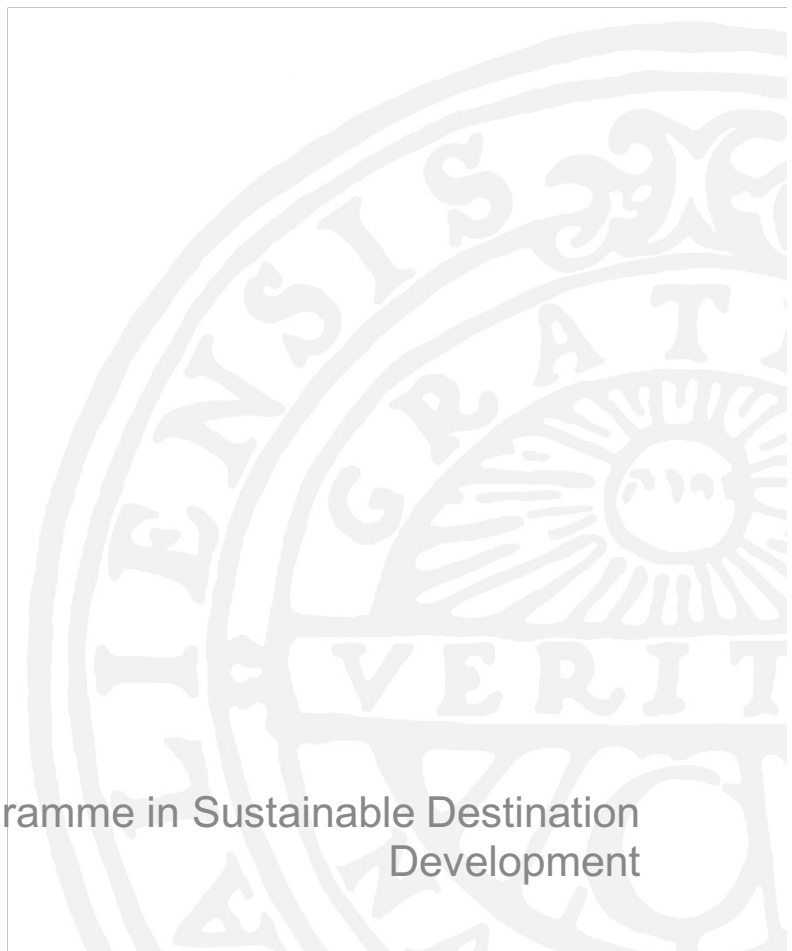
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The gatekeepers of Moroccan cultural heritage

Amazigh women and the status quo

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Master's Programme in Sustainable Destination
Development





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Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of Amazigh/Berber women in maintaining and preserving the cultural heritage of their people through carpet weaving, as well as how this tradition contributes to gender norms and tourism in rural Morocco. The research method consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews and a literature review of intangible cultural heritage preservation, traditional gender norms in rural areas, and nomadic tourism theories. Analysis of the interviews concluded that Amazigh women keep their traditional culture alive through carpet weaving, and they are simultaneously valued and marginalized within their society. The necessity and pressure placed upon them leads to issues related to gender equality and girls' rights/accessibility to a quality education in the modern context. Though in a constant state of change and shifting with time, the nomadic lifestyle and traditional Berber carpet weaving are still participated in today and nevertheless hold deep significance for those who partake in these activities. Traditional mentalities regarding gender norms remain intact, although they are challenged more frequently. Women's weavings are critical in preserving Amazigh culture and symbolize a heritage identity in an overt manner, making women central to the Berber story and Berber heritage.

Keywords: Berber women, Berber carpet weaving, cultural heritage preservation, rural gender norms, nomadic tourism, placemaking, authenticity, sustainable destination development

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1. Introduction

“...the very conditions that make minority and indigenous women instrumental to the preservation of their culture may condemn them to a position of subalternity (Gagliardi 2020).”

This thesis will focus on the heritage tradition of textile weaving created by women in nomadic communities. Women are the gatekeepers of Berber cultural identity and through the handcraft of rug weaving, they keep their culture alive (Becker 2006). The history, stories, and cultural heritage of the Berber tribe is preserved through this traditional craft. The nomadic lifestyle and textile production (weaving knowledge) are highly valued representations of intangible cultural heritage of this people group (Naji 2019; Harries 1973) though as Crawford (2002) points out, “what Berberness we might attribute to villagers is mostly a lived and unconscious experience rather than a notable basis of political identity” (59). In the first chapter I will introduce the topic and provide context for my research. In chapter two I define my theoretical points of departure and detail the current literature and research on the topic. Chapter three explains my chosen methodology and research structure. In chapter four the data I have collected will be analyzed. And finally, the findings from the research will be presented as well as suggestions for future research.

For centuries, the nomadic Amazigh people have lived in the Atlas Mountains of Northern Africa. Various desert dwelling groups spanning across multiple countries, ethnicities, tribes, etc. share this lifestyle as an element of their heritage. I will classify the nomadic lifestyle as a form of regional heritage. A variety of terms are used to reference the nomadic people of the Sahara Desert because a diverse range of people groups participate in this lifestyle in this area. The term “Berber” derives from the Greek word “barbaroi” which means “barbarian” (Boudraa & Krause 2007) and refers to the indigenous people of this region. “Berber” is the term used most commonly by scholars, but political activists often prefer the word Amazigh which means “free people” (Boudraa & Krause 2007). For the duration of this thesis, the words “Berber” and “Amazigh” will be used interchangeably.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

For the Amazigh women of the Atlas Mountains, being the cultural gatekeepers may come at quite a cost. It is burdensome for women to bear the weight of preserving their people's culture by "sticking to the loom" and this limits the scope of their future, professionally, geographically, and economically speaking. In rural areas, girls either begin farming or weaving at a young age, and these craftswomen are often in turn denied the ability to receive an education, thus keeping them stuck in a more marginalized place in society (Sadiqi 2017). However, women are revered for their work by those within their own community and outside. This artform—done traditionally and in modern times by women—keeps the Amazigh culture relevant while simultaneously maintaining its history, stories, and sense of identity. As a result, Amazigh women are somehow both valued and marginalized within their society. The necessity and pressure placed upon them to keep their traditional culture alive leads to issues related to gender equality and girls' rights/accessibility to a quality education. This fact has strong implications in the modern context, which is the specific matter I have chosen to research for my thesis.

Women are at the center of Berber heritage and identity. They bring the Berber community into the socio-political landscape—internationally and within the global conversation. The purpose of my research is to determine how this role contributes to and interacts with tourism.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to explore the above, my main research question is as follows: *In what ways does the preservation of Berber culture rely on women sticking to traditional roles, and what are the consequences of this in the contemporary world?*

I will then take a look at how this impacts destination development, tourism, and sustainability. As a secondary research question, I have composed the following: *How does this form of intangible cultural heritage contribute to sustainable destination development in Morocco?*

1.3 Delimitations of Study

The scope of my study is limited to only those Berber women living in Morocco rather than including all Berber tribes across the whole of Northern Africa. I have chosen to research carpet weaving specifically as artform and heritage production rather than including other forms of handiwork/ art created by Berber women such as pottery, jewelry, tattooing, poetry, song, etc., which also contribute to the preservation of Berber culture. This study is written with the intention of and in an attempt to enhance the current research on this topic.

2. Theoretical Framework/ Points of Departure

This section gives a description of the main points of departure I have collected as the springboard for my research. Those main points include 1) intangible cultural heritage preservation, 2) traditional gender roles in rural areas, and 3) nomadic tourism. My supportive theories to these points of departure are authenticity, place making, storytelling, and sustainability. The concepts of authenticity, place making, and narrative are foundational in understanding just how instrumental this form of cultural heritage is for the tourism industry and economic development of Morocco as a whole.

2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation

“It is only when a society has already lost the intangible knowledge of making things and has the material means of thinking about it, that it seeks to preserve its intangible knowledge frozen into objects of the past” (Naji 2019:142). This is the work of Berber women who weave carpets.

The concept of heritage in its simplest form can be defined as the relation between modernity and time; or in even simpler terms, a relation to/with the past (Harrison 2012). The entire Berber weaving craft is heritage as it forms a bridge between the present day and ancient stories and traditions of the Morocco of the past. It evolves with current events, trends, social movements and undergoes physical evolution with the passing of time. Weaving is a living tradition (Naji 2019) and “weavers engage with the present, redefining their textile heritage in phase with their

time” (ibid.:143). Carpets and tapestries act as a snapshot in history and in a weaver’s life. Each one unique, and often unpredictable, many rugs show that they have been woven by more than one person or over a long period of time. The tightness of the knots may vary, or the perfect symmetry can suddenly become more abstract. Everything from sourcing the materials from their flock, to dyeing the wool with plants and spices, to assembling the mobile, upright vertical loom is a cultural tradition that has been handed down for centuries (Becker 2006). The methods, designs, and patterns play a vital role in preserving the Amazigh culture as a whole. Throughout North Africa, women have used vertically mounted looms for generations, creating a range of goods. “This type of loom consists of a wooden frame made from two upright poles and two crossbeams, plus one heddle rod and two or three shed rods (used together to separate the warp threads)” (Becker 2017:35). Due to their simple assembly, this type of loom was moved across great distances in Morocco and the Sahara Desert, and allowed for the spread of traditional Berber style motifs and patterns (Becker 2017).

A paradox within the concept of World Heritage as a whole is the “relation between the globally dispersed and diverse phenomena and the idea that they, in spite of all disparities, [have] something in common, and [a]re constitutive parts of a distinct, universal and categorical entity, i.e. the World Heritage of humankind” (Turtinen 2000:7). Though the traditional weaving of Amazigh women is not expressly listed on UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritage, there are many similar handcraft practices from other countries’ indigenous peoples on the list. Moroccan rugs and textiles of this vein are handmade, individually unique, and require a great deal of skill and proficiency. The arduous means to prepare the dyes from completely natural resources is “a difficult and time-consuming process, requiring great expertise” (Becker 2017:39). This fact adds to the reasons why this is a form of cultural heritage in contrast to big batch and factory-made woven goods. Turtinen (2000) writes about the theory of reification, being that when something is named as heritage it is turned into an object that can be owned. This notion of cultural heritage becoming a consumer good, and the consumption of that good then supporting the continued generation of said cultural heritage, provides a nice segue into the following section.

2.1.1 Authenticity

“The feeling of authenticity has the expression of high intensity” (Knudsen & Waade 2010:16), and Knudsen & Waade compare this bodily feeling to that of viewing sublime art as well as taking part in adventure tourism. When it comes to experiencing a foreign place, tourists value authenticity above many other things. Authenticity of objects and experience alike adds value to the journey and gives travelers a certain cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979) they otherwise would not rightfully be the owners of. For example, a tourist able to purchase an authentic Berber rug made by a Berber woman using all local materials and traditional tools and methods obtains a greater deal of cultural and thus social currency than someone who comes home with a carpet made of synthetic materials from China, albeit it was purchased whilst visiting Marrakech. As Naji (2019:142) writes, heritage “is more likely to concern a wealthy class of people who have other concerns than just survival.” This connects again to Turtinen’s (2000) theory of reification. When the cultural tradition of weaving became “heritage” it also became something that could be owned and was especially sought after by the international market.

In just 2018, Vogue Magazine published an article titled, “How to Buy, and Style, a Vintage Moroccan Rug.” The article says “The difference between a handmade rug and a mass produced one is in the final look and feeling of the room. Vintage Moroccan rugs add very apparent substance and class, but also, authenticity” (Hall 2018). The “real thing” is ultimately paramount to the consumer. The international tourist market is a driving force of the current carpet weaving economy in Morocco (Naji 2019). The consumers’ desires for genuine, authentic, and traditional carpets influence the trends being produced by Berber women. Although weavers “aspire to modernity,” they often comment that the taste of Westerners resembles that of their grandmothers (Naji 2019). The heritage production most sought after by the international consumer is an old fashion design. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004:59) discusses the relation between the metacultural nature of heritage and time as “the possession of heritage as a mark of modernity.” This pattern of the past influencing present heritage creation and storytelling begs the question if one informs the other. Is the demand for old fashioned carpets (heritage production) informing the modern stories being told by Berber women through carpet weaving, and thus informing Berber identity and history in the contemporary context? “In a society marked by the absence of the written word,” Berber women are “the guardians of

language and other elements of Berber culture;” they have preserved a millennium-old cultural heritage (Belahsen et al. 2017:4).

2.1.2 Place Making

Place is “a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world” (Cresswell 2014:18).

When people think of Morocco, whether they have visited or not, Berber carpets are often one thing that comes to mind. Images of Moroccan handicrafts can be found in many forms: books, television programs, movies, museum exhibits, interior design, social media, etc. “But even before the voyage to Morocco the potential tourist has numerous opportunities to view the images and descriptions of these carpet types” (Nicholas 2014:400). These images set an expectation and standard for what tourists can expect traditional Moroccan textiles to look like. People learn the words ‘Berber,’ ‘Rbati,’ and more through simply shopping for carpets and noticing interior design details. “Novels, film, television series and documentaries provide representations of place which can stimulate a ‘desire’ to visit a destination” (Knudsen & Waade 2010:2).

Sociologist John Urry (1990) created the term “tourist gaze” meaning that when people visit a place they are not from, they gaze at the environment in a socially constructed way, which in turn puts certain pressures and expectations on the host community. “Just like language, one’s eyes are socio-culturally framed and there are various ‘ways of seeing’” (Urry & Larsen 2011). The tourist gaze is directed at landscape, townscape, even objects, and “People linger over such a gaze, which is then often visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be reproduced, recaptured and redistributed over time and across space” (Urry & Larsen 2011:16).

Nicholas (2014) points out that potential tourists already know about Berber rugs before travelling to Morocco to see them for themselves, which connects the tourist gaze with a sense of place. Place making is a central element in tourism and informs the tourist gaze prior-to-and-upon arrival at the destination.

2.1.3 Storytelling through Weaving

Women have given their culture a physical representation of their history and life that transcends time. Each carpet, tapestry, blanket, etc. tells a story. Some primary themes in the stories told through weavings include nature, the life cycle, and motherhood. The women are the ones who keep the culture alive through telling these deeply personal stories that many members of their community can share in and relate to. Mothers share these skills of weaving, tattooing, pottery, and other art forms with their daughters. Patterns are passed down, so the names for symbols and motifs vary amongst family units (Becker 2006). Because the Berber language and culture have been marginalized since post-colonization in Morocco (Sadiqi 2017), weaving is another language and vehicle by which to convey narrative. By telling stories at a global level through this tradition, a light is shone upon the local culture aiding the preservation of the original Berber dialect (Tossa 2012). Cynthia Becker (2009:72) writes “visual arts have become an important means by which activists construct a transnational Amazigh identity, linking members of the Amazigh cultural and linguistic movement across national borders.”

Motifs and designs such as triangles, bands, and zigzags have symbolic meanings associated with them. For example, the triangle is viewed by scholars as an abstract hand with five fingers, representing the five pillars of Islam (Becker 2006). According to Rebecca Hagen, the registrar at UNESCO World Heritage Site Falling Water, the diamond or lozenge motif is a geometric representation of the womb (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy 2018). This is one of the most prevalent symbols used in Berber carpet weaving. For example, something as subtle as whether a dot is placed within a triangle or outside can represent whether a woman was pregnant or lost a child during the time in which she was weaving that segment (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy 2018).

Bert Flint (1980) points out that nomadic textiles do not have an exact middle point and are not framed within a border. He mentions that these weavings instead repeat sequences of horizontal patterns which reflect “an evenly sustained succession of equal parts. This can perhaps be related to a non-hierarchic society and a nomadic lifestyle” (Flint 1980:58) as well as different

perceptions of space and time. This craft is a tradition, it is spiritual, and it is practical as these goods created serve necessary functions in the home and in daily life.

Another thread in the metaphorical tapestry of Moroccan cultural heritage is a strong spiritual element associated with the weavings of Berber/Amazigh women. According to Becker (2017), who has conducted many years of research in nomadic communities in Morocco, the moment a woman attaches the warp threads to the loom, is the moment the textile is “born” and has a soul. Then, as she weaves (often for months for just a single carpet) she tells stories. With the choice and placement of symbols as well as the colors selected, a story is crafted, and this is the life the textile is living. When it is finished, the weaver says a prayer for the textile, cuts it off of the loom, and it “dies” (Becker 2017). This metaphorical life cycle experienced by the textile during the weaving process means that the woman weaving it will “be protected from spiritual beings, called jnun (singular: jinn), who can afflict those passing through life’s transitions” (Becker 2017:38). The folklore and spirituality of the Berber people is literally woven into the fabric of their culture. Each tapestry, rug, garment, etc. contains stories, legends, symbols, and designs for protection. Becker (2017:38) writes, “Moroccan weavers sprinkle salt around a loom, which safeguards the weaver from the jnun, who are said to be repelled by it.” As mentioned, Berber women weave the narratives of their people into carpets. In return, “apart from earning immediate credit on the information exchange, social narrative can earn a general *status* for those who consistently provide information of high value and low cost: information not already known, relevant to listeners’ situations, unexpected...” (Boyd 2010:168). This theory transitions into the next grounding point of departure: how the role of narrator interacts with gender in the Atlas Mountains.

2.2 Traditional gender roles in rural areas

The theory covered in this section is summed-up well by the following: “Gender-specific research has challenged the traditional notion of men as active migrants and women as their passive partners who may stay behind and wait for their return, accompany them and travel under their protection, or follow them once they have paved the way” (Bock et al. 2017:9). Similar to other rural locations, the geographical movement of Berber women in Morocco is

restricted. “Cresswell (2010) even describes modern (wo)men as nomads who are constantly on the move” (Bock et al. 2017:8) which provides a clear contrast to the reality of Berber women. Traditional gender roles in the Atlas Mountains are observed in most households. Rural regions remained without infrastructure longer than other parts of the country, which gave way to unemployment, chronic illiteracy, and poverty in the Berber-speaking countryside. Sadiqi (2017:148) plainly states “migration was the only means of social mobility for the poor rural Berbers.” But the migration and physical mobility of women in the mountains is not seen as a good thing (Naji 2012). Most men in these areas “see formal education as fostering less subdued, more inquisitive and assertive women who are perceived as ‘trouble makers’” (Naji 2012:380) and “female expression is perceived as a threat to peace” (Yacine 2001:104).

“Amazigh women who work wool are highly respected, and it is said that a woman who makes forty carpets during her lifetime is guaranteed passage into heaven after she dies” (Becker 2006:44). The belief is that the wool contains blessing or “baraka” and often this baraka is transferred to the women who weave (Becker 2006:44). Maintaining the status quo and women retaining this position of esteem (allotted to them by weaving their culture’s stories into rugs) would afford a culturally richer, but financially poorer and more marginalized life. Gender equality and the right for girls to receive a quality education is at stake if the status quo is to be maintained and the future preservation of this culture rests solely on the shoulders of women and girls. In connection to the previous sections, Fredengren (2015:122) writes that there is an argument for “associations between heritage and place/ identity making as well as the use of heritage in peace and reconciliation efforts or as a way of mobilizing people into participating in taking care of their neighbourhoods.” She goes on to claim that “an involvement in heritage would empower people, facilitate dialogue and engage them [in this case, Amazigh women] in local democratic movements” (Fredengren 2015:123). Amazigh women and their art already play a role on the national stage through the production and trade of Berber carpets. Their invaluable role in the market should serve as a source of empowerment within their own communities which are dominated by men (Belahsen et al. 2017).

The interplay between UN Sustainable Development Goals #4 – Quality Education and #5 – Gender Equality are at the intersection of this cultural heritage tradition and modernity. “Most

young girls enrolled in school prefer to concentrate on their studies rather than learn the weaving arts—which they have deemed old-fashioned and outdated—from their mothers and grandmothers” (Becker 2017:41). The weaving Amazigh women are awarded status, honor, and respect for upholding their cultural heritage. Consequentially, young girls are less likely to receive a formal education. In a way, women are responsible for the survival of the Berber people. This responsibility is of great importance, but also great weight. These women have created an artform that encapsulates their people’s culture and narratives, but they are also the ones responsible for maintaining those stories and keeping up production. Women are “the main actors in the preservation of Berber identity” (Belahsen et al. 2017:4) and the longevity of their culture is seen to depend on it.

2.3 Nomadic Tourism

“Places are branded and becoming objects of consumption; both symbolically as objects for hungry tourists and concretely as they are reconstructed as consumption sites” (Knudsen & Waade 2010:6).

Western society has been fascinated with nomads for many years “either as a contemptuous case of pre-civilizational barbarism or as a romanticized icon of holistic freedom” (D'Andrea 2006:106). Many tourists in Morocco look for adventure-based experiences including typical nomadic activities such as riding a camel through the desert and sleeping in a characteristic tent, among other things. Tiberghien and Xie (2018:235) define neo-nomadic tourism with the following: “the changing aspect of the material culture in the country by various stages of touristification has transformed elements of traditional nomadic traditions into newly evolved lifestyles to become eventually a ‘neo-nomadic’ tourism culture.” There may be conflicting interpretations of this form of heritage, for example what makes a person truly a “nomad” and what art is representative of an entire people group. Not all Moroccans would identify with nomadic heritage or consider it heritage at all. The heirs of traditional Berber textile weaving are, of course, the Amazigh/Berber people. “Inheriting marks the passing away of the social relations that heritage objectifies; it signals a radical disjuncture between the past and the present” (Hafstein 2018:107). By having heritage, one must be of the present era. The concept of Amazigh

identity is most relevant in a literate, city-dwelling community (often activists) rather than to villagers (Crawford 2002). Young girls from rural areas are now distancing themselves from weaving, but still not enough to start regarding it as heritage. Perhaps the next generation will, as gender roles continue to shift in the Atlas Mountains. Those with a more modern way of life and with increased time and space separating them from the rural lifestyle may identify with/find more significance in this form of cultural heritage. In this case, heritage, and inheriting culture is how the current generation relates to the past (Hafstein 2018).

Silverstein (2009:170) frames it well when he writes that the Berber people “were originally nomads who were sedentarized and urbanized.” The nomadic lifestyle as a whole is considered heritage because it is a tradition that has outlived globalization, modernization, etc. It is becoming less and less common for a culture to maintain this way of life. “Indigenous culture needs to be continually re-made in response to changing times” (Silverstein 2009:175), like all culture, really. UNESCO does include the nomadic lifestyle more generally as intangible cultural heritage, though not that specifically of the Berber people. Nomadic groups are evolving along with the rest of the world and there are fewer of them now than ever before.

The entry of the weavers in Sirwa, Morocco into the global economy started during the colonial period when the commodification of carpets “was planned as part of a larger economic scheme in which the tourist industry was to play a central role” (Naji 2012:372).

Naji (2019) tells about a top-selling carpet design that features camels surrounding a square divided into quarters. Many interpret this design to represent a home shared by four wives against a nomadic background. Carpet traders “play on well-known orientalist stereotypes of harem and tribal life, when in reality polygamy is rare and frowned upon, and weavers who experience nomadic life constitute a very small minority today” (Naji 2019:139). Accuracy can be lost and misconstrued in order to fulfill tourists’ “hunger for exoticism” (Naji 2019:139) and “idyllic vision of cultural mobility and lifestyle” (Tiberghien & Xie 2018:242).

2.3.1 Sustainability

The survival of this cultural heritage is directly linked to many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and there are serious roadblocks to reaching them. I can begin by relating the issue to goal #15 – Protect Life on Land. Tourists fly to major cities like Fez and Marrakesh and drive for hours through the mountains to reach the desert where they can ride camels and live like the nomads do. This travel pattern of course has an impact on the environment.

“Increased desertification has resulted in a shortage of wool, and those who do weave can purchase pre-dyed thread at a market rather than spin and dye their own wool” (Becker 2017:36). The impacts of climate change clearly have a direct link to weaving production. Climate change is jeopardizing the nomadic people of the Sahara Desert’s way of life and traditions.

Berber rug weaving is directly connected to the UN’s SDGs #1 – No Poverty and #8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth because selling this craft is a significant source of income for women in rural Morocco (Naji 2012). Although textile weaving provides employment opportunities, it also limits girls’ education options and other work prospects. This also leads to goal #11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities. Because nomadic tourism is such a draw in this region, Berber women continue to weave shawls for the tourist market even though rural women themselves do not commonly wear handwoven shawls anymore (Becker 2017). When the host community is empowered “in development by emphasizing the elements of social capital in a local context” (Saarinen 2006:1131), sustainability is attainable. Lastly, but perhaps most relevant, is goal #4 – Quality Education. The opportunity for education in rural Morocco is limited and a gender gap reveals the education of boys as higher priority than that of girls (Bouoiyour 2016). The carpet weaving tradition connects with this goal because rather than attending school, girls often learn to weave at a young age (Naji 2012). These goals are each connected and intertwined creating a complex issue. Fulfilling these goals are contradictory: one must not be met in order for another to be achieved as is often the case with the multifaceted problems of sustainability and destination development.

3. Methodology

In this section I will describe the social research methods employed over the course of this study. I drew upon a basic form of the grounded theory technique because my research abilities and time were both limited.

3.1 Subject of investigation and objectives of the study

The objective of the study was to gain more in-depth knowledge on the topic and a sound understanding of the weaving tradition and how it interacts with destination development in a modern context. I used both primary data, collected by myself in the form of interviews, and secondary data, in the form of academic literature. Through conducting these interviews, I hoped to gain more insight on the interaction between cultural heritage, gender, and tourism in Morocco, and relate this to Amazigh women in particular and essentially, their potentially inadvertent role in destination development.

3.2 Research design

When searching for the most apt research method and choosing my interview correspondents, my main goal was the ability to tie together all of my theoretical points of departure with first-hand information gleaned from interviews. Considering my research questions and my very limited access to relevant participants, the qualitative method became the clearly viable and necessary choice. A survey or other form of data collection of the quantitative sort was not suitable for the needs and requirements of my research because I was interested in the why and the depth of feelings within this topic. Personal interviews added new knowledge and understanding to the subject as quotes from pertinent individuals who are central to this topic in the modern context provide the most valuable insight and perspective available. The interviews were semi-structured which allowed for the flow of conversation to be determined by the interviewee. I asked some initial questions, but the participant was the pilot of the conversation and voiced what they believed to be important. These particular methods were chosen because

my research question and points of departure covered such a wide breadth, and interviewing people from many different social groups was imperative.

The interviewees were chosen based on context and in order to give breadth to support my theoretical points of departure and answer my research questions. I was seeking a broad, expansive coverage/reach of individuals from various relevant groups. Thus, I chose a method of purposive sampling (Bryman 2012:408). Each interviewee was chosen in a strategic manner rather than on a random basis. There is an associated risk of bias when choosing purposive sampling, however with the help of my subject reader this was intentionally avoided.

The criteria I used for selecting these sources was whether the individual had a strong connection to and knowledge of rural Morocco or not, first and foremost. I found the individuals for my qualitative interviews as a result of snowball sampling. I began by researching NGOs relevant to my research topics online using keywords such as “Berber carpet weaving, Berber women, Atlas Mountains girls’ education” etc. My first point of contact, Sonia with Education for All Morocco, referred me to other potential respondents as she saw their positions and experience more relevant to my topic than she was herself. I used a combination of deductive and inductive methods. Initially, I used my guiding research question and sub questions as points of reference, but there was space within my method for the snowball effect. One interview led to the next and individuals offered connections/recommendations of scholars, organizations, and various others they thought might be relevant sources for my research.

3.3 Interview design

The interviews were each conducted digitally. The first choice of medium was via video call technology with Zoom so as to have the ability to pick up on body language and have some visual connection. The second choice was in written form, conducted via email and WhatsApp messaging.

Each respondent is from a different background and perspective and fulfills a unique role within my research. I had originally planned to interview four people all within the same social group,

school, or industry. However, my access to Moroccan individuals with relevance to the Berber textile weaving industry proved to be limited. I selected a mixed group of interviewees from varying professions, fields, and roles that each shared a connection to Morocco and an interest in Berber culture. This setup broadened the results from the interview process as a whole.

3.4 Data Collection

Due to the qualitative nature of the research, the data collection for this study consisted of ethnological interviews and reading primarily academic literature. The academic literature was collected via the Uppsala University library's online databases and Google Scholar. The literature was selected based on the criteria of being published, peer reviewed writing, and of relevance to my research questions and points of departure.

Data from interviews was gathered using Zoom, WhatsApp messages, and email. These were the preferred methods of communications selected on an individual basis by each interviewee. The conversational interviews were between 30 minutes and one hour and were recorded via Zoom software. The written interviews were conducted as such because they involved a third person translating the questions from English to a mix of Berber dialect and French, and subsequently translating the respondent's answers from Berber and French back into English, or they were simply the preferred method selected by the interviewee. The interviews that needed to be translated required additional time as well as made the typed method the option of choice. An added risk was assumed by using a translator to ask the questions I had posed on my behalf, as meanings can at times be altered through translation. However, it was imperative and hugely beneficial for my research to be in contact with a local Berber woman. Her first-person perspective was the most valuable, being of nearest relevancy to the topic and research question. My interview with Amina was an instance of critical case sampling, which Bryman (2012:409) describes as "Sampling a crucial case that permits a logical inference about the phenomenon of interest— for example, a case might be chosen precisely because it is anticipated that it might allow a theory to be tested." Rather than employing any speculation from other interviewees or myself, Amina answered my questions using her own real-life experience.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

As the researcher, it was important for me to realize my own biases prior to and during the data collection phase. As an educated woman, I have the bias that all women deserve to be literate and receive an education. Throughout the drafting process of my interview questions, I realized I have a tendency of posing leading/steering questions to produce the answers I was looking to hear. This needed to be overcome as did both the language and cultural barriers I found between myself and the interviewees. The interviews with Berber respondents were all conducted via text (through email and WhatsApp). In some ways this was helpful because they could see each question visually and take their time to respond in whatever way and to whatever degree they felt inclined. However, much of the positive aspects of interviewing were lost with this method. There was less opportunity to gain trust and establish rapport before asking questions, and meaning is often missed/miscommunications can occur when communication is done through writing. Because I did not have access to these individuals in person and a verbal conversation with some respondents was simply not possible because we do not share a common language, the ability to conduct some interviews in this fashion enriched my research in a way that would not have otherwise been possible.

All interview participants were informed about the reason I was requesting an interview, the topic of my thesis and the interview questions, as well as the public nature of my research. Each person interviewed via Zoom consented to recording. Each interview respondent was given the option of remaining anonymous or allowing me the use of their name. In order to provide a more detailed context, I used the names of organizations and business and chose not to anonymize individuals, but to use their first names in order to preserve the richness of the interview. I explained how I would be using the data gained from their interview within the context of the research and thesis project as a whole. They have each asked to see the results of this thesis and it will be shared with them upon completion.

The ethical risk I associate with interviewing those who are not Moroccan by origin is “otherizing” the Amazigh people. I have chosen all interviewees based on relevancy, diversity in

roles, and accessibility. However, I was particularly aware and acted cautiously when forming my questions in order to avoid exoticizing, fetishizing, and otherizing while conducting my interviews. One way I achieved this was by avoiding “us and them” language and asking multiple trusted peers and mentors to review my questions before I presented them to my interviewees, among other things. This method of seeking revision of each individualized set of questions prior to each interview also helped me further think about potential cultural and language barriers in advance. I was able to communicate with each respondent multiple times preceding the interview and on multiple occasions after which helped to establish a relationship beyond the confines of the interview. This repeated contact also helped to break the ice and set a tone (for both myself and the interviewee) for a friendly and professional interview.

3.6 Analysis

Each of the four interviews have been conducted and transcribed in English. One was translated from English to Berber and French, then the responses were translated from Berber and French into English. All discernable fillers have been included in the transcriptions. The two interviews conducted via Zoom were transcribed manually and without the aid of any software systems. I wanted to assure the accuracy of my transcripts as well as spend a significant amount of time studying each interview, becoming better acquainted with the individual and their responses. The two interviews conducted via email and WhatsApp were in written format with no transcription necessary. Thematic coding was employed as a method in order to identify patterns and overall themes (Bryman 2012). I initially processed each interview individually, using a system of *open coding* (Bryman 2012) to find main themes discussed by the interviewee in his/her response. Bryman (2012:578) defines open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data.” Next, using the coding concepts gleaned from open coding, I took a look at the themes discussed and noticed how they interacted and overlapped. This process is called *axial coding*: “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories” (Bryman 2012:578). Finally, the broad categories and main areas of focus were determined through *selective coding*, which is “the procedure of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further

refinement and development. A core category is the central issue or focus around which all other categories are integrated” (Bryman 2012:578). This gave me a workable coding system I could use with specific themes within more broad categories. All coding was done manually, with pen and paper. Using this system allowed me the ability to produce conclusions in my analysis of the data.

3.7 Role as Researcher

I chose an interpretivism school of thought which “respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences” (Bryman 2012:26). Having the ability and priority of being self-aware is of utmost importance to me as a social researcher in order to produce legitimate data and findings. Charlotte Aull Davies defines this as reflexivity: “a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Davies 2008:4). The results of a study are inevitably affected by the individual(s) and the methods employed when conducting such social research (Davies 2008). This thought was at the forefront of my mind throughout the entire research process. My attempt was to create an open environment during each interview for the participant to speak freely considering the time, space, and technology barriers.

4. Analysis

In this section I will share the results and primary findings from the interview process. After speaking with each person, transcribing their interviews, using open coding for each individual transcription, and then using axial coding to find common themes and connections (Appendix 1), I have prepared the following synthesis of that data and selective coding. This section will give an in-depth analysis of the Berber cultural heritage tradition of carpet weaving and how it interacts with gender and the tourism industry in a modern context.

4.1 Interviewee Profiles

The interviewees share in common the fact that they have all spent some time in Morocco and are aware of elements of Moroccan culture. The interview guides and preemptive questions for each respondent were all individual and personalized to them. My questions for each touched on similar themes so as to answer my research question concisely.

Amina – The Eve Branson Foundation

Amina is a Berber woman and an embroidery and textiles teacher at the Eve Branson Foundation in the High Atlas Mountains. For this interview, I sought to gain insight on the craft of carpet weaving and the social structures around it. My questions mainly focused on current attitudes and feelings towards weaving, whether or not it is viewed as a form of cultural heritage preservation, and the current social implications surrounding this community and tradition. This interview gave me more insight into the impact these women who weave rugs have on sustainable destination development as the manufacturers of a sustainable good that is highly sought after by tourists and designers worldwide.

- Conducted via email. May 16, 2021.

Ismail – Camel Excursions Morocco (Camel Excursions S.A.R.L AU)

I met Ismail in 2018 in Morocco. He provided valuable insight regarding the tourism industry in Morocco and nomadic tourism in general. He is a business owner, manager, and tour guide at his company, Camel Excursions Morocco. Ismail is a nomad and from the desert village of Merzouga. His perspective as a Berber from within the tourism sector was respected and valued as an authority.

- Conducted via WhatsApp. May 5, 2021.

Sonia – Education for All Morocco

This interview focused on education in rural Morocco, primarily in the High Atlas Mountains. I was interested to know about the perspectives of girls in rural Morocco who were attending

school. I requested to interview the students but was sensibly denied as the girls need to focus on their education. EFM is approached quite often by researchers and students in search of collaboration, and their mission to support the girls with their education is top priority. Even so, I was able to interview an employee there who focuses on fundraising and communication. I spoke with her about her interpretation of the girls' general attitudes towards education and the opportunity provided to them by the organization in order to gain more insight on modern opinions regarding education for girls in rural Morocco.

- *Conducted via Zoom and recorded. April 29, 2021.*

Thomas – tourist who visited Morocco in 2017

In order to better answer my research question regarding sustainable destination development, I was curious to know if and how an individual who had traveled to Morocco would associate traditional Berber rugs with Moroccan heritage/Morocco as a whole. I am interested in the role of Berber rugs in place making from the perspective of the tourist gaze, and I wonder about the sustainability factor within this context. Thomas is a seasoned traveler and familiar with the concept of authenticity. This interview was meant to aid me in finding themes in a tourist's views of Berber rugs and therefore assess the ability of this form of cultural heritage to generate a sense of place for visitors.

- *Conducted via Zoom and recorded. May 7, 2021.*

4.2 Results

Coding themes and categories are bolded for readability. The main themes that resulted from the interviews are as follows:

culture/tradition, gender, education, authenticity, tourism, and the carpet weaving industry.

4.2.1 Culture/tradition

During my visit to the Atlas Mountains in 2017, the concept of time and the way in which it is viewed by nomadic people was a theme throughout my trip. I was told that, in general, nomads

don't think of the past and future nearly as often as the present moment. Decisions and activities are based on the current situation. Heritage is the relationship between modernity and time (Harrison 2012). Carpet weaving is one of the primary representations of heritage in Berber culture.

Beginning with the category **culture/tradition**, each interviewee spoke about their experience within or their impression of Amazigh culture and cultural heritage. Most interviews included moments discussing **cultural heritage** and the importance, history, and tradition of Berber carpet weaving as a whole. As mentioned previously, weaving is a living tradition that has been valued and passed down from one generation to the next for centuries (Becker 2006; Naji 2019). Ismail and Amina provided first-hand perspective as Berbers.

Ismail: Berber rugs have been in my life from birth. My mother made them. They are not just for sitting, we use them for blankets and for clothing. They are part of Berber culture.

Amina: All my family members weave because it is a tradition inherited from generation to the next. It is a very old traditional Berber custom that represents the authentic Amasigh identity. It remains mostly a feminine art. It is for the feminine outlet where women display their potential and strength.

My theory when starting this research was that perhaps girls are in search of a different future for themselves with more options outside of the traditional: domestic and agricultural activities (Belahsen et al. 2017) and carpet weaving. **Breaking from tradition** seemed to be a significant talking point for many interviewees. The carpet weaving tradition is maintained and upheld, although women and girls are choosing alternate paths and futures (such as education) outside of solely weaving and domestic responsibilities. Signs of modernity creating a shift from past traditions in the modern context were mentioned in particular.

Sonia: It takes a lot of courage from them to do something so new, you know, as a girl, where it's maybe just less traditional that girls are educated.

Amina: I think the new generation have more expectations to a new refined and luxurious life.

As a whole, opinions are shifting in regard to girl's education in rural Morocco. As more girls are educated, villages are able to see the positive impact this can have on overall quality of life and increased opportunities. Naji (2012) and Yacine (2001) both describe educated women as threatening and seen as less than desirable in rural areas; however, one interview suggested this has changed, and in some instances is no longer the case.

Sonia: I think probably the first evidence is the fact that more and more families bring their daughters to be at EFA. So, I think that shows in a general sense that the attitudes are positive towards EFA and educating girls, and that's something that wasn't the case in the very beginning. We only had 10 girls. Now we have 250 so that shows in a sweeping way that they're happy with EFA and they're happy that their daughters are being educated, and they see that it doesn't present any problems that their daughters are educated.

Coded as **changing attitudes**, the interviews produced many quotes referencing a shift in mindset, challenging traditions.

Sonia: I've also heard stories of some of the mothers saying to their daughters "Look, I didn't have this opportunity. I'm illiterate. I couldn't go to school. Your success is my success." So again, real encouragement for the girls to be educated, which is a great sign.

One interview added insight to the **preservation** of this form of cultural heritage. The traditional motifs and symbols discussed by Becker (2006) and Flint (1980) remain prevalent today as do the themes and sentiments being preserved. In effect, carpet weaving is still a functioning method of recording these attitudes, ideas, and feelings that compose elements of Amazigh identity (Becker 2009). Speaking with Amina added a personal dimension to the earlier concepts discussed in chapter 2.1 of the theoretical framework.

Amina: It is the preserved culture which reflects fertility, richness, female sexuality, freedom and nature. The most important and commonly used symbols in Berber weaving are those related to protection from evil and superstition.

4.2.2 Gender

The next primary category was **gender**. As mentioned before, carpet weaving is an activity primarily done by women, and it has implications regarding the options and lives of Berber women specifically. Due to the complex nature of this issue, carpet weaving improves/adds options for women (employment and increased community), while limiting them simultaneously. Rural Morocco is a male dominated society (Belahsen et al. 2017). Combined with a cultural heritage traditionally maintained by women and girls, one might see a culturally richer society with the cost of women placed in a marginalized role within this society. Alongside domestic responsibilities, Moroccan women “transmit and recreate the traditions and values that characterize Moroccan culture” (Sadiqi 2012:3). Interviews provided strong context for the current and long-standing traditional **gender norms** and expectations placed upon women and girls.

Sonia: Of course, then once they're with us we can really focus on their education which they can't do when they're at home. Even if there was a school around the corner, when they're at home, they're helping mom cook and clean. They're looking after siblings. They're washing clothes down by the river. You know, it's a hard and busy life. So, another benefit to have them in the houses is that they can completely focus on themselves, they can focus on their studies.

The reality of **early marriage** for many Berber girls and young women (as well as the importance of marriage in general) was formative to my understanding of social systems in rural Morocco. This tradition creates barriers to upward mobility for women.

Sonia: [A] very poor, rural family that don't have much space or many resources to get by to live, of course for the girl to be married as soon as possible is a way of taking financial pressure off the family.

The concept of empowerment appeared often while conducting my research. According to Sadiqi (2012:6), “Historically, Berber women have been associated with freedom, boldness, and political leadership.” The Berber women of Morocco, specifically, are related to these traits in stories from ancient folklore spanning all the way up to scenarios in present day villages. Female

empowerment through education was a significant finding that connected two main categories: **gender** and **education** and the ways they interact with **cultural heritage preservation**.

Education is a tool that reflects that freedom, boldness, and leadership (Sadiqi 2012) and opens up other options for the futures of rural girls.

Sonia: So, it [education] completely changes their options in terms of their own empowerment. Maybe even their empowerment to choose who they want to be married to because they know that they're just more aware that they have options, for example.

The same notion arose in regard to employment and was coded as **empowerment through employment**.

4.2.3 Education

Education was spoken about frequently throughout the interviews. It was discussed as a top desire for rural Moroccans, as well as a contributing factor to the existing social, cultural, and economic situations. Though they are deeply linked with the endurance of the Berber language, a large majority of women in rural Morocco are illiterate (Sadiqi 2012). **Opportunity for education** is often not easy to come by in the Atlas Mountains/rural Morocco, but when one does, it has the potential to be life-altering.

Sonia: [T]hey're [students at EFA] extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be at school and probably all of them have illiterate mothers and grandmothers. So, they're often the first to get educated in their families and also in their villages so it's an opportunity that they really appreciate and that they really take on with a lot of determination.

Ismail: All of my life I was around tourists... The money we raised helped with living and school expenses. As I got older, I went away to school during the week, and would work on the Saturdays and Sundays selling fossils when I came home. I needed more money to go further in school, so I decided to quit and work full time.

Though the opportunity for education can be limited in rural Morocco (Bouoiyour 2016), **empowerment /opportunity from education** is often a desired and frequent outcome. Many

moments throughout the interview process reflected the sentiment that with education comes greater empowerment and opportunity.

Sonia: We have two girls that are actually studying their master's degrees. So, some continue on through their education as well. I know of a girl that did her degree and then did a teacher training to become a biology teacher and some that got paid internships in Marrakech, so with employment opportunities.

4.2.4 Authenticity

I asked a variety of questions about authenticity and what that meant in terms of Berber carpets, and nomadic tourism/tourism in Morocco in general. The concept of the possession of heritage (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004) combined with the international market's desire for authentic Berber carpets (Naji 2019) have influence on the actual product, thus altering this form of living heritage to a certain extent. **Heritage production** and selling Berber rugs on a global scale brings accompanying questions and concerns of authenticity (i.e. mass production, the use of synthetic materials, etc.). I was interested to know (from the perspective of a tourist) the definition of authenticity and how important its presence is when purchasing something from a particular culture.

Thomas: And I really felt that if I buy such a thing that is related to a culture and has a meaning for a culture, I'm really always try to buy the authentic one. I would kinda feel weird to have something in my house that is not authentic but is just like taken from the culture and redone very cheaply. So, it's also maybe I'm trying to support the community with my purchase. When I'm traveling, I always get from the country that I am visiting something typical that is very special. So, I guess carpet would be something that I would get from Morocco.

4.2.5 Tourism

The nomadic lifestyle has long been exoticized by the global West (Naji 2019) which is reflected in the demands of tourists visiting Morocco. **Authenticity** and placemaking, and Berber cultural heritage preservation intersect uniquely within the tourism industry.

Ismail: Tourists want to experience the feeling of riding the camel in the desert, to experience nomadic life and something different than what they are used to... Most tourists are interested in the camel riding excursion.

When a tourist activity is based on a particular lifestyle, it runs the risk of becoming performative or inauthentic. **Nomadic tourism/lifestyle tourism** was discussed as something sought after by many tourists (Tiberghien & Xie 2018), but the individual tourist I interviewed was not interested in this type of activity while traveling.

Thomas: I think no way we would have done any sort of deserty overnight trip on camels or stuff. I'm usually not a person that does this kind of tours. You know what I mean? I usually don't ever pay for experiences and just very rarely. Because I'm not the person that...I'm interested in culture, but I also don't feel comfortable to be part of people watching.

4.2.6 Carpet weaving industry

Finally, the last major category I coded from the interviews contained comments relating to the carpet weaving industry. This was in some ways a broad category, but it served to group together thoughts about the international market as well as the local industry. With the prevalence of Berber carpets spanning far reaches of the globe for decades (Naji 2019), the culture has been in the spotlight on the international stage and provided an identity and visual representation in local activist movements (Becker 2006). Thus, the talented weavers often achieve a certain status locally, which in some instances is of greater value than education. When asked about the social status awarded to women who weave, Amina replied with the following:

Amina: She would become a famous professional weaver who will be associated with weaving in ceremonies.

5. Conclusion

An obstacle I found when conducting my research was the fact that the Muslim holiday Ramadan was for 30 days during the time in which I had scheduled for data collection. This made timely interviews difficult to come by as my respondents were only available during certain times. Language was another limitation to data collection as my sole working language is English. This wasn't a significant problem as most of my respondents spoke fluent English. The one participant with whom I did not share a common language, completed the interview questions with a translator. Above all else, the biggest limitation to conducting my study in the manner I had intended was the fact that I wasn't able to interview any girls currently in the education system in rural Morocco. This greatly impacted my research. When it became apparent that this group would not be available for interviews, I was required to shift my research completely. I understood why my request for interviews was denied, seeing as the students being in school and dedicating their time towards their education is top priority. Following this need to pivot, I chose a more diverse and broadened group of interviewees to provide a multidisciplinary look at the topic at hand.

My main research question was, *“In what ways does the preservation of Berber culture rely on women sticking to traditional roles, and what are the consequences of this in the contemporary world?”* Carpet weaving is still viewed as a valuable and noble representation of Berber cultural heritage. However, attitudes are changing. Girls and women in rural Morocco are seeking more opportunities through education and alternate forms of employment. The desire to create a home that is pleasing to one's family and husband is still prevalent throughout rural communities. Things are shifting socially, but of course this takes time. Men are involved in certain processes within the carpet industry--specifically and most often in trading--but design and production are most commonly the work of women (Naji 2012). Though they are being challenged more frequently, traditional mentalities regarding gender norms are still intact. Without women to hand down the Berber customs, traditions, and language through weaving and other forms of craft, Berber cultural identity would fade rapidly.

In terms of current events for the Berber people, the two main objectives of the Moroccan Berber movement are to achieve official recognition/status of the Berber language and to create space for the Berber community in the socio-political landscape (Ennaji 2014). “Thus, Berbers today demand not only linguistic and cultural rights, but also economic opportunities, political rights, and dignity” (Ennaji 2014:93). Activists have used the art created by indigenous women to represent the Berber people group as a whole when seeking to achieve these two main goals (Becker 2009). “Amazigh women demonstrate the esteem, respect, and status accorded to motherhood by incorporating fertility symbolism into their woven carpets, clothing, tattoos, and hairstyles” (Becker 2006:42). Berber women’s weavings are critical in preserving Amazigh culture and symbolize a heritage identity in an overt manner. Women are central to the Berber story and Berber heritage.

Becker (2006:55) writes, “women, especially mothers, symbolize what it means to be Imazighen, demonstrating the artistic legacy of Amazigh women to Morocco's history and contemporary identity.” The act of creating textile art in this traditional format is the intangible cultural heritage clearly valued by the native people and tourists seeking authenticity. This practice provides Berber/Amazigh people with a sense of belonging. In the words of Valdimar Hafstein (2018:110), they “subjectify themselves as ‘communities’ and objectify their practices and expressions as ‘intangible heritage’” which, of course, generates Moroccan cultural imagery and adds to and informs the tourist gaze. Linking back to the sub research question, “*How does this form of intangible cultural heritage contribute to sustainable destination development in Morocco?*”, Berber carpets alongside images of nomadic tourism do supply visuals used in placemaking. The tourist gaze often associates Moroccan culture with these components. Though in a constant state of change and shifting with time, the nomadic lifestyle and traditional Berber carpet weaving are still participated in today and nevertheless hold deep significance for those who are partake in these activities.

Due to the restricted timeline, limited resources, and overall brief nature of this project, further research is necessary. I would suggest further research be conducted by collecting interviews amongst young women who weave Berber carpets, whether professionally or solely for familial/domestic and practical purposes. To hear directly from this group about their opinions in

regard to this form of heritage and their own role in its preservation would be invaluable research and paramount in any discussion relating to sustainable development of the Atlas Mountains region. Further research that prioritizes amplifying the voices of Amazigh women, a group of people with a lot to say, is necessary and suggested for significant advancement in the study of destination development in rural Morocco.

Appendix 1: List of codes

Culture/tradition	<p>Amina: I learnt traditional craft industry in my hometown in a small city called Safi when I was in the primary school. My mum was my first teacher then I joined a craft school.</p> <p>Amina: All my family members weave because it is a tradition inherited from generation to the next.</p> <p>Amina: It is a very old traditional Berber custom that represents the authentic Amasigh identity. It remains mostly a feminine art. It is for the feminine outlet where women display their potential and strength.</p> <p>Ismail: Berber rugs have been in my life from birth. My mother made them. They are not just for sitting, we use them for blankets and for clothing. They are part of Berber culture.</p> <p>Thomas: That's the same when purchasing this carpet which I think brought me to this guy in Berlin who is from Morocco, married to a German. Then I actually went to his house and saw his family and he was saying yeah, he had two huge carpets from his family, his parents, and they sent it over.</p>
Preservation	<p>Thomas: They're [Berber carpets] very practical, but also at the same time they kinda transport a message.</p> <p>Amina: It is the preserved culture which reflects fertility, richness, female sexuality, freedom and nature. The most important and commonly used symbols in Berber weaving</p>

Breaking from tradition

are those related to protection from evil and superstition. My contribution is to maintain a human heritage from disintegration.

Sonia: They're [students at EFA] often the first to get educated in their families and also in their villages.

Sonia: It takes a lot of courage from them to do something so new, you know, as a girl, where it's maybe just less traditional that girls are educated.

Sonia: I haven't heard that they feel so pulled to follow the family traditions, but maybe some will...

Sonia: So, what we see is that as the years go on, the girls become more confident, there's more of a culture of learning, and they see the girls before them going onto university, for example.

Sonia: Some go back to the villages, and they get married, but they're going back to the villages and married with a completely different outlook on life and with education and with literacy.

Thomas: Some parts it's very traditional and in some points when we met locals, we felt like, we didn't feel that religion is a topic at all.

Amina: I think the new generation have more expectations to a new refined and luxurious life.

Changing attitudes

Sonia: [B]ecause now more and more families want to send their girls to us, which is a great sign of how attitudes are changing.

Sonia: I've also heard stories of some of the mothers saying to their daughters "Look, I didn't have this opportunity. I'm illiterate, I couldn't go to school. Your success is my success." So again, real encouragement for the girls to be educated, which is a great sign.

Sonia: ...we're in a process of evolving (it's just really the last 14 years that EFA has been in operation) probably it will take a couple of generations to really see what the processes of the girls evolving into a new culture, being educated.

Sonia: I think probably the first evidence is the fact that more and more families bring their daughters to be at EFA. So, I think that shows in a general sense that the attitudes are positive towards EFA and educating girls, and that's something that wasn't the case in the very beginning. We only had 10 girls. Now we have 250 so that shows in a sweeping way that they're happy with EFA and they're happy that their daughters are being educated, and they see that it doesn't present any problems that they're daughters are educated.

Sonia: ...one of the families was having a big kind of village meeting and they needed to make some decisions. I'm not sure of the details. But one of the fathers of one of our girls said, "We will have this meeting on Saturday

	<p>because we will wait for our daughter to come home before we make these decisions.” So that shows how that they realize that the girls have access to knowledge and can bring something to the villages that the villagers themselves don’t have the answers to or the knowledge for. So, I thought that was a very positive example, and it also shows the respect and admiration for the girls’ education...</p> <p>Sonia: ...it’s a big step to make a change in your traditions and customs. I always like to acknowledge them in the process of the advancement in girls’ education.</p>
<p>Gender Gender norms</p>	<p>Sonia: Of course, then once they’re with us we can really focus on their education which they can’t do when they’re at home. Even if there was a school around the corner, when they’re at home, they’re helping mom cook and clean. They’re looking after siblings. They’re washing clothes down by the river. You know, it’s a hard and busy life. So, another benefit to have them in the houses is that they can completely focus on themselves, they can focus on their studies.</p> <p>Sonia: So, there’s definitely something in terms of acknowledging that Covid was especially difficult for rural girls and a lot of that was due to the domestic chores that they traditionally do...</p> <p>Thomas: I didn’t feel unsafe [in Morocco], I would say, not at all. But since I was traveling with some girls, I think they had a different experience maybe.</p>

<p>Early marriage</p>	<p>What do you think you would be doing (right now) if you weren't teaching carpet weaving?</p> <p>Amina: A housewife to please my children and my husband.</p> <p>Sonia: Some go back to the villages, and they get married, but they're going back to the villages and married with a completely different outlook on life and with education and with literacy.</p> <p>Sonia: Well, they would be married and having children, and it's traditional in these villages for the girls to marry quite young, some as young as 14, 15, 16. So they would certainly be married as soon as their communities thought they were ready to be married, which is why we started up EFA.</p> <p>Sonia: [A] very poor, rural family that don't have much space or many resources to get by to live, of course for the girl to be married as soon as possible is a way of taking financial pressure off the family.</p>
<p>Empowerment through education</p>	<p>Sonia: Some go back to the villages, and they get married, but they're going back to the villages and married with a completely different outlook on life and with education and with literacy.</p> <p>Sonia: So, it completely changes their options in terms of their own empowerment. Maybe even their empowerment to choose who they want to be married to because they</p>

<p>Empowerment through employment</p>	<p>know that they're just more aware that they have options, for example.</p> <p>Sonia: I know of one girl that went back to the village and got married, but then her and her husband run a small bed and breakfast. You know, she's able to greet the clients, speak to them in English. So, she has more of a role than she probably would have had, had she not been at the EFA houses.</p> <p>Sonia: You know, they'd be mainly looking after the cows and the goats and collecting grass to feed the animals. So, they wouldn't be in an income generating position as illiterate women and girls.</p> <p>Thomas: And I remember last time, we also stopped by this argan oil plantation which was really nice. It was just like this local co-op for women, it was really cool. You could just buy their product and support them right away. It was just really nice. Because I would imagine to do that same, if there would be a co-op sort of thing for rugs. Where there's no pressure, and you know, you just see how your money goes straight to the people that make them and that would feel really good.</p> <p>Amina: They [women] are desperate to find another alternative work that would improve their family lives.</p>
<p>Gender + tradition</p>	<p>Amina: It is a very old traditional Berber custom that represents the authentic Amasigh identity. It remains</p>

	<p>mostly a feminine art. It is for the feminine outlet where women display their potential and strength.</p> <p>Amina: They are aware of how valuable the weaving is because it reflects their lost identity and the desire of the Berber women to challenge the patriarchal norm that defines female subjects as hardworking and confined in the domestic sphere.</p>
<p>Education</p> <p>Opportunity for education</p>	<p>Sonia: [T]hey're [students at EFA] extremely grateful to have the opportunity to be at school and probably all of them have illiterate mothers and grandmothers. So, they're often the first to get educated in their families and also in their villages so it's an opportunity that they really appreciate and that they really take on with a lot of determination.</p> <p>Sonia: [T]hey feel also a responsibility to kind of role model to the other younger girls the benefits of education. So, I would say they generally have a very positive attitude toward being able to go to school... They know that it's an opportunity.</p> <p>Sonia: It [atmosphere at EFA houses] really encourages learning and they get lots of additional support. So, they really have way beyond what they would have if they were even able to access the schools.</p> <p>Sonia: There are many obstacles that rural girls face, even if they can access the school, it's not necessarily...the education on its own is not really giving them the full</p>

<p>Empowerment/opportunity from education</p>	<p>benefits, and the EFA boarding houses are really focused on that.</p> <p>Ismail: All of my life I was around tourists... The money we raised helped with living and school expenses. As I got older, I went away to school during the week, and would work on the Saturdays and Sundays selling fossils when I came home. I needed more money to go further in school, so I decided to quit and work full time.</p> <p>Ismail: [When asked about options outside of employment in tourism industry] I would be lost...if I had the chance to study, I don't know.</p> <p>Amina: They [weaving students] would love to [attend school] because they are longing for a better change and improve their standards of living. There is only one secondary and high school in the High Atlas Mountains for more than 50 villages which is not enough.</p> <p>Sonia: So, for some of them it's just to pass the baccalaureate, which in itself is a huge success. It means they have completed their education.</p> <p>Sonia: So actually in 2019, before Covid, we had a 100% pass rate for the [baccalaureate] and I think about 84% of the girls that passed went to university and a couple of them also got scholarships to go to university in Casablanca.</p> <p>Sonia: We have two girls that are actually studying their master's degrees. So, some continue on through their</p>
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	<p>I felt, if it's wool, it doesn't bother me as much as where the carpet is made. I did the burn test. Just to see you... if it's... to see the wool quality. And it looked well-made, and I just felt this would look nice in my bedroom.</p>
Tourism	<p>Ismail: I like it because I don't feel like I am only working, I am working and learning at the same time.</p> <p>Sonia: They [EFA graduates] might be able to get a job or they might do something more vocational, like hotel tourism...</p> <p>Sonia: I know of one girl that went back to the village and got married, but then her and her husband run a small bed and breakfast. You know, she's able to greet the clients, speak to them in English. So, she has more of a role than she probably would have had, had she not been at the EFA houses.</p> <p>Thomas: Umm we were actually kind of scared back then because there were some issues or some things that happened to tourists, so we were actually not supposed to do stops or stay there. I don't remember, really why but at that point, I think it was just not an area where tourists would go or be, so we mainly just drove through it, that's how I remember.</p> <p>Thomas: And I have many friends that went to Morocco many times, and then they go there again and feel very close with the culture and the country.</p>

<p>Nomadic tourism/lifestyle tourism</p>	<p>Ismail: My family and I saved money and purchased a camel, in the first year we had two clients respond to my blog and book a camel ride into the dunes.</p> <p>Ismail: Tourists want to experience the feeling of riding the camel in the desert, to experience nomadic life and something different than what they are used to... Most tourists are interested in the camel riding excursion.</p> <p>Ismail: I knew the nomad woman from the mountains only by passing by her tent when I first began driving. I knew she was a nomad and as I am a nomad too, I knew she would invite guests into her tent and serve tea, it is the way nomads welcome people.</p> <p>Thomas: I'm familiar that those rugs do make a comfy home and it's easy to transport and it's the best surface to sleep on and cover yourself with in the cold nights in the mountains.</p> <p>Thomas: I think no way we would have done any sort of deserty overnight trip on camels or stuff. I'm usually not a person that does this kind of tours. You know what I mean? I usually don't ever pay for experiences and just very rarely. Because I'm not the person that...I'm interested in culture, but I also don't feel comfortable to be part of people watching.</p> <p>Thomas: I wanna see how they kill their chickens and cook it and I wanna be part of it [describing tour in Laos]. But you know, I just feel bad because it makes me seem like</p>
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	<p>this white person who's so much better and just pays for this experience to see poor how those people live. But I definitely think there might be some tours that are very sensitive towards this issue and might be better. But I just think, for me personally, it's not something I wanna do on my vacation. But still, I try to connect with locals. There's always some sort of exchange, but I don't wanna force it.</p>
<p>Carpet weaving industry</p> <p>Scam</p>	<p>Thomas: It's such an interesting piece and I also thought that the material...having a rug made out of wool is very... gives the room a very cozy atmosphere.</p> <p>Thomas: I would definitely try to visit the mountains this time and maybe also see places where those rugs are produced.</p> <p>Thomas: And I remember last time, we also stopped by this argan oil plantation which was really nice. It was just like this local co-op for women, it was really cool. You could just buy their product and support them right away. It was just really nice. Because I would imagine to do the same if there would be a co-op sort of thing for rugs. Where there's no pressure, and you know, you just see how your money goes straight to the people that make them and that would feel really good.</p> <p>Amina: She would become a famous professional weaver who will be associated with weaving in ceremonies.</p> <p>Thomas: I found websites that sell them, or they import them, they were about the same price sometimes. I just have the feeling did you buy them from a trader? Or not</p>

trader, like a shop in Marrakech or Essaouira. Like they would crazy overprice it, because what I paid for other stuff there it seemed like a big scam to me sometimes, and it was like way too expensive. I don't blame them; I would do the same. I would hardly trust (even if I read some reviews on google or whatever) and I feel really bad about saying this, but it's really, go shop in a souk of Marrakech, as foreigner, trying to buy a carpet I honestly, don't trust anybody.

Thomas: We went to this store, and I was really annoyed because they were all looking at this jewelry and they do the silver test. So, they kind of rub the silver onto some paper and some liquid and if the color changed it means it's real silver. And they chose their jewelry. I looked at him and how he takes the jewelry and rubs it on this paper, and I was like "oh my god, he has a second piece in his hands." He has a real piece of silver hidden somewhere between his fingers. And then I just asked him, "can you please open your hand?" And then everyone in the shop was like just so surprised. Everyone was like "oh my god, no we should leave!" and it was like a really chaotic scene. We left. It was a great moment for me, but it was a bad moment for this guy. But this is just too bad. Just too bad thing to do, right? But you know then one dealer...you leave the store, and he screams when you leave the store, he screams out on the street...everyone knows in this town that you, no one else would really sell you anything anymore. It seems like they all are kinda connected and working together. And they are all selling the same stuff, essentially, like really.

Purchasing heritage

Thomas: I just bought all other stuff, like typical leather goods and ceramics and all that stuff. But I think I didn't have my own apartment back then, so I was not focused on buying carpets, you know. But the first time I saw a Berber carpet was in London in like a fancy upscale furniture store, and that's when they caught my attention.

Thomas: And I really felt that if I buy such a thing that is related to a culture and has a meaning for a culture, I'm really always try to buy the authentic one. I would kinda feel weird to have something in my house that is not authentic but is just like taken from the culture and redone very cheaply. So, it's also maybe I'm trying to support the community with my purchase. When I'm traveling, I always get from the country that I am visiting something typical that is very special. So, I guess carpet would be something that I would get from Morocco... That's what I always do. I bring along gifts that I would put up in my apartment that are very specific from each country.

Thomas: We went to buy in Morocco, some jewelry silver, because it's also a thing you buy in Morocco, apparently...

Thomas: I wanna get those Berber cushion covers. Not to sit on. It's like a pillow cover, a small pillow cover, but it's also in this colorful and wool kinda style. And ceramics. When you're at the airport you hear everyone's suitcases, you hear the sound of smashing plates. And a lot of people carrying rugs.

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