

## Heritage tourism in Algeria

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**Abstract**---Cultural heritage preservation is crucial for countries to retain collective memory and attract tourists. Global heritage tourism has seen substantial growth, making it a popular sector in the global economy. Many countries are prioritizing the advancement of this sector for future economic options. Cultural heritage embodies the identity and memory of individuals and societies, reflecting ancestral principles and values. Its preservation and revival are crucial for economic, social, and political development globally.

**Keywords**---Cultural heritage, heritage tourism, recreation, tourism, components.

### Introduction

Algeria has shown a strong commitment to preserving its cultural heritage through legislative measures, such as the enactment of Order No.67-281, which focused on regulating excavations and safeguarding antiquities, historical sites, and natural landmarks. However, over time, it became evident that this legislation was inadequate in effectively protecting and conserving all historical sites. The legal framework was deemed outdated and unable to keep up with the evolving needs and challenges faced in the preservation of buildings, sites, and historical centers, leading to deficiencies in the protection system.<sup>(1)</sup>

Given the existing gap and absence of legal framework, it became imperative for the lawmaker to consider these factors and consult the National Economic and Social Council in order to initiate a reform in the legislation governing cultural heritage. This led to the restructuring of cultural heritage under a new law, namely Law No.98-04 concerning the safeguarding of cultural heritage. This law

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(1)- Mohammed Nayef El-Charayra, Heritage Tourism and its Role in the Tourism Industry and Activating the Process of Attracting Tourists to Jordan, *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality*, Volume 5, Issue 3, 2022.

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introduced regulations for the protection and supervision of all operations conducted within these sites, with a particular focus on tourism-related activities.

Conversely, it is evident that the lawmaker has established regulations for the tourism sector through a unique legislation, Law No.03-01, which has implemented legal measures to enhance tourism and promote its growth while ensuring sustainable development to safeguard tourism assets and resources, particularly the cultural heritage which plays a vital role in Algeria's tourism industry.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **The problematic:**

Looking at this perspective, with Algeria's abundant cultural heritage potentially positioning it as a hub for heritage tourism development, the country shows promise as a sought-after tourist destination. Recognizing heritage tourism as a crucial component in the tourism sector, our research focused on the inquiry: How has cultural heritage played a role in rejuvenating heritage tourism in Algeria?

In the research paper, we relief on a descriptive approach to delve into the topic at hand, aiming to comprehend and recognize the cultural heritage and its correlation with local promotional tourism. This approach explored various characteristics, mechanisms, principles, and objectives associated with the subject matter, ultimately leading to several insightful conclusions that enhance our understanding of reality.

Additionally, the content analysis approach was adopted to examine legal documents by scrutinizing their content and interpreting legal texts. To effectively address the raised issue, the intervention was divided into two main Chapters. The first emphasized the significance of cultural heritage as a valuable asset for civilization, while the second focused on the components of heritage tourism in Algeria.

### **Chapter One: The significance of cultural heritage as a valuable asset for civilization**

Cultural heritage is widely regarded as a valuable asset of a nation, serving as a means to assert its presence, validate its accomplishments, and fulfill its aspirations. It bestows upon its people a unique identity that sets them apart. Furthermore, it serves as a fundamental element in unveiling the cultural richness of any society and showcasing its intellectual and cultural progress.

Tangible cultural heritage is a valuable, irreplaceable asset with cultural, scientific, national, and religious significance. On the other hand, intangible cultural heritage, though delicate, plays a crucial role in safeguarding cultural diversity and addressing the challenges of globalization. Exploring the intangible cultural heritage of various communities promotes intercultural dialogue and fosters mutual respect for diverse ways of life.<sup>(3)</sup>

The significance of intangible cultural heritage does not solely reside in its cultural manifestation, but rather in the transmission of knowledge and artistic abilities from one generation to another. This transfer of knowledge holds both social and economic value, which is relevant not only to minorities and large social groups, but also to developing countries. Developed countries also find this topic intriguing.<sup>(4)</sup>

The cultural legacy of each country serves as a portal offering insights into the roots of various cultures, providing a platform to understand their evolution and the transformations they have undergone. This heritage unveils the authentic essence of a nation's identity, showcasing its intimate ties to civilization, literature, art, and the daily lives of its people on both tangible and intangible sides.

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

(3)- International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group, Guidance Note 8: Cultural Heritage, January 2012, p.2.

(4)- Bedis Boukhloua & Radouan Chefou, *Cultural heritage as a basic pillar of desert tourism, Onedi Zigh region as a model*, National Forum on Tourism Investment, Adrar University, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Cultural heritage holds immense significance as it serves as the initial foundation for an individual's thoughts and culture. Therefore, it becomes imperative to safeguard this heritage and create awareness about the importance of actively engaging with it and passing it down to future generations with a sense of pride and honor. By doing so, it not only strengthens the sense of belonging but also accentuates one's identity. Moreover, cultural heritage stimulates the innate human ability to explore, reflect, and motivates individuals to strive for progress and transformation in order to fulfill their purpose in life. Cultural heritage holds immense significance across various dimensions, encompassing:

#### **A. The national ID**

The remnants of past civilizations left behind by various peoples are not mere lifeless stone structures, but rather serve as symbols of an intrinsic identity deeply rooted in history and spanning across generations. In Algeria, for instance, even in the face of colonialism's attempts to challenge the country's identity and rich history, the evidence of ancient civilizations still lingers in many of Algeria's archaeological sites. These remnants affirm the presence of a people who have witnessed the evolution of human civilization on their land from ancient times to the present, reflecting a profound history and unwavering identity that resisted efforts to erase it by colonizers, with cultural heritage serving as a testament to this enduring legacy.<sup>(5)</sup>

#### **B. The historic importance**

Cultural heritage is often regarded as a unique form of history, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects. It serves as a crucial and indispensable resource for historians when documenting the past. By drawing upon cultural heritage, historians can verify or refute historical events mentioned in primary sources. Moreover, the historian receives financial backing for their work, as antiquity is seen as a valuable foundation that holds a wealth of historical, archaeological, artistic, and cultural knowledge. It is an inheritance that proudly showcases the history of various societies.<sup>(6)</sup>

#### **C. The economic importance**

Cultural heritage is widely recognized as a valuable asset that can be harnessed for the advancement of tourism and investment. By giving due attention to cultural heritage and revitalizing it through the restoration of archaeological sites, for instance, we can attract visitors and promote both domestic and international tourism. This, in turn, will contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage and ensure its rightful place in society.<sup>(7)</sup> Ultimately, the economic development derived from cultural heritage will be a testament to its significance and the benefits it brings.

### **1. Components of heritage tourism in Algeria**

#### **1.1. Natural tourist attractions**

Algeria boasts a plethora of heritage qualifications and elements that cater to the diverse preferences of tourists. Spanning a vast coastal strip that stretches over 1,600 km, the country offers an abundance of picturesque beaches, breathtaking vistas, lush forests, expansive plains, elevated plateaus, majestic mountains, captivating caves, and numerous natural reserves. Among these reserves is the renowned "Kala" Park, which extends all the way to the border with Tunisia.

The landscape of Algeria is a stunning combination of forests, swamps, lakes, and coastal waters that create a picturesque scene for all to enjoy. In the southern part of the country, the Saharan Atlas dominates the Algerian desert, covering a vast area that makes up more than 80% of the country's total landmass. This desert region is home to numerous oases scattered throughout, showcasing palm forests, fertile soil, sand dunes, rocky plateaus, and stony plains. Notable regions within this desert landscape include Biskra, Ghardaia, Adrar, Ouedi Souf, Ain Salah, Ouargla, Touggourt, Djanet, and Tamanrasset.

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

(6)- Oussama Hassanin Abid, Criminal Protection of Archaeological Cultural Heritage, A Comparative Study, First Edition, Dar El Nahda, Egypt, 2009.

(7)- Abbas El-djarrari, *From Heritage Inspiration*, 1st edition, El-oumnia Press, Riyadh, 1971, p.154.

However, the most remarkable feature of the Algerian desert is the Al-Ahghar-Bantamrasset region, which holds great significance in the country's natural heritage. This region stands out due to its diverse terrain and climate, as well as its towering mountains sculpted by winds carrying sand. One such mountain, the "Tahat" peak, reaches an impressive height of 2,918 meters.<sup>(8)</sup>

The rocks in this region also hold the remnants of animals and plants, providing evidence of life dating back over ten thousand years, including giraffes, rhinos, and elephants. This is supported by the various drawings and rock engravings found across the natural and historical museum, known as the desert of Algeria. It is a valuable tourism asset that should be preserved and utilized to boost desert tourism, potentially becoming a significant source of revenue for the state treasury in line with Algeria's future economic trends.<sup>(9)</sup>

### 1.2. Tangible tourist attractions

The tourism industry encompasses various elements that cater to the needs of tourists of all sizes and preferences. This includes offering a range of hotel services, as well as ensuring the availability of essential infrastructure like highways, sea and airports, communication networks, and modern facilities such as the Setif Tramway, railway lines, and Bechar...<sup>(10)</sup>

Algeria boasts a satisfactory level of infrastructure, with further enhancements anticipated in the future due to the completion of various significant projects. In terms of hotel services, the country has experienced steady growth, with the number of hotels expanding in alignment with the demands of the industry.<sup>(11)</sup>

### 1.3. Cultural and historical tourism components

Algeria is renowned for its rich historical and cultural legacy, deeply rooted in the annals of time. Throughout its diverse historical periods, the country has showcased a remarkable civilization and an array of archaeological sites that bear testament to its invaluable heritage. Notably, Algeria boasts seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, encompassing both Roman and Islamic influences, as well as ancient inscriptions dating back to antiquity.

These sites include the awe-inspiring ruins of Tipaza, the captivating Djmila, the majestic Kasbah, the enchanting Ouedi Mizab, the formidable Beni Hammad Castle, the splendid city of Timgad, and the mesmerizing Tassili N'Ajjer caves. Moreover, Algeria is home to numerous other sites that are on the path towards international recognition and classification.<sup>(12)</sup>

Algiers boasts a plethora of historical monuments that serve as a testament to the rich history of the region. One such site is "Dar Aziza," a palace constructed during the Ottoman era to accommodate distinguished guests. Additionally, the "Ketchaoua Mosque," also dating back to the Ottoman era, stands as a significant landmark in the city.

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(8)- Abdelkarim Azzoug, Archaeological Heritage, its concept, types, importance, protection, and exploitation as economic wealth, *Journal of Law and Human Sciences*, No.25, 2014, p.4.

(9)- Houcine Houcine, *Feasibility Study of Tourism Investment Projects in Algeria from a Marketing Perspective*, Master's Thesis, University of Algiers, 2009, p.127.

(10)- Guidance manual on Sustainable tourism in the Arab world, publications of the Arab Administrative Development Organization, Cairo, Egypt, 2020.

(11)- Boutefleh Nabil, *a Comparative Study of the Reality of the Tourism Sector in North African Countries, the case of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco*, the First National Forum on: Tourism in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Bouira University Center, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, p.23.

(12)- Boutefleh Nabil, Op.Cit.

The presence of the Turkish "Bey Larbay" in Algiers for over four centuries adds to the historical tapestry of the city. Furthermore, the "Great Mosque," erected by the Almoravids towards the end of the eleventh century,<sup>(13)</sup> holds the distinction of being the largest mosque in the capital.

Algeria boasts a rich civilizational and cultural legacy, highlighted by a plethora of museums, such as the esteemed National Museum of Cirta in Constantine, recognized as one of the oldest in the country. The inception of this museum dates back to 1852 AD, with the primary aim of gathering the abundant fossils unearthed in the city and the wider eastern Algerian area. In addition to the National Museum of Cirta, there are numerous other museums that showcase Algeria's diverse cultural and historical heritage.

Algeria not only boasts a rich civilizational and cultural heritage but also possesses a vibrant popular cultural heritage. This is evident through a legacy of local customs, traditions, and various products of traditional industries. For instance, the carpet industry in regions like Ghardaia, Djelfa, and Aures, as well as the copper industry in Constantine, are well-known. Additionally, the pottery industry in the Kabylie region<sup>(14)</sup> further highlights the diverse cultural offerings of the country.

Algeria possesses a rich abundance of natural, historical, and cultural resources that should not be underestimated. It is imperative that these resources are safeguarded, utilized, and appreciated in order to enhance and cultivate the tourism offerings linked to this destination. By doing so, Algeria can position itself to effectively compete in the Arab and African tourism sectors, ultimately increasing its presence in the global tourism arena.<sup>(15)</sup>

The urban centers in Algeria showcase a blend of various architectural styles, including Andalusian, Ottoman, French colonial, and modern influences. This unique fusion can be observed in cities such as Constantine, Oran, Tlemcen, Blida, and Algiers, where each style contributes to the rich cultural tapestry of the country.

### **Conclusion:**

Countries adopt policies to preserve their cultural and historical heritage as a way to maintain their collective memory. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in attracting tourists, which has led to the growth of heritage tourism on both international and local levels.

Algeria stands out as a country that has successfully preserved its heritage and cultural identity, boasting a wealth of historical, cultural, social, and natural resources that appeal to tourists. Visitors can immerse themselves in the daily lives of our ancestors by exploring heritage sites, museums, hotels, cities, ancient houses, mosques, and other ancient heritage details. This commitment to preserving cultural heritage has resulted in the continuous growth of heritage tourism in Algeria, prompting the government to actively revive and promote its cultural heritage.

Consequently, a series of recommendations can be formulated, as outlined below:

- ✓ The responsibility of adopting heritage for tourism lies with the entire community, necessitating its preservation and promotion.
- ✓ It is essential to raise awareness about tourism among citizens, particularly the youth, by acquainting them with cultural heritage, ensuring its conservation, and revitalizing it for tourism purposes.

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(13)- Moussa Boudhan, *The Legal System for the Protection of National Heritage*, Dar El-Houda, Ain Melila, Algeria, 2002.

(14)- Hamidet Salah Qamiha Faycal, *Competitiveness of the Algerian Tourism Sector*, National Forum on: Tourism and Tourism Marketing in Algeria - Competitive Potential and Challenges -, Guelma University, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

(15)- Nesrine Rafik El-Lahham, *Tourism Planning for Archaeological Areas Using the Environmental Impact Assessment Technique*, first edition, Cairo, Publishing and Distribution House, p.22.

- ✓ Given the competitive nature of active ONAT institutions, it is imperative for organizations within the same sector to establish specialized departments focused on marketing and promotional activities.
- ✓ The Bureau should develop a website that showcases its identity, accomplishments, and programs, featuring historical details about Algeria's cultural heritage components, accompanied by visuals. Additionally, the website should provide information on Algeria's geography, nature, climate, and demographics.
- ✓ There is a need to repurpose heritage houses and old caravanserais by restoring them and transforming them into popular heritage restaurants and hotels to attract tourists.
- ✓ Enhancing traditional industries and popular heritage markets is crucial to draw tourists and highlight Algeria's cultural heritage, handicrafts, and traditions.
- ✓ Furthermore, efforts should be made to develop archaeological sites, offer services in those areas, and educate both local and international visitors about the historical significance of these locations.

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