

## Reality of E-Tourism in Algeria and its Role in Promoting Tourism Products

واقع السياحة الالكترونية في الجزائر ودورها في ترويج المنتجات السياحية

**Madoui Abdelaziz \***

Requirements for the rehabilitation and  
Algeria  
development of developing economies in  
light of global economic openness,  
Kasdi Merbah Ouargla , Algeria

madoui.abdelaziz@univ-ouargla.dz

**Bendjeroua Hakim**

Kasdi Merbah Ouargla,

Bendjeroua.hakim@univ-ouargla.dz

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### Abstract:

As one of the new communication technologies means that has significantly impacted the tourism industry, the role of e-tourism has become necessary and obligatory for countries and companies if they want to develop their tourism destinations. In this context, this study aims to explore and evaluate e- tourism and its uses in Algeria tourism sector and its role in promoting Algeria tourism products.

The results of analysis indicate that although both the great development of users of internet by Algeria population in the last decade and due to the weakness of Algeria official websites that are responsible for promoting and selling the tourism products, e-tourism has not been used in the right way to promote and sell tourism products across the international markets and facilitate to foreign tourists to arrive at Algeria tourism product and purchase it, thus it enhances the competitiveness of Algeria tourism destination.

**Keywords:** tourism product; e-tourism; ICT; IT; website.

**Jel Classification Codes :** L83; M37; Z32

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\* Correspondent author's

**Abstract in Arabic:**

كواحدة من تقنيات الاتصال الحديثة التي أثرت بشكل كبير على صناعة السياحة، أصبح للسياحة الإلكترونية دورا ضروريا و الزاميا للدول و المؤسسات لتطوير الوجهات السياحية وترويجها.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى اكتشاف و تقييم واقع السياحة الإلكترونية و استخداماتها في قطاع السياحة الجزائري، و كذا دورها في الترويج للمنتجات السياحية. و قد توصلت النتائج التحليل أنه رغم الاستعمال الواسع للانترنت من طرف الجزائريين بشكل عام، إلا أن ضعف المواقع السياحية الرسمية المسؤولة عن الترويج و وتسويق المنتجات السياحية، وعدم استخدامها لهذه الوسيلة بالطريقة الصحيحة عبر الاسواق الدولية و في المواقع العالمية قد أثر بشكل سلبي على بيع المنتجات السياحية وبالتالي تعزيز الموقع التنافسي للوجهة السياحية للجزائر.

**Keywords (in Arabic):** منتج سياحي; تكنولوجيا الاتصال و الاعلام; سياحة الكترونية; موقع الكتروني; تكنولوجيا الاتصال

**Jel Classification Codes :** L83; M37; Z32

**1.Introduction**

Tourism is a complex business ecosystem, which is based on a variety of operations, i.e. management and marketing offline and online activities (internal/organizational and external) (Stylos et al , 2021). Tourism is a combination of activities, services and industries such as means of transportation, accommodation and entertainment places, sports centers, restaurants, shops, etc. All these industries contribute to a nice travelling experience by lifting the standard of living, by promoting employment, by raising investments and thus supporting the economy (Hemasundari, Babu et al, 2014). Tourism is an economic activity that represents an important revenue source globally and it is the third most important activity in the exportation category (Pedrosa et al, 2020). Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and an important driver of economic growth and development with a significant impact on trade, job creation, investment, infrastructure development, and the promotion of social inclusion. International tourist arrivals increased from 697 million in 2000 to 1.4 billion in 2018 and are expected to reach 1.8 billion in 2030 (UNWTO, 2019).

According to World Tourism Organization tourism was one of the first sectors to digitalize business processes on a global scale, bringing flight

and hotel booking online to become a digital pioneer. Tourism as an industry requires a diverse range of information and lends itself well to the support offered by developing multimedia, communication technologies and information systems (Buhalis & Deimezi, 2003). Information search is one of the first steps of the vacation decision-making process. It is necessary for choosing a destination and for on-site decisions such as selecting accommodations, transportation, activities, and tours (Gursoy & Umbreit, 2004). A well-informed consumer is able to interact better with local resources and cultures, to find products and services that meet his/her requirements and to take advantage of special offers and reduced prices (Buhalis et al, 2011). Understanding the information search behaviour of travellers is therefore important for providing effective marketing strategies and designing appropriate communication campaigns (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2008). The rapid development and adoption of information technology in tourism and hospitality industries influenced the behaviour of consumers, such as information search, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour, as well as the suppliers marketing and management approaches (Mostafa Rasoolimanesh et al, 2019). Nowadays there exists an increasing interest on tourism recommender systems as more and more people use travel web services to obtain information for their trips (Sebastia et al, 2009).

The tourism industry is an intensive user of information and organizations adopted information technology (IT) to provide reliable and accurate information. Travel agencies, for example, use IT for reservation, accounting, and inventory management functions. Global distribution systems (GDS) are used for reservations, information search, client management and reporting (Standing et al, 2014). Information technology in tourism takes on many forms. Travel companies have adopted CRSs to obtain information and make bookings. Hotels have widely applied the technologies to integrate the front office, back office, and food and beverage departments (Koo et al, 2015). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have also radically changed the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism organizations, the way that businesses are conducted in the marketplace and how consumers interact with organizations (Buhalis et al, 2011). Travellers and tourists, of all ages, increasingly use digital technologies to research, explore, interact, plan, book and ultimately share their travel experiences (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). As information and communications technology (ICT) became a global phenomenon, tourism was a consistent early adopter of new technologies and platforms. ICTs play a critical role in the competitiveness

of tourism organizations and destinations as well as in the entire industry as a whole (Buhalis et al, 2011). ITs provide tools for enterprises and organizations to manage and market themselves in a more efficient and effective way as well as to develop interfaces with the entire range of their stakeholders (Buhalis, 1999). When looking into technology innovations, it is evident that ICT has changed consumer behaviour in hospitality and tourism in recent years. Consumer behaviour has been transformed and new realities emerge in the marketplace. Technology adoption, particularly the use of mobile platforms such as tablets, Smart phones and other handheld devices, is of critical importance on the use of ICT to engage in dynamic dialogue between consumers and suppliers (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014). ICTs can assist in the improvement of the service quality and contribute to higher guest/traveler satisfaction. ICTs place users in the middle of its functionality and product delivery (Buhalis & Law, 2008). And added that the impact of ICTs are becoming clearer, as networking, dynamic interfaces with consumers and partners and the ability to re-develop the tourism product proactively and reactively are critical for the competitiveness of tourism organisations.

The Internet is rapidly becoming the number one information source for travel and tourism. Internet provides a great deal of information directly accessible at low costs on prices, products and gain opportunities. The internet has become an essential tool for users in the decision-making process allowing them to search for information on products and services, to compare and assess the alternatives, and finally, to make bookings on the spot (Pedrosa et al, 2020). It also provides a tool for communication between tourism suppliers, intermediaries, as well as end-consumers (Kim, 2006). The internet allows travellers conveniently access a wide range of information related to the service products without any time and geographical constraints (Mostafa Rasoolimanesh et al, 2019). The efficiency of internet has been increased by the multiplication of infomediaries offering easier access to the information, the creation of shop bots comparing prices or selecting sites according to different choice criteria (Christian, 2008). The last statistics of internet users by Americans in their travel 65% of hotels are booked on the Smartphone the same day as it was researched, 79% of Americans researching trips will eventually book on their Smartphone via app or online. 90% of U.S. travellers use apps at their destination to make life easy. In Europe, and according to statistics in 2015 internet use related to travel is 39 % of population, 50% of internet users and 60% of population in participation in tourism (Eurostat, 2019).

### **Problematic of study;**

Although the diversity of Algeria tourism products, the destination of Algeria is at the last rank among both Arabic countries and the Mediterranean basin. And with the absence of serious studies and official statistics in one hand, and the importance of e-tourism in the promoting and selling of tourism products in other hand, the main question is: what is the reality of e-tourism in Algeria tourism destination and how Algeria's tourism products can be promoted?

### **Objectives of study;**

The main objective of this research paper is to explore and diagnosis the reality of e-tourism, and its applications in purchasing tourism products, and its contribution to promoting and marketing Algeria tourism products. In addition this paper tries to provide a comprehensive view of e- tourism in Algeria tourism sector.

### **Methodology of study**

In order to discover the reality of e-tourism in Algeria, the study used the descriptive and quantitative method for analysing. In the first part the study tried to identify the IT, ICTs and e –tourism. And in the second part, the study analysed the reality of e- tourism and its use in Algeria tourism sector and the inbound tourism, and finally the competitiveness of Algeria destination.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. E-tourism, concepts, definitions and roles:**

At the end of the last century and exactly when internet was discovered, the worldwide knew a revolution in information and communication technologies that affected all aspects of life like economic, social, cultural sectors. Tourism is one of sectors that was considered a great sector affected by internet which appeared many programs and applications for promoting and distributing tourism products among them what is known e- tourism (Wagaw & Mulugeta, 2018, Hojeghan & Esfangareh, 2011).

It has stimulated radical changes in the operation and distribution of the tourism industry. Perhaps the most apparent example in tourism is the re-engineering of the booking process, which gradually becomes rationalized and enables both consumers and the industry to save considerable time in identifying, amalgamating, reserving and purchasing tourism product (Buhalis, 1998).

The large number of travel and tourism websites being created in developed and developing countries shows the importance of ICT in the tourism industry and it also indicates the evolution of e-tourism in the world (Mohamed & Moradi, 2011). The technological revolution experienced through the development of the internet has changed dramatically the market conditions for tourism organizations. ICTs evolve rapidly providing new tools for tourism marketing and management. They support the interactivity between tourism enterprises and consumers and as a result they re-engineer the entire process of developing, managing and marketing tourism products and destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

Electronic tourism or e-tourism is a part of electronic trade, which encompasses the fastest developing technologies, such as communication and information industry, hospitality and management/marketing of strategic planning industry. The “e” stands for the electronic and represents the e-marketplace, where the e-business meets e-consumers, e-governing, e-partners and other e-business on e-platforms. The specific activities of e-tourism must rely on tourism operators, tourism agencies and other organisms directly interested in virtual tourism using a specialized website. The phenomenon itself involves both the consumer and the provider of tourism (Soava & Badica, 2008).

E-tourism has become the world’s largest industry composing of numerous enterprises such as airlines, hoteliers, car rentals, leisure suppliers and travel agencies (Merazi, 18-21 July 2011).

E-tourism is known as “travel technology” or “e-travel”, referring to a phenomenon and field in which the adoption of ICT by tourists and companies on the financing of operations and value chains in the travel industry (Al Chalabi, 2019).

(Kazandzhieva & Santana, 2019) Defined e-tourism as a process of digitalization of all managerial and business functions, services and stages of the value chain of the tourism system in order to increase effectiveness in the interactions between tourism companies, consumers and public sector thus achieving competitive sustainability.

E-tourism determines the competitiveness of the organisation by taking advantage of intranets for reorganizing internal process, extranets for developing transactions with trusted partners and the internet for interacting with all its stakeholders and customers (Hemasundari et al, 2014). And they added that some of the advantages of e-tourism are the reduction of

seasonality, the more successful communication with the customers and the raise in reservations and sales in general.

E-Tourism is a form of tool for data collection standardisation and consolidation, a management and follow up tool and a modern marketing tool to promote tourism in modern era, using the internet (Hefah).

We may summarize the importance reasons to users of e-tourism according to (Buhalis et al, 2011) as follows:

1. *Need recognition*: the key to success lies in the quick identification of consumers needs and in reaching potential clients with comprehensive, personalized and up-to-date products and services that satisfy those needs.
2. *Information search*: that considers a significant part of the purchase decision process and can reduce uncertainty and perceived risks, and enhances the quality of trips.
3. *Evaluation of alternatives*: travellers can now use the internet extensively to evaluate alternative opportunities and to compare and contrast offerings.
4. *Purchase decision*: more customers now purchase tourism products through web sites, and perceive that a web site's image and usability directly affect their purchase intentions.
5. *Post-purchase behaviour*: after travellers have returned home, they often like to share and exchange their travel experience. In this context, ICTs also provide a very effective mechanism for consumers to air complaints.
6. *Risk management*: as payment is the most important item in e-commerce, consumers are always concerned about payment security. Such concerns are a possible outcome of computer crimes, which are one of the primary factors that prevent consumers from providing credit card information.
7. *Implications*: with less time spent on waiting and planning, and more time on enjoyment, consumers have expressed their increasing interest in more convenience and choice, and in online travel shopping at home via travel web sites. At present, there is a large increase in the number of customers who make reservations directly from hotel web sites.
8. *Technological innovation*: e-tourism is spreading rapidly as a holistic and integrated system of networked equipment and software, which enables effective data processing and communication for tourism organizations and destinations.
9. *Interoperability*: enables partners to interact electronically with each other by the most convenient method, and to deliver the right information at the right time to the right user at the right cost.

## **2.2. Reality of internet users in Algeria**

According to [www.internetworldstates.com](http://www.internetworldstates.com), the users of internet in Algeria were growing from year to another. In 2000 the users of internet were 50.000 users among 18.580.000 of population with 0.2%. In 2010 the number of internet users were increasing rapidly with 4.700.000 users among 34.586.184 of population and it increasing 18.580.000 users in 2017 with 45.2% of population.

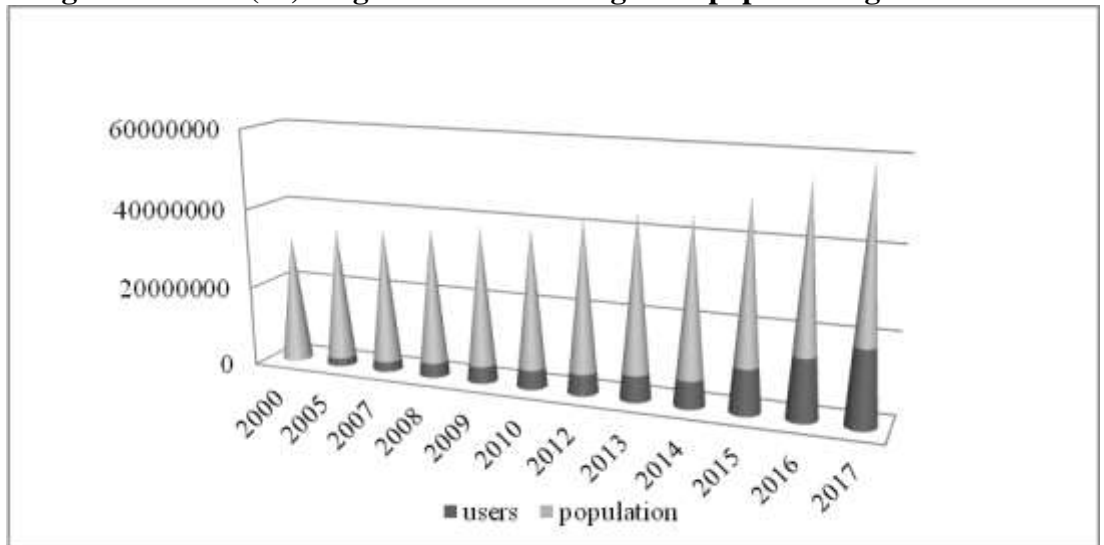
The table No 1 and figure No1 are shows the increasing of users internet in Algeria from 2000 until 2007.

**Table No 01: Algerian internet usage and population growth**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Users</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>% pen</b>
2000	50.000	31.795.500	0.2%
2005	1.920.000	33.033.546	5.8%
2007	2.460.000	33.506.567	7.3%
2008	3.500.000	33.769.669	10.4%
2009	4.100.000	34.178.188	12.0%
2010	4.700.000	34.586.184	13.6%
2012	5.230.000	37.367.226	14.0%
2013	6.404.264	38.813.722	16.5%
2014	6.669.927	38.813.722	17.2%
2015	11.000.000	39.542.166	27.8%
2016	15.000.000	40.263.711	37.3%
2017	18.580.000	41.063.753	45.2%

**Source: [www.internetworldstates.com](http://www.internetworldstates.com), November 28, 2017.**



**Figure number (01): Algerian internet usage and population growth**

**Source: own compilation based on table 1.**

### **2.3. The diversity of Algeria tourism products:**

According to (UNWTO, 2019) tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle. In this context Algeria is rich with its natural potentials such as coasts, mountains, cultural heritage tangible and intangible, and diversity of weather. According to statistics of ministry of tourism, Algeria has a 59242 classified hotel establishments and 66 434 Hotel establishments in the way of classification which includes 125 676 bad in 2019.

### **2.4. competitiveness of Algeria tourism destination**

Covering 140 economies, the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the travel and tourism sector, which contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country (forum, 2019). And according to World Economic Forum report Algeria was classified at the 116 ranke.

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And for our study index related to the use of internet is the five index regarding to information and communication technologies (ICT) readiness that including eight (08) indicators: Online services and business operations have increasing importance in T&T, with the internet being used for planning itineraries and booking travel and accommodation. However, ICT is now so pervasive and important for all sectors, it is considered part of the general enabling environment. The components of this pillar measure not only the existence of modern hard infrastructure (i.e. mobile network coverage and quality of electricity supply), but also the capacity of businesses and individuals to use and provide online services. In this index Algeria was ranked at 89 logging behind many Arab countries such as Jordan was ranked at 65rank , kuwait at 39 rank, Qatar at 36 rank, Bahrain at 24 rank, United Arab Emirates at 04 rank.

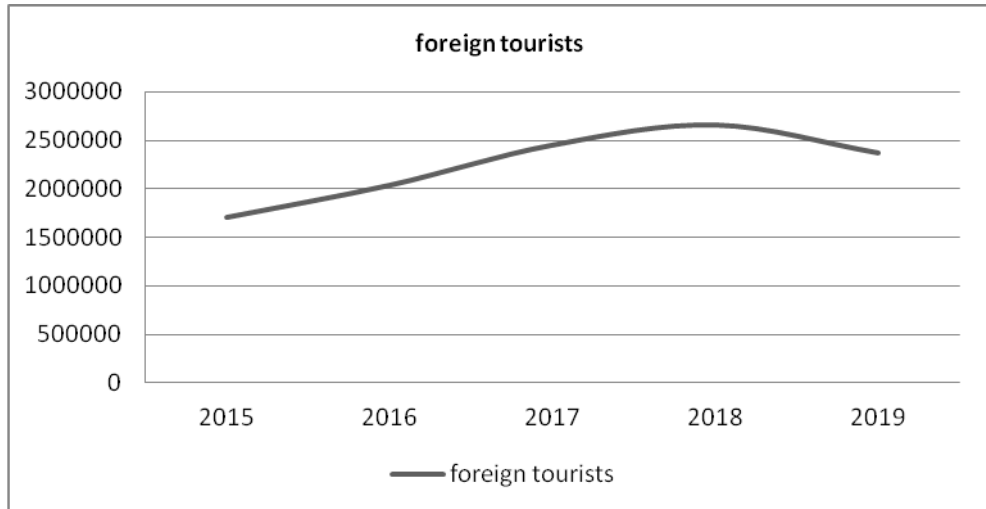
According to statistics of Algeria tourism ministry 2.03 million forgein tourists arrived in 2016, an increase of 8.4 % from 2.657 million in 2018 and 2.37 million in 2019. The table below shows the number of foreign tourists arrivals in Algeria between 2015 and 2019.

**Table 2: foreign tourists arrivals to Algeria destination.**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total foreign tourists	1 709 994	2 039 444	2 450 785	2 657 113	2 371 056
Rate of growth	-	19.27%	20.17%	8.42%	-10.77%

**Source: Algeria ministry of tourism, crafts and family work,  
January 2020**

**Figure number (02): foreign tourists arrivals to Algeria destination**



**Source: own compilation based on table 2.**

### 3. Results and discussion

The tourists appeal more and more often to the sites of touristic information and especially to the sites that also allow bookings for accommodation or transport services. Thus, the tourists have the following expectations from the websites services; the facility in using, the utility, the informational content, the security, the rapidity in operation and the personalization(Condratov, 2013).

A website is a communication platform providing a host of benefits for the tourist, it provides up-to-date reliable information. It can be accessed from anywhere in the world and at any time, even from the palm of your hand using a mobile device. It makes it possible to customize content according to profiles, interests and languages, and it also allows for several means of interaction when it comes to the message, the sender and other users (Cavia & Castro, 2015). Websites are incredibly important, mission critical and cost effective marketing tools for businesses. Having a good website not only generates more business opportunities but also enhances a company's image and supports the interactivity with both institutional and individual customers (Law et al, 2009). According to many researchers the content of websites, design, information, interactivity, easy to use, presentation, overall impression and technological features are basic requirements for a useful website (Gupta, 2014). And he added that

Websites act as a direct bridge between the tourism organisations and tourists. Numerous advantages of World Wide Web have been identified such as, accessibility to detailed information, instant accessibility to availability enquiries and bookings, and assistance to tourists by making the product more tangible in their minds (Buhalis, 1998) and these are helping tourists to make better travel decisions. Numerous tourism websites have been established in order to capture the promising business opportunity (Law & Bai, 2006). Thus Website design is a fundamental element of retaining customers online and must also support the self-service environment of the online travel industry that is largely web based (Stockdale, 2007)

In spite of the existence of many Algeria tourism websites for promoting and selling tourism products of Algeria such as the website of tourism ministry and all organisations that related with it (ONT1, GHTT2, ONAT3), but all these websites don't reflect the great potential of Algeria tourism destination. Also, these websites are weak from design, information, presentation and overall impression. In order to evaluate these websites, and according to the global website [www.alex.com](http://www.alex.com), the website of organisation responsible of promotion of Algeria destination ([www.ont.dz](http://www.ont.dz)) is ranking at 6,437,559, and in the first overview of this site you can notice that there is no attraction in all aspects as photos, information. Regarding the website of tourism ministry ([www.mtatf.gov.dz](http://www.mtatf.gov.dz)) is ranking at 1,165,780.

According to [www.onat.dz](http://www.onat.dz), ONAT is a national tour operator, specialist in tailor-made travel for over 45 years is considered the leader in tourism, it offers unique trips in Algeria. Designed around the discovery of the country, our trips are aimed at anyone who wishes to stay in Algeria or abroad. ONAT plays a strategic role in the dynamic development of national tourism, which is competing with transport and accommodation networks. It consists on the one hand in designing and producing a wide range of tourist products (tourist circuits, camel rides, cultural and religious stays, climatic, hydrotherapy, change of scenery and relaxation, car rental, luxury coach and all terrain etc ... ) and on the other hand to market and organize national trips for the benefit of national and foreign tourists. Through its commercial network of 32 agencies spread over the territory. ONTA provides many

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<sup>1</sup> ONT: acronyme of (Office National du Tourism) in french language

<sup>2</sup> GHTT : acronyme of (Group Hotellerie Tourisme Thermalisme) in french language

<sup>3</sup> ONAT : acronyme of (Office National Algerien du Tourism) in french language

services such as: hotels reservations, air tickets, excursion and all operations related to tourism and travel. many services the website of ([www.onat.dz](http://www.onat.dz)) is ranking at 1,204,087

According to [www.touring-algeria.com](http://www.touring-algeria.com) the company Touring Voyages Algeria Present in the travel and tourism market for several decades, it is a tour operator where professional teams evolve, capitalizing on 40 years of experience in the field. Touring Voyages Algeria, is a joint stock company with a share capital of 400,668,000, it has 350 employees distributed between its central headquarters in Algiers and its four regional offices: in the center, east, west and south of country, relies on its own distribution network, with 31 branches covering almost all of Algeria. the website of ([www.touring-algeria.com](http://www.touring-algeria.com)) is ranking at 4,981,729,

According to [www.groupe-htt.com](http://www.groupe-htt.com) The “group-htt” is a group of governmental hotels and spa resorts. The group includes eight (08) businesses hotels such as: El-Aurassi, El-Djazair, Sofitel, twelve (12) city hotels such as Essafir, Albert, Rais in Algiers, El-Kalaa in M’sila, three (03) tourism centers such as; shopping center and parking in Algiers, nineteen (19) hotels in the south such as:Tahatin in Tamanrasset, Le Caid in Bousaada, Touat in Adrar, Marhaba in Laghouat, four (04) climatic stations such as: Bracelet d'Argent - Beni Yenni , twelve (12) bathing unites such as: eight (08) spa resorts such as: Hammam Guergour in Setif , Hammam Chellala in Guelma, Hammam Bouhadjar in Ain Temouchent, one (01) wellness center (Andalouses), one (01) thlassotherapy center (Sidi-redj). Although this group is supported by authority and its important organisation to sell hotel products, the website ([www.groupe-htt.com](http://www.groupe-htt.com)) is ranking at 3,873,192.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This research attempted to highlight the reality of e-tourism and its applications in Algeria tourism destination with emphasize on official websites which represent the face of Algeria tourism. The study was appeared that the ranking of websites of Algeria organizations especially in tourism and travel in above are weak in classification comparison with global websites that especially in selling of tourism products for instance the website “[tripadvisor.fr](http://tripadvisor.fr)” is ranking at 13,777, the website “[Expedia.com](http://Expedia.com)” that ranking at 979, the website “[Booking.com](http://Booking.com)” that ranking at 143 and the website “[Travigo.com](http://Travigo.com)” which ranking at the first (01). In a simple note we observe a big difference between Algeria websites and world websites that especially in booking and travel. For these reason the authority of Algeria must create competitive websites regarding the world criteria whether it

wants to develop the destination and attracting more tourists and visitors through providing adequate financial and qualified humans resource to establish and be responsible on these websites to ensure the quality, security, facilities to use, and other aspects of website.

### **Recommendations**

By this study we recommend about these points as follows:

- Give importance and priority to e-tourism, that it is considered a way to promote and sell tourism products by authority.
- Build infrastructure of ICTs through increase the flow of the internet.
- Create competitive websites especially of selling Algeria tourism products such as world websites (booking...).
- Training and formation of the human resources qualified to run these sites.
- Develop the official Algeria tourism websites such ONT and GHTT website.
- Provide adequate budget by authority to run these sites.

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