

The constraints of the tourism sector in Algeria & the solutions for its development

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Abstract:

Tourism has become a fundamental and leading sector in economic and social development. Algeria is an almost virgin tourist destination which has unfortunately not yet been sufficiently exploited, unlike other countries around the Mediterranean. Indeed, it has an enormous tourist potentiality, which can give birth to an extensive and prosperous tourist industry; nevertheless the presence of certain obstacles hinders this sector and makes it more vulnerable. The objective of this study, is to shed light on the tourism potentialities of Algeria, while presenting the constraints related to the tourism sector, finally we try to provide solutions that can energize and revitalize this sector. In order to achieve our objective, we therefore followed the analytical descriptive method while relying on previous researches and reliable studies carried out in the tourism sector in Algeria, so the research tool used is the content analysis. We arrive by this work to conclude a multitude of constraints linked to the tourism sector like the administrative and legal obstacles to tourism investment, and we propose several solutions to be taken up in order to make tourism in Algeria prosper and developed.

Keywords: *The tourism sector, Algeria, Constraints, solutions.*

Jel Classification Codes : XXX ; XXX ; XXX.

Résumé:

Le tourisme est devenu un secteur fondamental et de premier plan dans le développement économique et social. L'Algérie est une destination touristique presque vierge qui n'a malheureusement pas encore été suffisamment exploitée, contrairement à d'autres pays du pourtour méditerranéen. En effet, elle possède d'énormes potentialités touristiques, qui peuvent donner naissance à une industrie touristique étendue et prospère, néanmoins la présence de certains obstacles freine ce secteur et le rend plus vulnérable. L'objectif de cette étude, est d'apporter un éclairage sur les potentialités touristiques de l'Algérie, tout en présentant les contraintes liées au secteur touristique, enfin nous essayons d'apporter des solutions pouvant dynamiser et redynamiser ce secteur. . Afin d'atteindre notre objectif, nous avons donc suivi la méthode descriptive analytique en nous appuyant sur des recherches antérieures et des études fiables réalisées dans le secteur du tourisme en Algérie, ainsi l'outil de recherche utilisé est l'analyse de contenu. Nous arrivons par ce travail à conclure une multitude de contraintes liées au secteur du tourisme comme les obstacles administratifs et juridiques à l'investissement touristique, et nous proposons plusieurs solutions à prendre afin de faire prospérer et développer le tourisme en Algérie.

Mots clés: *Le secteur du tourisme, Algérie, Contraintes, Solutions*

Jel Classification Codes : L53 ; L78 ; M00

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I. Introduction

It is true that the increase in the purchasing power of individuals, as well as the increase in the time they devote to leisure, due to their awareness of the importance of these times of relaxation for both adults as well as children contribute to the development of tourist activity. On the other hand, tourism activity in Algeria does not seem to be sufficiently developed, given the rankings of our country in this area.

Algeria is ranked among the 20 most beautiful countries in the world, in terms of natural landscapes, but that has not prevented its poor rankings in attractiveness of tourists, both in Africa and in the world. We are relying here on data from the last report of the World Economic Forum, to show the place occupied by Algeria, in terms of tourism competitiveness. Indeed, WEF carries out a world ranking of tourism competitiveness on a set of countries (138 countries), and according to a set of criteria which are, essentially: safety, health, hygiene, openness to foreign countries, enhancement of natural resources, sustainable environment, cultural resources, tourism marketing, price level, qualified human resources, road and airport infrastructure and tourism services, price competitiveness... etc. In addition, out of a total of 138 countries, Algeria comes in 118th place, according to WEF. On the other hand, in Africa, Algeria is ranked in 19th place, far behind our neighbors (Morocco comes in 3rd place and Tunisia comes in 9th place) ([Sabrina AMNACHE – CHIKH, The tourism activity in Algeria, 2017](#)).

Algeria has a rich and diversified tourist potential, its historical past, its climate and its geography, in particular the Sahara, its Mediterranean coast (1200km) constitute the bulk of this heritage. In view of this recognized potential, Algeria should be a tourist country at least at the same level as that of the Maghreb countries (Morocco and Tunisia). Algeria, today, timidly participates in international tourism and submits to occupy the last ranks of tourist destination in the Mediterranean basin because of several obstacles and constraints related to the policy of the country, to the culture of the Algerian citizen ... etc.

In this vein that we have relied on explaining the constraints and obstacles related to the tourism sector in Algeria, so we will try to list the fundamental solutions that can make the tourism sector prosper. Therefore, a research problem will be formulated as follows:

What are the constraints linked to the tourism sector in Algeria, and what are the solutions to be taken up to develop this sector?



In order to provide an answer to this problem, we therefore followed the analytical descriptive method while relying on previous research and reliable studies carried out in the tourism sector in Algeria, so the research tool used is the content analysis.

Our research work will be divided into three integral parts, Algeria and its tourism potential, the constraints linked to the tourism sector and the solutions to develop this sector.

II. Algeria and its rich tourist potentialities

Algeria, this vast country located on the southern shore of the "Mediterranean Sea" conceals an extremely rich and varied tourist potential. Due to the immensity of its territory and the diversity of its climate, Algeria welcomes any visitor wishing to discover its history, its archaeological riches, the beauty and authenticity of its landscapes.

With its wealth, Algeria offers a multitude of products for tourists, such as seaside, Saharan, cultural, thermal and adventure tourism. Etc.

A coast of over 1600 km, is home to magnificent coves and beaches, the majority of which are still pristine and well preserved. Algeria has 14 coastal wilayas with seaside resorts, some of which are located near archaeological sites. The country is full of impressive mountain ranges such as the Djurdjura, Chr ea, and Talaghilef mountains, where winter sports are simply practiced.

Unlike the often snowy slopes of the mountains in the north of the country, those of the Ahaggar in particular in the Great South, offer landscapes with a lunar aspect that are most often climbed on the back of a camel or in a 4x4 car.

The Sahara remains Algeria's major asset, extending over an area equal to two million km². The Great South, representing the Tassilis N'Ajjer and the Ahaggar, constitutes the largest open-air museum on the planet, housing rock art dating from prehistoric times and soil geologically millions of years old.

The Algerian Sahara is the second largest Sahara in the world due to its area approaching two million km² and covering nearly 80% of the country's area. Due to its desert expanses, which also contain plant and animal species that are often endangered, these Saharan regions with a tourist vocation also find themselves closely concerned by United Nations programs for the protection of biodiversity.

The two cultural parks of Tassili and Ahaggar, together, represent the largest contiguous protected area in Africa and the second largest protected area in the world as well. The Algerian Sahara is so large that it shares borders with several African countries such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco.

Through its grandiose landscapes made of sea of sand extending to infinity, vertiginous mountains with multiple shapes sometimes reminiscent of cathedrals or stone forests as in Tassili, and oases that appear as if by magic, the Algerian desert is imposed as an excellent tourist destination.

Many Saharan cities enjoy the proximity of airports linked to several European capitals, thus facilitating the tourist flow. There is also the trans-African route connecting the North of the country to the South and allowing to better appreciating the multiple facets of the Algerian Sahara. (ONT report, 2018).

II.1. The Tassili

The Tassili N'Ajjer is the largest open-air rock art museum on the planet. It is more than 2000 km south-east of Algiers. Administratively, it comes under the wilaya of Illizi, of which Djanet is the capital. It was classified as a national park in 1972 and then promoted to world heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 1982.

Today, it enjoys the status of a cultural park because it is considered a fragile area encompassing animal and plant species, to be safeguarded in order to preserve the ecological balance and the prevailing biodiversity in Tassili.

This park covers approximately 140,000 km² and is the spearhead of the Algerian tourist destination where different types of stays are offered: hotel, Saharan campsite or bivouacs, 4X4 car tours, tours on camels and trekkingsetc. There is something for every taste.

There are more than 15,000 rock paintings and engravings exhibited in nature in Tassili. Some are on the program of the various tourist circuits and are accessible to tourists and others are not programmed in order to better preserve them.

Tassili is also the land of the Tuaregs. These mythical blue men who still roam the desert today, relying only on the stars to orient themselves and find their way. And it is again these same blue men who annually celebrate an ancestral festival called the *Sbeiba*, which drains a considerable number of people from the Great Southern Africa and Africa to attend. It is a sacred dance, where only men from two tribes of *Djanet* have the right to carry on, in a ritual loaded with symbolism and music orchestrated over 3000 years ago.

II.2. The oasis

The oasis circuit is another tourist product in the South-East of the country, which has countless oases that seem to appear as if by magic in the middle of the desert. It is one of the most popular circuits, especially as several cities stand out for the beauty of their landscapes including Bou Saada,

considered the gateway to the desert because it is the closest oasis to the capital and the last stopover before the great desert.

The oasis of Biskra, also called the queen of the Zibans because of its many palm groves, is a lush and green tourist destination and yet it is indeed a wilaya with a Saharan vocation. And it is still in Biskra and especially in Tolga, one of its many oasis, that the famous variety of dates is cultivated “*Deglet Nour*”, very appreciated overseas.

It is a town of rest and care because it benefits from world-famous thermal resorts and springs such as those of Hammam Salihine, whose waters have proven therapeutic properties and attraction of a considerable number of spa guests.

II.3. The roman heritage of Algeria

Algeria has several cities and ancient sites dating back to the Roman Empire. This archaeological and historical heritage is mainly concentrated in the north of the country, more particularly along the coasts where the Carthaginians had previously installed their trading posts such as in Délys, Tizirt, ténès and Cherchel. The grandeur of some of these cities denotes the importance Algeria had for Rome like Tipaza.

Some of these ancient cities stand out more than others, for their grandeur and magnificence such as Tipaza, located 70 km from the capital, Djemila in Sétif and Timgad in the Aures in the east of the country. Their architectural value has earned them the universal heritage of humanity classification and their museums are full of sublime mosaics and remains from this era when Algeria was Roman.

The remains of several other ancient cities dot the country and tell their story like Guelma, Souk Ahras, Khamissa and Hyppone. The latter is the prestigious city where Saint Augustine, the famous father of the Catholic Church, was bishop for thirty years.

II.4. The spa resorts

Algeria has great potentialities in terms of hydrotherapy. More than 200 thermal springs with proven therapeutic virtues are listed across the country.

About thirty spas are listed and welcome thousands of spa guests from all over the country. Some for fitness trips and others for specific medical care. The

waters of these stations have curative virtues treating various diseases such as dermatological and rheumatic ailments, arthritis and several allergies.

Many of these resorts are located in the northern part of the country and some others in the Saharan zone such as the Salihine hammam spa resort of Biskra. Located at an altitude of more than 500 m, this station is recommended for rheumatic diseases, respiratory tract disorders and O.R.L. These waters are chlorinated, sodic and sulphurized at 46 ° C.

The spa of Hammam Guerguour in the wilaya of Setif, is better known for its sulphated and radioactive water, especially as it represents one of the most radioactive sources in the world. There are a few thermal spas not far from the capital which also treat arthritis, rheumatism, certain nervous disorders and trauma as well as certain gynecological ailments and many other diseases.

We cannot list here all the spas existing in Algeria. The market remains opened to invest in this sector. The state plans to modernize the existing stations and their equipments, and to build new ones to meet the ever-growing demand from both spa visitors and tourists looking for stays in shape.

With this modest overview we realize that the field of tourism potential in Algeria is very vast and the Algerian tourist heritage is extremely rich. Nevertheless, tourism in Algeria is still low in comparison with our neighbors because of several factors that we will detail in the next section.

III. Obstacles and constraints to the tourism sector in Algeria

III.1. Obstacles linked to tourism investment

The reports prepared by various organizations about the investment climate in Algeria move away from the ambitions of the Algerian economy and progress towards economic development, by removing all obstacles to investment. A joint report by the European Commission and the American Bureau Schlumberger revealed a number of obstacles to investment in Algeria, with most opinions confirming the existence of significant obstacles to the flow of investment in Algeria.

Tourism investment in Algeria being an integral part of public investment, all obstacles to investment in general are also opposed, whether national or foreign investments, will therefore attack the main obstacles to tourism investments in Algeria, some obstacles will be detailed in the following. (Messiliti Nabila & others, A study to assess the constraints of the tourism sector in Algeria, 2020).

- **The handicap of tourist real estate**

Tourist real estate is one of the main obstacles facing investors, whether local or foreign, given the complexity of the procedures for obtaining such goods and the high prices. At present, real estate in Algeria remains subject to many obstacles and practices, linked to manifestations of brokerage and speculation in real estate.

- **Administrative and legal obstacles to tourism investment**

The investor has to face several obstacles, local or foreign, before embarking on his investment project, and the most important of these obstacles is the exhaustion of administrative procedures for the tourist investor.

- **Economic obstacles to tourism investment**

Besides the aforementioned administrative and legal problems and obstacles, which make tourism investment very difficult, there are other factors no less important than their predecessors, which is another obstacle to this type of investment. The lack of incentive to attract this type of investment and the lack of funding.

- **The delay in tourism investment projects**

It should also be noted that tourism investments are delayed, due to the slowness of the deadlines recorded (it turns out that out of 500 hotel projects in 2015, 340 are awaiting building permits). With good reason, it seems that an official will is showing in this area, texts exist but the results remain mixed and the results obtained remain mediocre. In Algeria, the delay in completion is not necessarily due to studies, nor to the actual completion deadlines, nor to the length of training; It is rather the administrative processing times that determine the duration of implementation. (Sabrina AMNACHE – CHIKH, *The tourism activity in Algeria*, 2017).

III.2. Obstacles linked to tourist culture

Cultural obstacles are among the most important obstacles, which prevent the spread of a tourist culture and therefore the development and increase of tourist demand.

In our society, there is a problem that gets stuck between tourism as a concept and the mainstream culture which is very wary of the term “tourism.” If the community is absent from the tourism culture, the tourism sector itself suffers,

and the environment also plays a very important role in improving the image of tourism in the country. Algeria is currently seeking to limit and reduce environmental problems, especially in tourist areas.

The study carried out by the magazine "Theotors 2005" proved that tourism rests on two pillars: the tourism industry and experiences (regions, cultures). The president of the Forum on the development of tourism organized in Tamanrasset stressed that the reason for the lack of development of the tourism economy in Algeria, does not refer to the black decade in Algeria or weak basal structures only, but extends to the problem of mind and culture. (Haba Nadjwa & Haba Wadiaa, The economy of tourism and its role in sustainable development, March 2010).

III.3. The deterioration of the situation and the decline of Algerian tourism

The tourism sector is one of the most sensitive sectors from a security and political point of view in any given country, with security being the main pillar of tourism, which has declined in many countries due to the absence or deterioration of the political and security situation, after being a tourist destination for many tourists around the world, its security situation has become largely isolated, such as in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria, and the tourist can see that he is threatened with safety as soon as he feels unstable.

Algeria experienced a difficult political and security crisis during the 1990s. This deterioration of the situation caused a notable delay in the tourism sector compared to other countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. and has also established a culture of rejection of large social segments of specific tourism activities in Algeria.

We recall here that the security situation is not limited to the phenomenon of violence that Algeria experienced during this period, but also includes various deviations, such as physical attacks, thefts, etc. These deviations have become a major threat to society, threatening the tourism sector. (Majutna Massoud, Obstacles to the process of promoting the tourism sector in Algeria, December 2009).

III.4. Obstacles related to government policy

There are several obstacles related to government policy in Algeria, so we will mention a few:

- The multiplicity and complexity of customs procedures at airports is a matter to be reviewed.

- Routine tourist organization and lack of dynamism.
- In the official and informal bodies whose work is linked to the tourist activity, there is no coordination between their work in this field because of the different affiliations.
- Do not give tourism as a development sector the priority it deserves.
- The lack of a tourism and hotel training policy. (Iman El-Almi, The reality of tourist marketing in Algeria and the prospects for its development, 2013).

III.5. Obstacles linked to tourism promotion

This is linked to the promotion and marketing of the destination of Algeria, still unknown to many in the world, due to the lack of cooperation between the different sectors and partners of the tourism sector to define this destination. Likewise, the means of promotion are complex and unconditional, not in accordance with modern techniques of promotion and communication, and despite the national and international tourist exhibitions in which various tourist agencies and institutions participate, this is not enough to promote Algerian tourism. There are many problems in promoting the Algerian tourism sector, the most important of which are:

- Limited marketing and promotional information of the Algerian tourist product for the authors of national programs on the one hand, and the customers on the world markets on the other hand, and the absence of feedback from the tourists themselves on their vision of the services provided and their prices and the problems they face while they are in the tourist area. (Zir Rayan, The contribution of the tourism marketing in the development of tourism in Arab nations, 2018).
- The focus on traditional tourist markets and the weakness of the tools and means to penetrate new markets.
- Algeria's limited participation, especially from the private sector, in international tourism fairs and conferences.
- Absence of workshops, conferences and meetings to present the Algerian tourism product in tourist exporting countries.
- Weak marketing efforts and promotional campaigns in Arab markets compared with Tunisia.
- Lack of a clear policy on the prices to be respected in the tourism professions, with individuals reluctant to serve in hotels and restaurants.
- The lack of interest of the various media for the cultural development of tourism in the country, for example, with regard to the clarification of the importance of the role of tourism in economic and social development.

The presentation to the public the different opportunities and tourist attractions, and how to enjoy them and ways of dealing with tourists.

III.6. Other obstacles negatively affect the tourism sector in Algeria

▪ The weak role of information and communication technologies

Regarding the role of information and communication technologies and their relationship with Algerian tourism, they remain weak and substandard for several reasons, including:

- The difficulty of adapting to the growing weight of information and communication technologies in the tourism sector.
- Weak telecommunications infrastructure
- The weakness of the legal and legislative structure conducive to the development of media and communication in order to regulate electronic transactions. (Aouenan Abdelkader, *Tourism in Algeria : Opportunities and obstacles*, 2013).

▪ Weak banking services

The backwardness of the banking system in Algeria and its inability to keep up with international developments have negatively affected the nature of the banking services provided, particularly in terms of means of payment, which often do not correspond to the demands of foreigners.

▪ Obstacles linked to Algerian tourist products

The weakness of Algerian tourism products lies in the fact that most of them represent insufficiently valued tourist sites and others not retained in addition to the lack of attractive products able of standing out, due to the lack of quality of Algerian tourism.

Products and services, as well as the lack of cleanliness and maintenance of public and private spaces. If we compare the tourism patterns according to the tourism potential, we find that Algeria has enormous potential compared to Tunisia and other countries, but the problem is that the tourism potential is not fully exploited given diagrams present there.

After having presented the main factors which constitute a brake on tourism development in Algeria, we will try in the following part to propose solutions and suggestions to remedy the various problems related to the tourism sector in Algeria.



IV. The solutions proposed for the development of the tourism sector

This study allowed us to assess some solutions that we can judge their use for tourism development, an inevitable necessity to make a region attractive with competitive tourism, these proposals play a key role in tourism development and attracting tourists. , We cannot list them all, so we cite a few that we find more effective:

- The state must play a facilitating role at the local level, allowing actors to work together and agree on major themes. (United Nations Program for the Development, Tourism and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean)
- Tourism is a service sector; human resources must be at the heart of the development system. The quality of the sector's competitiveness can be strengthened through the development of highly qualified and motivated human resources. So, a strong evolution of the training system which will have to make real progress to respond to challenges of a more qualitative nature. (Croutsche J., Practice of data analysis in marketing and management, Paris, 1997).
- To better develop tourism in our country, the public authorities are obliged to strengthen and modernize airport, motorway and rail infrastructure in order to guarantee interconnection between the various tourist areas of the country. In addition, the world of tourism is strongly impacted by information and communication technologies (ICT). Today, the public and the private sector are increasingly investing in new communication technologies to boost their actions. In this context, let us note the importance of opening up to new communication media, which represent a privileged tool for the promotion and marketing of tourist products. Indeed, ICTs bring a certain and significant added value to the tourism sector. ICTs facilitate network organization, reduce costs, provide accessible and reliable information, diversify the means of reservation and payment & reduce the intangible nature of the tourist product. The lack of highly developed ICT facilities may be the main reason why our country is placed lower in the competitive ranks. (Kouri Djamel, tourism and economic development in Algeria, 2017).
- Improving the country's foreign policy (visa, tourist image of the country...etc.).
- Development of tourism institutions: This would involve supporting the capacities of institutions responsible for tourism in Algeria, placing the dotted roles in each tourist authority and setting up a special body



- responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the tourism strategy applied.
- The security of people and goods which must be ensured on the territory day and night.
 - Effective tourism planning and work on its development: The action plan in the field of tourism planning and development should focus on strengthening tourism institutions at regional or pole level.
 - Hotel prices and services, which must be low or at least affordable and not prohibitive.
 - Set up a "destination marketing and promotion" system: In this area, we propose to activate the role of the Tourism Directorate of the wilaya of Setif and to give it broader powers and capacities to carry out marketing and promotion of the tourism product, working on the development and presentation of the product, intensifying tourism promotion programs such as advertising in various media, formulating and activating public relations, increasing sites for Electronic Marketing and Marketing via the Internet, the establishment of tourist information and guidance centers and tourist kiosks.
 - The development of human resources in the field of tourism.
 - Currency exchange offices which must be installed at all corners of tourist activity, as well as at the level of infrastructure participating in the tourist chain such as: the airport, attractions and leisure centers, hotels ... etc.
 - Create a tourism culture in the community: the tourism strategy must take into account the perception of certain members of the community with regard to tourism development, and work to bring a change within the society.
 - The ease of tourist investment.
 - Interest in studies and information provision: for the tourism strategy to be successful, we propose to create the information and research centers on tourism.

V. Conclusion

We ended up concluding through this work that Algeria is extremely rich by its sites and tourist places, indeed this magnificent country can offer all kinds of tourism, from Saharan tourism to seaside, from historical to cultural & from adventure tourism to health tourism... etc.

Despite the tourism potential of Algeria, this country still remains uncompetitive with an insignificant ranking and this comes down to the various obstacles and hindrances which are linked to the various factors. From these

factors, we can enumerate those that are considered to be a real border to tourism development in Algeria, firstly the constraints related to tourism investment.

Second, the culture of the Algerian citizen which remains unsuited to other cultures of the world as well as the non-flexibility of the mentality of the Algerian people. Then there is the lack of security procedures which play a primordial role in attracting tourists.

And finally, there are several other factors that hamper tourism activity such as the poor banking services offered & the weak role of information and communication technologies ... etc. In order to try to provide solutions to remedy the problems mentioned above, we offer some suggestions that we can consider their uses to be a real opportunity to be exploited to develop the tourism sector, so we cite a few:

- The security of people and goods, which must be ensured on the territory day and night.
- Hotel prices and services, which must be low or at least affordable and not prohibitive.
- The development of human resources in the field of tourism.
- Currency exchange offices which must be installed at all corners of tourist activity.
- The ease of tourist investment.
- Highly developed ICT facilities.

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