

## Cultural Heritage and the Tourism Industry in Algeria

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**Abstract:**

The tourism industry necessitates comprehensive planning programs and forward-looking studies to ensure the successful and effective management of tourism resources. Although Algeria is endowed with an array of natural, historical, and civilizational tourism assets, its tourism strategies continue to be hindered by deficiencies in service quality, which have yet to meet the expectations of foreign tourists in particular. From this perspective, the research paper seeks to develop a visionary and future-oriented approach to harness and capitalize on Algeria's diverse and unique cultural heritage for the advancement of a heritage tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Heritage; Cultural Heritage; Tourism; Tourism Industry; Heritage Tourism.

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## **1. Introduction:**

Contemporary studies and foresight analyses underscore tourism as a pivotal, dynamic force propelling national economies. Investing in tourism stands out as one of today's most lucrative and enduring strategies. This investment proves particularly advantageous for nations with predominantly rentier economies.

Moreover, tourism ranks among the foremost sectors catalyzing social and economic advancement. Within this framework, Algeria harbors considerable untapped potential in tourism. Urgent economic diversification away from a hydrocarbon-centric model necessitates robust development and investment in the tourism industry. Such investments yield manifold benefits, including job creation, unemployment mitigation, and a promising future for successive generations.

Algeria's wealth encompasses both material and cultural heritage, each distinct across its diverse regions. Scholars in heritage and anthropology describe Algeria as a cultural and heritage mosaic ripe for tourism sector development. To harness Algeria's vast material and cultural heritage, strategic planning and synergistic efforts between the cultural and tourism sectors are imperative.

Effective management of tourism resources demands meticulously planned programs and foresight studies. This research paper delves into strategies for leveraging Algeria's rich material and cultural heritage, positioning it alongside leading nations in the tourism sector.

## **2. Study Objectives:**

Our study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- \_ Explore the multifaceted components of cultural heritage in Algeria.
- \_ Comprehend the mechanisms for effectively leveraging cultural heritage within Algeria's tourism industry.

## **3. Study Concepts:**

### **A. Cultural Heritage:**

In Algerian legal contexts, "cultural heritage" encompasses all immovable properties and specifically designated movable cultural assets situated on or within national estate lands. These assets are owned by natural or legal persons under private law, extending to properties found in subsoil areas within internal

and territorial waters. This heritage spans diverse civilizations from prehistoric eras to contemporary times.<sup>1</sup>

UNESCO offers one of the most comprehensive classifications of cultural heritage types:<sup>2</sup>

- \_ Cultural Heritage Sites
- \_ Historic Cities
- \_ Cultural Landscapes
- \_ Natural Sacred Sites
- \_ Underwater Cultural Heritage
- \_ Museums
- \_ Movable Cultural Heritage
- \_ Handicrafts
- \_ Documentary and Digital Heritage
- \_ Cinematographic Heritage
- \_ Oral Traditions
- \_ Languages
- \_ Festive Events
- \_ Rites and Beliefs
- \_ Music and Song
- \_ Performing Arts
- \_ Traditional Medicine
- \_ Literature
- \_ Culinary Traditions
- \_ Traditional Sports and Games

### **B. Tourism:**

As per the World Tourism Organization's definition, tourism encompasses the activities of travelers who reside outside their habitual environment for a period exceeding twenty-four hours but less than a year, motivated by leisure, business, or other purposes<sup>3</sup>

Anthropologically, tourism manifests as a web of social interactions that evolve among individuals or groups in tourist locales. This setting fosters social engagement as individuals traverse spaces, facilitating encounters and interactions with diverse cultures, an intrinsic aspect of the tourist experience.<sup>4</sup>

### **C. Tourism Industry:**

Often termed as an "industry without smokestacks," a "waste-free industry," or a "service industry," tourism is distinct from traditional sectors as it generates heritage, economic prosperity, and communal legacies that form tourist attractions.<sup>5</sup>

This industry encompasses promotional activities, hospitality management, and the provision of goods and services to visitors during their sojourns.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4. Material Heritage in Algeria:**

UNESCO's catalog of Algeria's material cultural heritage includes renowned sites, includes:<sup>7</sup>

- \_ **Beni Hammad Fort**, M'sila Province.
- \_ **Tipasa**, Tipaza Province.
- \_ **Timgad**, Batna Province.
- \_ **Djémila**, Sétif Province.
- \_ **Tassili n'Ajjer**, Illizi Province.
- \_ **M'zab Valley**, Ghardaïa Province.
- \_ **Casbah of Algiers**, Algiers Province.

#### **5. Intangible Cultural Heritage in Algeria:**

UNESCO's compilation of Algeria's intangible cultural heritage for humanity encompasses diverse elements, includes:<sup>8</sup>

- \_ **Ahellil of Gourara**, Adrar Province.
- \_ **Crafts and skills associated with the Tlemcen bridal costume traditions**, Tlemcen Province.
- \_ **Practices and knowledge related to the music of the Imzad and its instrument among the Tuareg communities in Algeria, Mali, and Niger**, Hoggar region.
- \_ **Annual pilgrimage to the tomb of Sidi Abdelkader Ben Mohammed**, Sidi Cheikh, El Bayadh Province.
- \_ **Rituals and celebrations specific to the Sbeiba festival in the Gant oasis, Algeria**, Gant Province.
- \_ **"El Sbouâ," the annual visit to the Zawiya of Sidi Haj Belkacem in Gourara on the occasion of Mawlid al-Nabi**, Timimoun Province.
- \_ **Knowledge and skills related to the water measurers working in the foggaras in Touat and Tidikelt**, Adrar and Tamanrasset Provinces.

#### **6. Cultural Heritage and the Tourism Industry:**

We have previously highlighted that Algeria possesses substantial tourism potential that should be effectively utilized within the tourism industry, recognized globally as one of the most influential sectors.

This potential includes the rich heritage and cultural diversity of the nation. A pivotal question arises: How can this heritage be effectively employed within the tourism industry?

To address this query, we have investigated various strategies employed by several leading nations in the realm of heritage tourism. Among these strategies, the concept of "Heritage as a Tourism Product" is particularly noteworthy.

### **A. Heritage as a Tourism Product:**

It is imperative for the authorities managing tourism in Algeria to not only acknowledge but actively utilize cultural and natural heritage. This heritage should be seen not merely as a testament to the nation's history, identity, art, customs, and traditions, integral components of Algerian society, but also as a pivotal tourism product.

This perspective is crucial for the enhancement of the tourism sector, which stands as a significant economic resource, particularly in light of the government's current policies aimed at economic diversification.

Experts in tourism and economics define a tourism product as encompassing three primary components: attractions, facilities, and access. Attractions serve as the cornerstone, drawing tourists by offering new and unique experiences that allow them to enjoy authentic and unique sites and events.

Facilities refer to the array of services and products that cater to the needs of tourists during their stay. Meanwhile, access involves the logistical aspects, the means, processes, and procedures of transportation, that ensure tourists can travel from their places of origin to their destinations and move within them efficiently.<sup>9</sup>

While heritage forms an integral part of the past, present, and future of all peoples, the elements of cultural heritage today are deemed one of the most critical resources for tourism globally.

The field of heritage tourism transcends mere tourism and financial gain; it involves the promotion of a community's heritage to other communities through tourists. Drawing on expert opinions and statistical data in the field of tourism,

cultural or heritage tourism is identified as one of the most significant, rapidly growing, and increasingly prominent types of tourism in recent decades.

Therefore, it is essential for the Algerian state to prioritize this type of tourism, given its extensive heritage assets that can significantly boost the tourism sector in the short to medium term.

Achieving and implementing the strategy of leveraging heritage as a tourism product necessitates robust protection and maintenance of cultural heritage. In this context, **Dr. Faiza Riach** has underscored the importance of cultural properties as a sector capable of generating revenue.

She commends the extensive efforts by the Algerian state to safeguard cultural properties through a comprehensive legal framework designed to protect all types of cultural assets, both material and intangible.

This framework plays a crucial role in safeguarding cultural properties, evidenced by Law 98-04 on heritage protection and its numerous implementing decrees, alongside the creation of specialized units for heritage protection within the police and national gendarmerie.

Noteworthy, too, are the efforts of customs officials at national borders, who work diligently to prevent infringements on cultural properties, viewing them as a heritage of humanity and a trust for future generations.<sup>10</sup>

### **B. Cultural Heritage Management:**

The endeavor of managing cultural heritage in its varied forms is fundamentally geared towards the establishment of robust, independent bilateral institutions that strategically merge the cultural and tourism sectors.

The core mission of these institutions is to safeguard, preserve, promote, and optimally utilize the heritage to foster genuine heritage tourism. Their overarching objective is to actively re-highlight and market the rich cultural diversity and abundant heritage that Algeria is renowned for.

In Algeria, the responsibility of heritage management is anchored in the Ministry of Culture and Arts, as delineated by "Executive Decree No. 05-79, dated February 26, 2005, which specifies the responsibilities of the Minister of Culture. This decree particularly highlights in Article 2 the minister's duties in the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible".<sup>11</sup>

To effectively carry out these responsibilities, the Ministry has instituted several pivotal structures within the realm of cultural heritage preservation, management, and valorization, these include:<sup>12</sup>

- \_ The Directorate of Legal Protection of Cultural Properties and Valorization of Cultural Heritage.
- \_ The Directorate of Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Restoration.
- \_ The National Office for the Management and Exploitation of Protected Cultural Properties.
- \_ The National Center for Archaeological Research.
- \_ The National Center for Prehistoric, Anthropological, and Historical Studies.
- \_ The National Center for Manuscripts.
- \_ The National Committee for Cultural Properties.
- \_ Special Committees for Cultural Properties.
- \_ The National Fund for Cultural Heritage.
- \_ The Advisory Council for Cultural Heritage.
- \_ Regional and local structures of the Ministry responsible for culture, which encompass cultural park offices, directorates of culture and arts, and provincial committees.

It is evident that the Ministry of Culture has deployed a comprehensive array of central structures dedicated to the meticulous management and preservation of cultural heritage. This strategic approach is predominantly focused on the principle of conserving heritage rather than leveraging it primarily as an economic asset within the heritage tourism industry in Algeria.

However, contemporary strategies, particularly prevalent among leading tourist nations, are increasingly pivoting towards managing heritage from an economic standpoint.

Our vision is centered on constructing a symbiotic bridge between heritage and tourism through the adept management of heritage tourism. This initiative aims to cultivate and amplify this style of tourism in Algeria, which boasts substantial potential to elevate it among the premier tourist destinations globally.

The International Labour Organization's guide in its fifth chapter on business in tourism articulates that "heritage tourism serves as the raw material that is transformed by tourism development agents to fulfill a human need. The deliberate efforts of public and private entities, along with national and local



governments, agents, and other stakeholders, are vital in realizing this transformation. Once the heritage materials are processed, a refined tourism product emerges".<sup>13</sup>

This strategic processing and utilization of heritage not only cater to the cultural enrichment of tourists but also significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of the hosting country.

### **C. Emerging Institutions in Heritage Tourism:**

The significance of emerging institutions in Algeria's economic landscape cannot be overstated due to their substantial contributions to national economic growth and their notable economic activities.

In the contemporary Algerian economic restructuring efforts, these institutions serve as pivotal agents providing dynamism and productivity, which are instrumental in generating new employment opportunities. Among these groundbreaking initiatives is the establishment of the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and Startups.

This ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, plays a crucial role in supporting young individuals, particularly university students. It guides them in launching innovative startups aimed at addressing various societal challenges inherent within Algerian society.

When discussing the concept of startups, widely recognized among diverse societal segments as "Startup," it is often articulated that "a startup is not merely a smaller version of large corporations but entities that navigate from failure to failure with alacrity, learning continuously from their customers and consequently adapting to meet market demands efficiently".<sup>14</sup>

Startups are fundamentally innovative in utilizing technology creatively to solve problems, which positions them as essential for the development of the heritage tourism model and for reaping economic benefits from their dynamism and active involvement in enhancing tourist experiences.

A significant milestone was reached on September 6, 2020, when a cooperation agreement was forged between the Ministry of Culture and Arts and the Ministry for the Knowledge Economy and Startups.

This agreement was aimed at fostering the creation of startups in the realms of heritage, culture, and arts. ***"Both parties concurred on the launch of an***



*initiative within the upcoming weeks, with immediate preparations. This initiative encompasses an exhibition of innovative projects across the fields of heritage, culture, and arts, pinpointing projects that qualify for support and guidance. Concurrently, the Ministry of Culture and Arts is diligently crafting a new strategic approach intended to substantially enhance and fortify the protection of cultural heritage, aligning with the new economic and social paradigms,"<sup>15</sup>*

Furthermore, on March 15, 2021, a partnership agreement was established between the Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts and Family Work and the Ministry for the Knowledge Economy and Startups. This agreement aims to set up business incubators that support young entrepreneurs in creating startups that are expected to elevate and expand Algerian tourism.

The Minister for the Knowledge Economy and Startups remarked, "This agreement is poised to lay a foundational stone for fostering a robust partnership between the sectors to escalate innovation, particularly vital in the tourism sector which thrives on creativity given Algeria's potential to become a premier tourism destination in the region.

He also emphasized the necessity for rapid enhancement of tourism diversity, necessitating modern technological tools facilitated by startups, which are crucial in motivating young project bearers to innovate and firmly position Algeria as a genuine hub of tourism,"<sup>16</sup>

#### **D. Marketing Heritage Tourism:**

The various components of Algeria's heritage tourism require effective marketing, aligning with the notion that heritage itself can be strategically packaged and marketed to tourists. Marketing, as a discipline, is defined as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer or client needs in a mutually profitable way".<sup>17</sup>

This definition underscores the imperative role that responsible management plays, particularly within the realms of the Ministry of Culture and Arts and the Ministry of Tourism. These bodies are tasked with developing sophisticated strategies that enable the optimal utilization and marketing of cultural heritage in ways that not only attract tourists but also resonate artistically with them.

This endeavor is situated within the broader scope of marketing management for heritage tourism, which integrates the historical, heritage, and cultural dimensions that are unique to Algeria, setting it apart from other nations.

Heritage tourism marketing is essential for the development of this sector. The unique characteristic of this form of marketing is that the product -heritage- comes with distinct characteristics and requirements that necessitate meticulous consideration and management by the responsible authorities.<sup>18</sup>

Through strategic marketing efforts, which include advertising, media promotion, and digital marketing, Algeria's cultural heritage is made accessible and appealing to a global audience.

This approach not only seeks to promote and elevate the perception of cultural heritage but also aims to transform how heritage is viewed—from a mere component of history, identity, and culture to a cornerstone of the heritage tourism industry in Algeria.

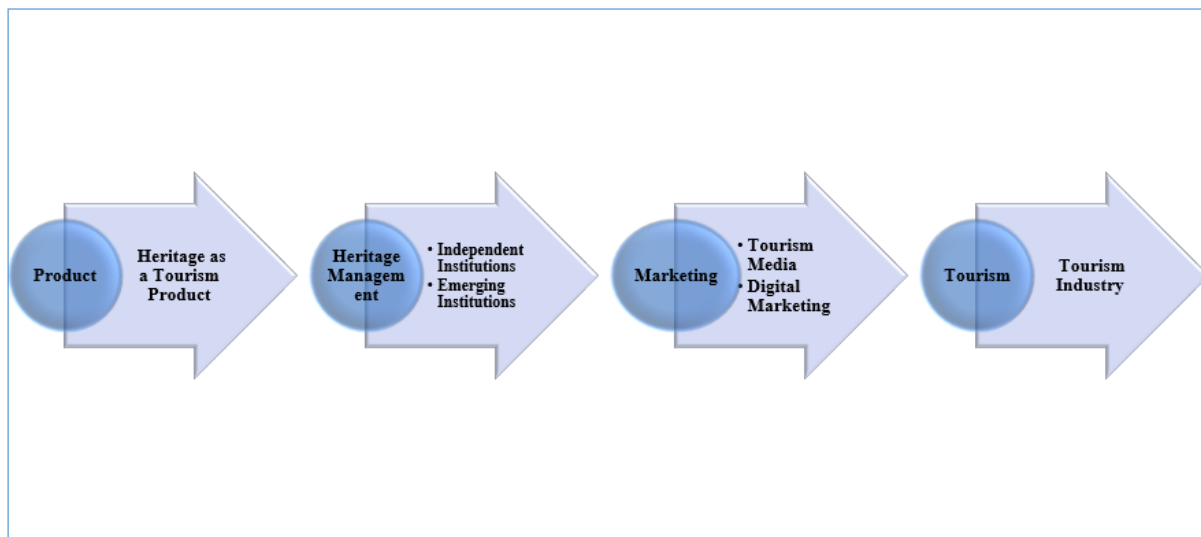
The positive and proactive exploitation of cultural heritage empowers cultural and tourism agencies to craft and implement policies and plans that creatively showcase the richness of Algeria's heritage tourism. These initiatives are designed to captivate and attract international tourists, effectively broadening the global footprint of Algeria's tourism sector.

## **7. Conclusion:**

Our methodology strives to refine and redefine the interaction between cultural heritage and tourism development. It emphasizes a sophisticated approach to managing cultural heritage, ensuring its transformation into a compelling tourism product.

This strategy not only enhances the cultural appreciation among tourists but also fosters economic growth by attracting international visitors drawn to unique cultural experiences. Thus, our approach illustrates a dynamic and proactive method of leveraging cultural heritage to advance the tourism sector, as depicted in the following diagram:

### **Diagram 1: The Method of Utilizing Cultural Heritage in Tourism Industry**



**Source:** Prepared by the researchers.

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