

The Importance of traditional artistic craftsmanship as a cultural heritage supporting tourism (Algeria as a model)

أهمية الحرف الفنية التقليدية

كتراث ثقافي يدعم السياحة (الجزائر كنموذج)

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Abstract:

Traditional artistic industries represent an important cultural heritage characterized by a rich and long history. These industries encompass a diverse range of local skills and arts passed down through generations, reflecting the Algerian people's culture and their adherence to customs and traditions. Strengthening traditional artistic industries plays a fundamental role in supporting tourism, enhancing the local economy, and achieving sustainable development, despite the challenges faced by this sector.

Key words: Traditional industry, Artistic and craft traditional industry, Tourism sector.

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ملخص:

تعد الصناعات التقليدية الفنية مورث ثقافي هام، يمتاز بتاريخه العريق والطويل تشمل هذه الصناعات مجموعة متنوعة من المهارات والفنون المحلية المتوارثة عبر الأجيال حيث تعكس الصناعة التقليدية الفنية ثقافة الشعب الجزائري وتمسكه بعاداته وتقاليده، وأن تعزيز الصناعات التقليدية الفنية في البلاد يلعب دور أساسي في دعم السياحة وتعزيز الاقتصاد المحلي والتنمية المستدامة على الرغم من التحديات التي تواجهها هذه الصناعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصناعة التقليدية، الصناعة التقليدية الفنية والحرفية، القطاع السياحي.

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Introduction:

Traditional industry is a means of expressing the important cultural heritage of Algeria , and it is considered one of the sectors that can be relied upon as a new economic and financial source. Traditional industries in Algeria are divided into three categories: traditional industries, artisanal industries, and artistic traditional industries. Artistic traditional industries include a variety of crafts and arts passed down through generations, such as copper works, artistic pottery, textiles, leather goods, artistic ironwork, and embroidery. These crafts and artistic industries stand out for reflecting the culture and creativity of the Algerian people in the artisanal sector, which is distinguished by its richness and diversity.

In an effort to promote these artistic traditional industries, Algeria has adopted a set of strategies to advance this sector, including providing financial and moral support, raising awareness of its importance, and working to develop and preserve it.

The main question of this research is: **What is artistic traditional industry? And what is its importance as a cultural heritage contributing to the support of tourism in Algeria?**

1) The Artistic traditional industry in Algeria:

Traditional industry in all countries around the world is considered one of the most important productive industries that contribute to the economy, as it opens many horizons to stimulate the economic and social fields and gives a qualitative leap to technological development. Algeria, in turn, has relied on traditional industry to develop its economy, considering it one of the key pillars of development and investment, helping to grow this sector, one of whose foundations was the establishment of small and medium enterprises in the field of crafts and traditional industry. The preservation of traditional crafts is crucial for several reasons. firstly, these crafts are an integral part of cultural identity, secondly, traditional crafts contribute significantly to local economies, providing livelihoods for artisans and their communities, and lastly, the skills and knowledge involved in traditional crafts have immense educational value, teaching future generations about history, creativity, and sustainability¹.

1-1) Definition of the artistic traditional industry in Algeria:

Before 1996, there was no clear and explicit definition of traditional industry in Algeria until the issuance of Ordinance 01-96, which defined the rules governing traditional industry and crafts. Article 5 of this ordinance states: "Traditional industry and crafts are any activity of production, creation, transformation, artistic restoration, maintenance, repair, or service provision that is mainly characterized by manual labor and practiced primarily and permanently, either in a stable or mobile or exhibition form, in one of the following areas of activity: traditional industries, artistic traditional industries, artisanal traditional industry for producing materials, traditional

industry for services, either individually or within a traditional industry cooperative or as part of a traditional industry and crafts company"².

It refers to any craft that is predominantly manual, where the artisan may occasionally use machines to create functional and/or decorative items with a traditional character. It has an artistic nature that allows the transfer of an ancient skill. Traditional industry is considered an artistic traditional industry when it is distinguished by its authenticity, unique character, and creativity³. This indicates that traditional industries are characterized by the uniqueness of artistic creativity and the authenticity of the traditional product, and require high qualifications for the craftsman⁴. This definition indicates that this type of traditional industry is characterized by the uniqueness of artistic creativity and the authenticity of the traditional product. The latter refers to all expressions related to traditions and arts from various local geographic regions. In addition, this type requires high qualifications for the artisan, along with the exclusion of the feature of division of labor⁵.

Table 01 - Field of activity of artistic traditional industry enterprises

Symbol	Field of Activity
1	Food Products Food Products
2	Work on clay, plaster, stone, glass, and similar materials.
3	Working with metals (including precious metals).
4	Working with wood, its derivatives, and similar materials.
5	Working with wool and similar materials.
6	Working with fabric or textiles.
7	Working on leather
8	Working on various materials

Source : كريمة التوفيق & عبد الكريم المؤمن (2017)، «مؤسسات الصناعة التقليدية والحرفية ودورها في التنمية المحلية -ولاية بسكرة نموذجا-»، مجلة "التنمية الاقتصادية"، مخبر البحث "النمو والتنمية الاقتصادية في الدول العربية"، جامعة الوادي، المجلد 02، العدد 01، ص ص 155-171.

1-2) The reality of the artistic traditional industry in Algeria:

The activity of traditional industries and crafts has seen great diversity across different eras and regions, due to the variety of cultures and differences among them. Various types of traditional industries emerged based on the necessity for them in ancient times. For instance, without the need for shelter, the craft of construction would not have arisen; without the need for food and drink, pottery would not have developed; without the need for weapons, the craft of sword-making would not have appeared; and without the need for carpets and rugs, weaving would not have been practiced. Other types of traditional industries also emerged to meet specific needs⁶.

- Artistic Ceramics and Pottery:

Pottery and artistic ceramics artisans rely on a common characteristic, which is the continuity and ancient origins of this craft. This industry is distinguished by its aesthetics, creativity, decoration, and the variety of lines. The craft draws its themes from the local heritage, rich with symbols. In Algeria, this industry is concentrated in the following regions: Algiers, Medea, Ain Defla, Tissemsilt, Chlef, Tipaza (Chenoua), the Kabylie region (Djurdjura), M'zab Valley, Bordj Bou Arreridj (El Biban and El Babor), Constantine, Batna, Khenchela, Oum El Bouaghi, Tebessa, El Oued, Timimoun, and Tamantit⁷.

- Copper Craft:

Copper crafting is an ancient craft that has existed for centuries, and it has remained in strong competition with other products such as aluminum, plastic, and melamine. It has been discovered in several Algerian archaeological sites. Artisans use copper sheets to create various items, some practical and others decorative. The craft relies on simple tools such as hammers and chisels, using a technique of engraving with dimensional

details, with the edges of the items shaped with pliers. Copper crafting is concentrated in the Tlemcen region.

Carpet making:

Weaving is practiced across all regions of Algeria, especially in areas where livestock such as sheep, goats, and camels are abundant. Each region has its distinctive style, characterized by specific symbols used in its designs. There are two main types of weaving: plain weaving and weaving with knotted stitches.

Table 02 - Types of Weaving and Their Concentration Areas in Algeria

Weaving	Its concentration
Carpet in Aflou	Laghouat The Mount Amour
Maatka Carpet	Tizi Ouzou
Ait Hichem Carpet	Tizi Ouzou
Cherchel Carpet	Tipaza
Timimoun Carpet	Adrar
Mizeb Carpet	Ghardaia
Alhrakta Carpet	Oum El Bouaghi
Babar Carpet	Oum El Bouaghi & Khenchla
Guergour Carpet	Setif, Bougaa
Tursad Carpet	Guelma
Messraa El sayd Carpet	Ouargla

Source : Ministère du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat (2024).

-Traditional Clothing:

Traditional clothing represents a part of our culture and history that spans centuries. It is an important symbol and a defining characteristic of any community or nation. It is natural for every individual to take pride in their clothing, as it is deeply connected to history, revolution, authenticity, civilization, customs, and traditions. Algerian traditional clothing is often influenced by multiple cultural factors, including Berber, Arab, Andalusian,

European, and Ottoman influences. These various cultural elements have contributed to the creation of a unique style that blends with Algerian values⁸.

The importance of traditional industries and crafts is as follows⁹: Traditional crafts contribute to preserving the identity and distinctive features of the community's culture by maintaining professions linked to tangible history and symbols of traditional culture. Traditional crafts represent a source of national income and provide hard currency. They also create job opportunities and help in addressing the unemployment problem. Furthermore, traditional crafts contribute to the development of local community infrastructure, as artisans play a role in enhancing their local environment and improving their living standards. The following table illustrates this:

Table 03 - Statistics of traditional artisanal industry

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Job positions created in traditional industries	30106	30606	36490	31709

Source : Ministère du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat (2024).

It is observed from the statistics table of the traditional artisanal industry that the traditional industry contributed to increasing the newly created job positions, from 30,106 positions in 2020 to 31,709 positions by the end of 2023.

2) The Importance of artistic traditional industry as a cultural heritage supporting tourism in Algeria:

It is not limited to preserving the identity and cultural features of the country. It goes beyond that to become a vital part of the development of cultural tourism in Algeria. The traditional industry and crafts sector plays a significant role in enhancing tourism revenues. Tourists are always looking to buy souvenirs that reflect the culture of the country they visited. It is well-known that the growth of tourism revenues is linked to the increase in foreign tourist arrivals¹⁰.

2-1) Artistic traditional industry as cultural heritage:

Cultural heritage represents meanings that are preserved by members of society and passed from one individual to another. It forms a series of shared memories, customs, and practices used in daily life¹¹. Although the content of heritage may change over time, it never disappears from collective memory because individuals who inherit it through their social upbringing often retain it unchanged for long periods, within their behavioral customs that they replicate unconsciously¹².

Traditional artisanal industries serve as a mirror reflecting the heritage of peoples and enhance the Algerian culture and identity. This contributes to attracting tourists interested in exploring ancient traditions and traditional crafts. Additionally, traditional artisanal industries play a vital role in strengthening Algeria's economy by providing job opportunities for many artisans and enhancing local development in rural areas. Thanks to these industries, Algeria can leverage its cultural strength to boost tourism and achieve sustainable economic growth.

2-2) Strategies for artistic traditional industry to support tourism:

The Swiss researchers Kurt KRAPF & Walter HUNZIKER " defined tourism as:

"Tourism refers to the total set of relationships and phenomena arising from the travel and stay of tourists or visitors, as long as their stay or visit does not lead to permanent residence or involve paid employment¹³.

Traditional artisanal industries are considered essential factors in supporting cultural tourism in Algeria. Therefore, there is a need to develop effective strategies to promote this tourism by fostering and promoting traditional artisanal industries. These strategies include providing necessary training and education for local artisans and artists, enhancing trade and export of artisanal products, encouraging innovation in these industries, and integrating digital technology into the production of traditional art products. These strategies will contribute to the economic and cultural sustainability of these industries and attract more tourists interested in the country's cultural heritage¹⁴.

In recent years, Algeria has been working on organizing training programs for artisans in the field of traditional and artistic craftsmanship. These programs aim to qualify artisans to develop their crafts, improve their skills, and keep up with the developments occurring in this field. The following table illustrates this:

Table 04 – Training and qualification of artisans

Training	Artisans
Training through Apprenticeship in Traditional Industries by Artisan Masters	24595
Technical training to strengthen the capabilities and skills of craftsmen.	84396
Training in the field of carpets and traditional weaving, with more than 80% of participants being females.	1422
Training in a traditional activity threatened with extinction.	229
Training in the field of pottery and ceramics.	1854
Training in the field of glassmaking	107
Training for women artisans in the "IYES" technique to enhance presentation and sales skills.	431
Training in Business Management according to the GERME methodology approved by the International Labour Office, "How to Create and Manage My Business" technique.	40350
The formation of traditional jewelry and techniques of gemstone polishing.	266
Training in the field of natural dyeing.	589
Training in the field of design in traditional crafts.	915
Training of 576 artisans in the field of copper.	576
Qualification of 51 artisans to the rank of master artisan: 28 in pottery and ceramics, 21 in traditional jewelry, and 2 in copper.	51
Training in digital marketing.	75

Source : Ministère du Tourisme et de l'Artisanat (2024).

An effective marketing strategy for traditional artisanal crafts plays a crucial role in attracting both foreign and local tourists, contributing to the enhancement of the tourism sector in Algeria. This can be achieved through the implementation of an innovative promotional strategy, including:

- showcasing traditional crafts on various websites;
- organizing exhibitions and festivals to showcase traditional artistic crafts and highlight their aesthetic beauty;
- organizing international forums, lectures, and seminars aimed at raising awareness about these artistic crafts and promoting them.

Conclusion:

Today, it has become essential to focus on industries outside of hydrocarbons, such as tourism and traditional crafts, considering the latter as a reservoir of the nation's tangible heritage. These industries can be relied upon to diversify the economy and stimulate other sectors. Therefore, it is clear that traditional artistic crafts play an important role in supporting tourism and diversifying local and international economic production.

Key findings include:

- the development of traditional artistic crafts enhances tourism in Algeria and contributes to promoting it both locally and internationally;
- they also play a key role in preserving traditional skills and the country's cultural heritage;
- developing and modernizing the techniques of traditional artistic and artisanal crafts by relying on advanced and innovative technologies, while emphasizing creativity and innovation, all while preserving the core values and traditional Algerian craftsmanship.

Based on the analysis results, here are a set of recommendations to consider:

- adopting effective strategies to enhance tourism by promoting traditional artistic and artisanal crafts (providing necessary training and education for local artisans and artists, as well as boosting trade and export of artistic products);
- supporting the trade of traditional crafts and their products and exporting them abroad;
- promoting traditional artistic crafts by organizing local exhibitions and participating in international fairs to introduce these products and attract a large number of tourists interested in the country's cultural heritage.

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