

CONTROVERSIAL MARKETING: TUNISIA WOOS TOURISTS



After times of extreme turmoil, the reputation of Tunisia has plummeted. However, the vast beaches and stunning resorts are still available and tourists are needed. The response of the Tunisians has been to make a controversial campaign to woo the British and other European holidaymakers back.

Even in pre-revolutionary times, Tunisians did not have a great relationship with European holidaymakers and many experienced visiting major resorts such as Hammamet, Djerba and Sousse with very little contact with the locals.

Now that the North Africans are emerging from times of political upheaval, the fear factor of visitors has escalated. **The revolution has cut the numbers of tourists in half, specifically to 3.5 million last year.** For obvious reasons, Libyan tourists have stopped coming and hotels are much emptier than they were.

The Tunisian response has been a bold one: making a mockery of the situation and suggesting that the reputation of brutality and political violence is unfair. The argument behind the new advertising campaign is that Tunisia is no more dangerous than South Africa, where football fans went without fear in droves for last year's World Cup. Indeed, Tunisia is a lot safer than many would believe.

The controversy of the campaign has been focused on two slogans in particular. The first, visible even on London buses, shows a woman being massaged by a man with the words **"they say that in Tunisia people receive heavy handed treatment"** above. The second shows an archaeological site with the words "they say Tunisia is nothing but ruins".

In short, the campaign runs on the undertone of proving that Tunisia is far more peaceful and safer than one might think. However, fierce criticism of the slogans appeared in the media discussing the effects of the campaign.

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