

The role of material heritage in activating tourism in Algeria

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Abstract---The interest in cultural heritage is one of the policies adopted by countries to preserve their civilizational or historical heritage, serving as an important means of preserving the collective memory of peoples. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in attracting tourists, as heritage tourism has experienced significant growth worldwide. As a vital component of tourism, it is currently of considerable importance to the global economy, due to the benefits derived from tourism activities and their economic and social impact. Many countries have sought to promote this sector and make it one of their future economic options. Cultural heritage is a symbol of identity for individuals and communities and a fundamental element of their memory, linking the past to the present. It embodies the principles and values of the ancestors and passes them on to future generations. Therefore, the revival, preservation and reactivation of cultural heritage remains a major concern for various countries, as it represents an important economic, social and political resource.

Keywords---cultural heritage, heritage tourism, recreation, tourism development, components.

Introduction:

Algeria has placed significant emphasis on cultural heritage from a legislative perspective, issuing its first law related to excavations and the protection of historical and natural sites, known as Decree No. 67/281. After a considerable period, lawmakers recognized that this law was insufficient to cover all historical sites for their protection and maintenance. The legal framework governing these matters had

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become outdated and failed to align with contemporary realities and modern visions, particularly regarding buildings and historical centers, thus rendering the protection system inadequate¹.

In light of this inadequacy and legal void, it became essential for lawmakers to consider these issues and seek the opinion of the National Economic and Social Council to initiate changes in the legal system governing cultural heritage. This led to the establishment of a new law, Law No. 98/04, concerning the protection of cultural heritage, which laid down protective measures and regulated all activities conducted therein, especially tourism activities.

In addition, the legislator organized the tourism sector under a specific law, Law No. 03-01, which implemented legal mechanisms to develop and promote tourism within the framework of sustainable development, aimed at preserving property and tourism resources, particularly cultural heritage as a prominent component of tourism in Algeria².

Research problem:

Given the rich cultural heritage of Algeria, which could serve as a basis for developing heritage tourism and making Algeria a promising tourist destination, and considering heritage tourism as a complementary and essential element of overall tourism activities, our research problem is framed as follows:

To what extent has cultural heritage contributed to the promotion of heritage tourism in Algeria?

To address this research topic, a descriptive methodology was used to understand and identify cultural heritage and its relationship with local promotional tourism. This includes discussing various characteristics, mechanisms, principles and objectives related to the topic in order to draw conclusions that help understand the reality.

In addition, a content analysis approach was used to analyze legal documents through the content and interpretation of legal texts.

In order to effectively address the proposed problem, the presentation is divided into two main sections:

1. The importance of cultural heritage as a civilizational asset.
2. The components of cultural heritage tourism in Algeria.

Section One: The Importance of Cultural Heritage as a Civilization Asset

Cultural heritage is regarded as the treasure of the nation; it asserts its existence, confirms its identity and fulfills its aspirations. It provides the people with a unique identity that distinguishes them and is one of the essential elements that reveals the cultural depth of any nation and highlights its cultural and intellectual development.

The importance of tangible cultural heritage lies in its status as a unique, non-renewable resource of cultural, scientific, national and spiritual value. On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage may seem fragile, but it plays a crucial role in preserving cultural diversity and countering increasing globalization. Understanding the intangible cultural heritage of different local communities promotes intercultural dialogue and mutual respect for different ways of life³.

¹- Mohammed Naif Al-Saraireh, "Heritage Tourism and Its Role in the Tourism Industry and Enhancing Tourist Attraction to Jordan," *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism, and Hospitality*, Volume 5, Issue 3, September 2022, Fayoum University.

²- Ministry of Culture, "Legal Texts Related to Algerian Cultural Heritage," p. 10.

³- International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group, "Guidance Note No. 8: Cultural Heritage," January 2012, p. 2.

The importance of intangible cultural heritage lies not only in its cultural appearance, but also in the knowledge and artistic skills transmitted from generation to generation, as well as in the social and economic value associated with this transmission of knowledge, which is important for minorities as well as for larger social groups, and for developing as well as developed countries⁴.

For any nation, cultural heritage serves as a window through which the origins of cultures can be examined, allowing us to recognize both their essence and the changes they have undergone. Through this heritage, the true image of national identity becomes clear, revealing its close connection with civilization, literature, art, and the material and immaterial life of the people.

Cultural heritage is the primary foundation of thought and culture for the individual. Therefore, it is essential to preserve cultural heritage and raise awareness of the need to activate it and transmit it to future generations with pride and honor, as it strengthens belonging and emphasizes identity, awakening in individuals the capacity for inquiry and reflection, motivating them to work and strive for their existence.

Cultural heritage is of great importance in several respects, including:

First: National Identity:

The material remnants of civilizations that have passed through different peoples are not merely silent stone witnesses; they are symbols of a deep-rooted identity that is rooted in the depths of history and extends through the ages. In Algeria, for example, even colonialism, which sought to undermine Algeria's identity and its rich history of glory and heroism, was confronted in many of Algeria's archaeological cities with enduring artifacts that confirm the existence of a people who have known all the layers of human civilization that have accumulated on their land from prehistoric times to the present. These remains are the expression of a long history and a solid identity that continues to resist the colonizers' attempts to erase it. Cultural heritage remains a hallmark of this identity⁵.

Second, historical significance:

Cultural heritage represents a unique kind of history; it is both material and immaterial, tangible and living. Therefore, cultural heritage is an essential and vital source that historians rely on to write history. Through it, historians can confirm or deny certain historical events discussed in primary historical texts. Heritage provides material support for writing, as artifacts, from the historian's perspective, serve as physical evidence containing numerous historical, archaeological, artistic, and civilizational insights. This heritage is the shining historical facade of nations⁶.

Third, economic significance:

Cultural heritage is a source and wealth that can be exploited in the tourism sector and for investment, thereby benefiting economic development. This can only be achieved by paying attention to it and revitalizing it, such as rehabilitating archaeological sites to attract visitors and promote domestic and foreign tourism. This will lead to heritage tourism taking its rightful place in society to preserve this cultural heritage⁷.

⁴- Badis Boukhloua and Ridhwan Chafou, "Cultural Heritage as a Fundamental Pillar for Desert Tourism: The Case of Wadi Zigh," National Conference on: Tourism Investment, University of Adrar, December 5, 2018.

⁵- Ministry of Culture, "Legal Texts Related to Algerian Cultural Heritage."

⁶- Mohammed Abdo et al., "Folk Heritage: A Field Study in Rural and Nomadic Communities," Dar Al-Wafa for Printing and Publishing, Alexandria, 1st edition, Arab Republic of Egypt, p. 53.

⁷- Ousama Hassanein Obeid, "Criminal Protection of Archaeological Cultural Heritage: A Comparative Study," 1st edition, Dar Al-Nahda, Egypt, 2009.

The first requirement: Elements of cultural tourism in Algeria

First: Elements of natural tourism.

Algeria possesses numerous heritage qualifications and elements that appeal to tourists of different tastes. Its coastline extends over 1,600 kilometers and is rich in beautiful beaches, scenic landscapes, forests, plains, plateaus, mountains and caves. There are many natural reserves, such as the "Kala" Park, which extends to the border with Tunisia and consists of forests, marshes and lakes. The coastal waters enhance the sandy beaches, creating a picturesque view.

In the south of Algeria, the Saharan Atlas is a vast desert area that covers more than 80% of the country's territory, with numerous scattered oases of palm trees, fertile soil, sand dunes, rocky plateaus and stony plains. Notable regions include Biskra, Ghardaïa, Adrar, Souf Valley, Ain Salah, Ouargla, Tougourt, Jannet and Timimoun.

A particularly important area in the Algerian desert is the Hoggar mountains in Tamanghasset, which are of great importance for the country's natural heritage. This region is rich in treasures and monuments that show its unique characteristics, marked by diverse terrain and climate, as well as its towering mountains formed by wind-blown sands, notably the "Tahatt" peak, which rises to 2,918 meters⁸.

The rocks in this area contain remnants of animal and plant life, indicating the presence of life in this region since ancient geological eras, dating back over ten thousand years, including giraffes, rhinoceroses and elephants. This is evidenced by the rock carvings and engravings scattered throughout this natural and historical museum. The Algerian desert is a rich and diverse tourist product that must be protected and exploited to promote desert tourism, a source of revenue for the national treasury if it is taken into account in Algeria's future economic strategies⁹.

Second: Material components of tourism

The material components of tourism are represented by the provision of hotel services that cater to different sizes and levels of tourists, as well as the availability of appropriate infrastructure such as highways, sea or air ports, communication networks and the new international airport, as well as the Setif tramway and the railway lines in Béchar and others¹⁰.

In general, Algeria has an acceptable level of infrastructure, which is expected to improve in the future with the completion of several other major projects. In the field of hotel services, Algeria has experienced continuous growth, with an increase in the number of hotels depending on the type of activity¹¹.

Third: Civilizational and Historical Tourism Elements

Algeria is a country with a rich historical and civilizational heritage, rooted deeply in its past and encompassing various historical phases. The country is characterized by a diversity of civilizations and archaeological sites that reflect its invaluable heritage. Notably, Algeria boasts seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Roman, Islamic, and ancient inscriptions, as seen in the ruins of Tipaza,

⁸- Abbas Al-Jarari, "From the Inspiration of Heritage," Al-Amnia Printing House, Riyadh, 1971, 1st edition, p. 154.

⁹- Abdel Karim Azouk, "Archaeological Heritage: Definition, Types, Importance, Protection, and Utilization as an Economic Resource," Journal of Law and Human Sciences, Issue 25, 2014, p. 4.

¹⁰- Houssein Houssein, "Feasibility Study of Tourism Investment Projects in Algeria: A Marketing Perspective," Master's Thesis in Economic Sciences, University of Algiers, 2009, p. 127.

¹¹- "Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism in the Arab World," Publications of the Arab Organization for Administrative Development, Cairo, Egypt, 2020.

Djemila, the Casbah, the M'zab Valley, the Castle of Beni Hammad, the city of Timgad, and the Tassili n'Ajjer caves, in addition to many other sites on the path to global classification¹².

Algiers, the capital, features numerous historical landmarks that testify to the region's history. Among these is "Dar Aziza," a palace built during the Ottoman era to receive guests of the court. Another significant site is the "Ketchaoua Mosque," constructed during the time of the Turkish Beylarbeys in Algiers over four centuries ago, and the "Great Mosque," the largest mosque in the capital, built by the Almoravids at the end of the 11th century¹³.

Algeria's cultural and civilizational heritage also includes a significant collection of museums, such as the "National Museum of Cirta" in Constantine, one of the oldest museums in Algeria. The idea of creating this museum was born in 1852 in order to collect the numerous excavations discovered in the city and throughout eastern Algeria. In addition to this museum, Algeria's historical and civilizational heritage includes many other museums.

In addition to this cultural and civilizational heritage, Algeria possesses a popular cultural heritage that embodies local customs and traditions, as well as various handicrafts. Notable traditional products include carpet weaving, famous in areas such as Ghardaïa, Djelfa and Aurès; copper craftsmanship, famous in Constantine; and pottery, found in several regions, particularly in the Kabylie area¹⁴.

The wealth of Algeria's natural, historical and civilizational resources is significant and must be preserved, exploited and enhanced in order to promote and develop tourism patterns linked to this tourist product, making it competitive in the Arab and African tourism markets and thereby increasing its share of international tourism¹⁵.

Algerian cities show a mixture of different architectural styles, mainly Andalusian, Ottoman, French colonial and modern designs, as can be seen in cities such as Constantine, Oran, Tlemcen, Blida and Algiers.

Conclusion:

Cultural heritage protection is a policy adopted by countries to preserve their civilizational and historical heritage, and serves as an important means of preserving the collective memory of nations. Cultural heritage is one of the key elements of tourist attraction and contributes significantly to the revitalization of heritage tourism, which has experienced significant growth both internationally and locally. Algeria is one of the countries that has not lost its heritage and cultural identity and has historical, cultural, social and natural resources to attract tourists. Visitors can experience the daily life of our ancestors at heritage sites, museums, certain hotels, and even in ancient cities and houses, as well as mosques and other traditional details that promote cultural heritage. Heritage tourism is on the rise in Algeria, prompting the state to work on reviving and promoting its cultural heritage.

Based on this, several recommendations can be made, as follows:

- The responsibility of using cultural heritage for tourism lies with the entire community, so it is essential to preserve and enhance it.
- It is necessary to raise the tourist awareness of the citizens, to educate the youth about the cultural heritage and to ensure its care and revival for the benefit of tourism.

¹²- Nabil Boutflikha, "A Comparative Study of the Tourism Sector in North African Countries: The Case of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco," First National Conference on: Tourism in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Bouira University, May 12, 2010, p. 23.

¹³- Moussa Boudehan, "The Legal System for the Protection of National Heritage," Algeria, Dar Al-Huda, Ain Millila, 2002.

¹⁴- Hamidat Saleh and Qumih Faisal, "Competitiveness of the Algerian Tourism Sector," National Conference on: Tourism and Tourism Marketing in Algeria, October 28, 2009, "Potential and Competitive Challenges," University of Guelma.

¹⁵- Nasrin Rafik Al-Laham, "Tourism Planning for Archaeological Areas Using Environmental Impact Assessment Techniques," 1st edition, Cairo, Publishing and Distribution House, p. 22.

- Considering the competition among active institutions, it has become necessary for organizations in the same sector to establish a specialized department for marketing and promotional activities.
- The office should create a website that presents its achievements and programs, including historical information about the various components of Algeria's cultural heritage, along with images. The website should also provide information on Algeria's geography, nature, climate and population.
- It is crucial to utilize heritage houses and old caravanserais, renovating them to serve as popular heritage restaurants and hotels to attract tourists.
- There is a need to promote traditional craft markets and folk heritage to attract tourists and raise awareness of Algeria's cultural heritage and handicrafts.
- The development of archaeological sites and the provision of services within them is essential, along with efforts to educate local and foreign tourists about the history of these areas.

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