



Religious Tourism as a Source of Social and Economic Development in Algeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the various tangible and intangible components of religious tourism in Algeria, As religious temples, shrines, mosques, churches, cultural festivals, religious events, etc. To achieve this goal, the study addressed the most important points found in the research literature regarding the concept of religious tourism, its importance, characteristics, and main dimensions. It also presented the most prominent religious tourism sites and events in Algeria. Finally, the study focused on the obstacles and difficulties that limit the high demand for religious tourism compared to other types of tourism in Algeria. In conclusion, the study found that focusing on activating the components of religious tourism in Algeria plays an important role in achieving social and economic development strategies both locally and nationally.

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1. *Introduction*

Tourism, in its various forms, has become one of the most important pillars for the social and economic development of developing countries, as the act of tourism is an integral part of human nature.

Currently, religious tourism is a global phenomenon that is gaining significant importance due to its connection with the spiritual and doctrinal aspects of individuals, and its cultural heritage dimension linked to their origins. Many religions have historically included visits to holy places as part of the faith's doctrine, provided certain conditions are met, such as the ability to afford travel costs, good health, and the presence of companions, etc.

Thus, tourism, in its humanitarian and economic concept, is an important phenomenon that supports the movement of peoples and nations towards direct engagement with their heritage, uniqueness, and principles, leading to a state of rapprochement and understanding between civilizations, rejecting principles of extremism and terrorism. The broad concept of tourism plays a role in this area as it aims to satisfy the individual's human needs. Faith and spiritual tourism falls within this concept, involving visits to the relics and civilizations of ancient and modern peoples, and includes visits to religious and archaeological sites, museums, markets, and ancient places.

Religious tourism has a prominent role in the economies of developed countries, as it is considered an invisible export and one of the industries that contributes to the national output. It is an important source of foreign currency, provides employment opportunities, reduces unemployment rates, and revitalizes the populations of host countries, combating poverty in its various forms. It plays an active role in increasing spending levels, encouraging development and investment opportunities, thus achieving economic and social well-being for the residents of the tourist area.

In Algeria, there are various types of tourism that attract a large number of domestic and international tourists, such as desert tourism, adventure tourism, and scientific tourism, etc. However, religious tourism has not received the same level of attention or demand. Under these competitive conditions between religious tourism and other types of tourism in Algeria, ensuring its development requires study and strategic planning to revive it and ensure increased local demand and its spread on Arab, continental, and global levels.

The objective of this study is to monitor the various pillars of religious tourism in Algeria and explore ways to activate religious tourism sites. To achieve this objective, we attempt through this study to answer the question: **"What are the ways to activate the pillars of religious tourism in Algeria?"**

To answer the problem posed in the above question, we have divided the study into three main sections. After the introduction, the first part of the study addresses the concept and characteristics of religious tourism, while the second part examines the components of religious tourism in Algeria. The third part analyzes and discusses the ways to enhance religious tourism in Algeria.

2. Theoretical Framework of Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is a term widely used in theory and practice to refer to contemporary travel patterns and pilgrimage sites (Okon, 2018, p. 2). When researching the concepts of travel and religion within the same context in theoretical literature and previous studies, several terms are used interchangeably to denote religious tourism, including spiritual tourism, faith tourism, pilgrimage, tourism to holy places, and pious tourist. A selection of definitions of religious tourism includes:

2.1 Concept of Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is one of the oldest and most significant types of tourism and is also the most expansive. Historically, many tourists have been drawn to temples or specific locations to perform religious rituals, fulfill vows, or seek healing, regardless of their beliefs and religions. Over time, this evolved into regular visits at specific times according to certain

teachings and rites, such as Hajj, Umrah, and visits to holy shrines. This type of tourism is characterized by its continuity throughout the year, attracting large numbers of tourists for relatively short durations. Religious tourists are less influenced by their financial situation compared to non-religious tourists. Despite financial constraints, they often save throughout the year or longer to cover the costs of performing Hajj, Umrah, and other religious visits (Al-Qazwini, 2017, p. 17).

In the same context, (Okon, 2018, p. 2) considers religious tourism a distinctive type of tourism closely linked to individuals' leisure time. The destination of religious tourism is generally a sacred site, a pilgrimage site, or a site of religious heritage. Often, the motivation for the journey, the form of the trip, and the holy destination are used to explain religious tourism, where leisure activities are complementary opportunities within the need for religious travel.

(Okon, 2018) also attempted to define and compare religious tourism with pilgrimage. Pilgrimage has traditionally been defined as travel to a shrine or a place of religious significance for the purpose of performing religious rites or fulfilling a spiritual need. On the other hand, the motivation behind religious tourists can extend beyond performing religious rites to include broader cultural reasons. This creates a distinction between religious tourists and pilgrims, highlighting the difference

between religious tourism and pilgrimage through the behavior of the tourist during the journey.

From a broader perspective, religious tourism is defined as: "The activity or method by which tourists from within and outside the country can reach religious sites with a religious dimension to achieve primarily spiritual aspects, such as seeking blessings from holy places, performing religious duties, or learning about the religious heritage of a country. It includes participating in religious events and observing religious festivals and is limited to areas with ancient religious history that attract tourists from different countries" (Al-Jassani, 2004, p. 330).

Religious tourism is also defined as: "That organized influx of tourists coming from inside or outside the country to learn about holy places and their history, and the spiritual values they represent for religion or belief or otherwise in that country" (Al-Barzanji, 2006, p. 179).

Additionally, it is defined as tourism where religious and jurisprudential activities and teachings are practiced. This type of

- Visiting religious tourism sites for blessings;
- Visiting tourism sites to perform a religious duty;
- Visiting religious tourism sites to learn about a country's religious heritage;

tourism is restricted to areas of religious significance and ancient religious history, attracting tourists from around the world as the cradle of heavenly religions. This tourism involves traveling to visit places with religious history, considered a pilgrimage or a form of practicing religious teachings. This type of tourism continues throughout the year, attracting large numbers of visitors for short durations. Religious belief is one of the most important human factors influencing religious tourism (Bechta & Bourmana, 2020, p. 82).

Based on the aforementioned definitions, religious tourism can be said to revolve around two main aspects: choosing the destination, meaning traveling from one country to another or within the borders of a particular country to visit holy places, and the purpose, which primarily focuses on the spiritual aspect of the individual. This makes religious tourism a blend of religious and heritage contemplation for the purpose of devotion and closeness to the Creator. The concept of religious tourism includes the following:

- It is non-seasonal, meaning it occurs throughout the year;
- The demand for it is continuous;
- It is not linked to financial capability and individual luxury.

2.2 Importance and Features of Religious Tourism

Religious tourism distinguishes itself from other tourism activities through several key features:

- It fulfills essential spiritual needs, representing a state of turning to God in places of worship. These sites dominate the tourism market more than others due to the influence of religion and spiritual practices that individuals engage in throughout their lives. Naturally, the tourist seeks psychological, mental, and intellectual comfort to relieve the pressures of daily life, achieving peace and happiness. This is what religious tourism offers to the tourist who is looking for something new, exciting, and stimulating to their desires (Al-Najm, 2013, p. 159).
- Religious tourism requires special services, a large workforce, extensive transportation, hotels, and apartments to accommodate the number of tourists, along with other complementary services. The duration of the tourists' stay varies according to the rituals and their performance, often ranging from a week or less to a month or more (Al-Barzanji, 2006, p. 177).
- It is an ongoing process that is not significantly affected by weather conditions, or is minimally affected. It is not highly dependent on the standard of living, although the demand for religious tourism is concentrated during significant religious events. It is

characterized by varying demand levels but maintains its continuity throughout the year and encompasses all segments of society (Al-Jassani, 2004, p. 331) .

- Religious tourism combines various factors including economic, social, cultural, demographic, technological, and political aspects. It is significant in human life as it achieves spiritual connection between the individual and their intangible religion (Al-Qazwini, 2017, p. 4) .

2.3 Components of Religious Tourism

For religious tourism to succeed, certain components related to the religious tourism site and the accompanying activities and services are essential. The most important components include: (Abdel Samad & Boursouli, 2019, pp. 87-88).

- Actual Religious Value of the Site, The religious value of the site includes the potential number of visits per year and over time.
- Continuous Care for Religious Sites, The responsible authorities must maintain religious sites, including Islamic, Christian, and other landmarks, ensuring their upkeep, cleanliness, and preservation of their sanctity and religious importance. This requires allocating special financial budgets for their care according to desired goals.
- These religious tourism sites should be managed by individuals who truly

believe in their religious and spiritual importance. Additionally, these managers should be qualified to speak about the sites, their history, and their values.

- There should be products that express the spiritual value of the religious tourism site, such as photos or artifacts representing the site, which tourists can take home as heritage and souvenir gifts. This act can serve as free advertising for the religious tourism site.
- Issuing brochures and booklets containing information about religious heritage, various religious landmarks, and religious history can attract tourists' interest and promote tourism more widely.
- A clear marketing strategy for religious tourism at the national level is crucial to support the influx of tourists to visit religious sites. Programs should respect the religious specificity of each site and consider the psychological and demographic characteristics of tourists.
- These religious sites should be connected to a high-level network of transportation, communications, and other services that should be provided at the tourist destination, such as transport, accommodation, food, beverages, and religious services. Additionally, other goods and services

should be available, such as information services, specialized press, travel and tour clubs, explanatory and guiding services, historical and religious exhibitions, etc.

2.4 Factors Determining the Demand for Religious Tourism

The key factors determining the demand and supply of religious tourism are as follows (Al-Barzanji, 2006, pp. 179-181):

- **Income:** Income significantly impacts the demand for religious tourism. There is a direct relationship between the two. For instance, religious tourism is a primary source of income in many countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where revenues peak during the Hajj season, leading to increased income.
- **Prices:** Prices are one of the most important factors in determining the demand for religious tourism. The lower the cost of trips to religious tourism sites, the higher the demand, indicating an inverse relationship.
- **Leisure Time:** The more leisure time individuals have, the greater the demand for religious tourism. Leisure time depends on the vacations and holidays that an individual enjoys.
- **Population and Preferences:** There is a direct relationship between population size and demand for religious tourism. The demand for

religious tourism is higher among rural populations compared to urban dwellers.

- **Social and Cultural Awareness:**

Social and cultural awareness significantly contributes to the increased demand for religious tourism. Through their awareness, individuals become fully acquainted with the religious sites and shrines in the country they intend to visit.

- **Technology and Marketing Developments:**

Technological advancements have greatly contributed to the significant progress in various modes of transportation. Modern promotional strategies using technology, communication networks,

- regulations, and strict procedures (such as obtaining a passport, approvals from certain authorities like the employer, currency exchange procedures, airport and customs security measures, taxes imposed by some countries on departing and arriving tourists, accommodation bookings, etc.). The more complex and numerous these procedures, the lower the demand for religious tourism.

- **Natural Factors:** Natural factors constitute a significant part of the supply in religious tourism. Regions rich in natural attractions (such as fertile and flat land, good climate, rivers, forests, orchards, etc.) encourage

and social media to highlight religious tourism sites in many countries lead to increased demand for religious tourism.

- **Security and Political Conditions:**

The security and political stability of a country play a crucial role in the demand for religious tourism. Countries with internal security instability face economic crises, affecting both the residents and external tourists. Tourists seek comfort, security, and services, so stable security and political conditions correlate positively with the demand for religious tourism.

- **Travel Procedures:** Most religious tourism trips, especially those abroad, are subject to various laws,

investment in religious tourism projects.

The various factors determining the demand for religious tourism, as mentioned above, are present in Algeria. The country has many religious sites and shrines. Recently, Algeria has become known to a broad segment of the global population as a unique, inspiring, and attractive destination for various interests, such as nature, archaeology, history, religion, sports, and adventure. Currently, many foreign tourists refer to it as the "continental state" due to its vast area and diverse natural components and population, including Arabs and Amazigh.

Some of its most prominent tourism components include:

- Exceptional geological features and diverse geographical potentials;
- Varied climatic conditions during the same time period;
- Exotic and sometimes rare flora and fauna;
- Diversity in customs, traditions, and cuisine of indigenous and incoming populations;
- Abundance of tourist attractions, natural parks, and protected areas;
- Tourist safety and political stability.

3. Components of Religious Tourism in ALGERIA

Algeria is home to many religious sites of various faiths (mosques, zawiyas, Islamic schools, shrines, churches, temples, etc.), making it an intriguing destination for

religious tourism. Some of the most notable sites include:

3.1 Historical Islamic Mosques in ALGERIA

Djamaa El Djazaïr (Algiers Great Mosque):

Officially inaugurated on October 29, 2020, it is an architectural masterpiece located in the capital, Algiers. Covering an area of over 27,000 hectares, it is the largest mosque in Algeria and Africa, and the third largest in the world after the Prophet's Mosque and the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia. The mosque features a unique Andalusian architectural design, adorned with Islamic art and beautiful Arabic manuscripts on marble and wood from the Quran. The prayer hall floor is covered with a turquoise carpet with traditional Algerian botanical patterns. The mosque complex includes a prayer hall, a vast library, and centers for Quranic memorization.

Fig.1. Djamaa El Djazaïr - Algiers



- **Emir Abdelkader Mosque:**

The second largest mosque in Algeria by area, after the Algiers Great Mosque, it can accommodate 15,000 worshippers and has a large courtyard for additional thousands. Located in the heart of Constantine, the capital of eastern Algeria, it also houses the

University of Islamic Sciences, attended by notable scholars such as Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghazali and Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Modern Islamic figures like Al-Bouti from Syria, who frequently visited, and Omar Abdel Kafi and Hegazi have also lectured there.

Fig.2. Emir Abdelkader Mosque - Constantine (East Algeria)



- **Ketchaoua Mosque:**

A historic mosque in the capital Algiers, built during Ottoman rule in 1612 AD and expanded later by Bey Hassan in 1792 AD. During the French occupation, it was converted into St. Philip's Cathedral, remaining so until 1962 when it was

restored to its original status as a mosque. Despite these changes, the mosque retained its original grandeur and historical significance. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992 as part of the city of Algiers' heritage.

Fig.3. Ketchaoua Mosque - Algiers



- **Hassan Pasha Mosque (Great Mosque):**

Also known as the Great Mosque, it was built in 1796 in the city of Oran, Algeria,

during the rule of Bey Muhammad bin Othman the Great on the orders of Baba

Hassan Pasha during the Ottoman period in the 18th century.

Fig.4. Hassan Pasha Mosque - Oran (West Algeria)



- **Great Mosque of Tlemcen:**

One of the oldest and most important historical mosques in Tlemcen, Algeria. Built during the reign of Sultan Yusuf ibn

Tashfin in 1082 AD and rebuilt during the reign of his son Ali ibn Yusuf in 1136 AD, it is one of the finest examples of Almoravid architecture.

Fig.5. Great Mosque - Tlemcen (West Algeria)



- **Mansoura Mosque:**

A historical ruined mosque located in the town of Mansoura in northwestern Algeria, in the province of Tlemcen. It was built during the reign of the Marinids in

1303 AD by Sultan Abu Yaqub Yusuf al-Nasir. The main gate was later decorated during the reign of Sultan Abu al-Hasan al-Marini in 1336.

Fig.6. Mansoura Mosque (Castle) - Tlemcen (West Algeria)



In addition to these notable mosques, other historical mosques serve as religious tourism assets, such as: the Old Mosque in the Casbah of Algiers, Sidi Ramadan Mosque in the Casbah of Algiers, Sidi Belhassen Mosque in Tlemcen, the Great Mosque in Nedroma in Tlemcen.

3.2 Historical Zawiya and Islamic Schools in ALGERIA

Zawiyas are among the notable historical institutions in Algeria, playing multiple roles—military, religious, educational, and social—during the Ottoman period. They also impacted political, social, and cultural life.

According to a study by researcher Omar bin Aisha on 75,000 shrines nationwide, Algeria has 6,000 known shrines generating no less than 80 billion centimes annually. The figure of 6,000 refers only to

the major and well-known shrines, as some provinces have at least 350 shrines generating between 300 and 800 million annually. Among the famous large zawiyas in Algeria are:

- **Sidi Abdelrahman El Thaalibi Zawiya:**

Known as the Thaalibi Zawiya, it is a historic zawiya and school of Islamic sciences located in the Casbah of Algiers, founded in the 15th century by the scholar and Islamic jurist Abdelrahman El Thaalibi, who is also buried there. The zawiya is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as part of the Casbah of Algiers.

- **Sidi Amar Sharif Zawiya:**

Also known as the Sidi Daoud Zawiya, it is an Islamic zawiya following the Rahmaniyya Sufi order, located in the

municipality of Sidi Daoud in Boumerdes province. It was founded in 1745 by Sidi Amar Sharif El Erathni, an Algerian religious figure of the Rahmaniyya order.

Sidi Muhammad Bou Qabrain Zawiya:

An Islamic zawiya with a shrine, located in the Belouizdad area of Algiers. Founded in 1792 by Sidi Muhammad Bou Qabrain, a Sufi scholar and founder of the Rahmaniyya Sufi order, his tomb is within the zawiya.

El Hamil Zawiya:

Known as the Qasimiya Zawiya, it is an Islamic zawiya following the Rahmaniyya Sufi order located in the town of El Hamil in the M'sila province. Founded in 1863 by the imam and Islamic scholar Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim, it includes a mosque and a school, as well as the tomb of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abi al-Qasim al-Hamili.

3.4 Religious Festivals and Celebrations

Among the celebrations associated with religious events, the Sebeiba Festival in the province of Djanet and the Seboua Celebration in Timimoun, Adrar Province, have been chosen to highlight the cultural dimension of religious tourism.

• SEBEIBA Folklore Festival in Djanet- Southernmost Algeria:

Various sources agree on a single truth that Sebeiba is linked to "all of Djanet." Professor Youssef Oukassem states that, "Sebeiba is the inherited treasure and the gifted legacy from the Jantian ancestors, a distinctive identity card for their city that has embraced them for thousands of years. It is difficult to explain what it means as it remains a historical landmark and a religious appointment." (Sebeiba Cultural Association)

One of the performers of this dance mentions that, "Sebeiba is the most valuable thing in the hearts of the locals, passed down through generations, yet the meaning of the word remains mysterious." It remains the single thread uniting the tribes of "all of Djanet" annually, and despite its age, it is still deeply rooted in the hearts, especially of the elderly, despite their different and sometimes contradictory opinions on the history of this phenomenon. If we return to the first roots of this celebration, we find two narratives: (Sebeiba Cultural Association)

- **The first narrative:** Sebeiba, in its essence, commemorates the peace treaty signed between the ancestors of "all Mihan" and "all Zilouaz," established to prevent bloodshed. This treaty is celebrated annually, marking the triumph of the locals over these ethnic disputes and conflicts.

Consequently, "Kel Mihan" and "Kel Zilouaz" meet each year with a spirit of peace and forgiveness, in a symbolic war without bloodshed.

- **The second narrative:** Sebeiba is celebrated to mark the victory of Prophet

- Description of the SEBEIBA Dance

The Sebeiba dance includes both men and women, reflecting the customs of the Tuareg society. Women play a crucial role in inspiring enthusiasm, raising aspirations, and boosting morale. This dance relies on two human elements: men and women. Men are responsible for performing the sword and handkerchief dance, wearing traditional attire such as "Tekoumbet, Tegelmoust, Tikmest," and announcing the beginning and end of the performance.

Women's roles include wearing "Ajous, Tazlek," playing the tambourines, singing in the form of "Ajdim," clapping, and ululating. They also recite enthusiastic poetry that inspires men to act. Despite the distinct roles of men and women, the unique characteristic that unites them is wearing "Ilshan," a shiny blue fabric used by nobles and made in Sudan.

Moses (peace be upon him) over Pharaoh Ramses II on the Day of Ashura, symbolizing the triumph of truth over falsehood. Every year, on the same date as this event, the people of Djanet come out to create an artistic tableau formed by two groups, "all Mihan" and "all Zilouaz."

The Sebeiba Festival progresses through the following stages: (Sebeiba Cultural Association)

- **Timolawin Stage:** Preparations for Sebeiba begin at the start of Muharram, involving both equipment and human resources, particularly in the neighborhoods of Mihan and Zilouaz, the main competitors in the dance. Physical preparations take place in designated areas. In Mihan, this is "Daq al-Zawiya," a square under the "Taghourfit" palace. In Zilouaz, preparations occur in the "Tifrit" square. These preparations, known as "Timolawin," imply announcing and informing. On the first night, women play "Genqa," or tambourines, signaling the start of the event, which lasts until the tenth day of Muharram. During this period, young men perform remarkable dances to the beat of tambourines and accompanying poetry sung by women standing in a half-circle, referred to as "Ajdim" in the Tuareg language. Meanwhile, a group of elderly experts

observes the dancers to select young men to face the opponent on the tenth day, "Tilellin," marking the end of the peaceful competition.

Dancing is a key criterion for determining the winning neighborhood, as "Timolawin" serves to select dancers who meet the necessary conditions, wearing "Tekoumbet," and demonstrating endurance and resilience.

- Tilellin Stage: Sebeiba culminates on this day, where certain aspects may tip the balance in favor of one neighborhood. Tilellin is the awaited day between Mihan and Zilouaz, featuring a semi-closed meeting between the leaders and elders of both neighborhoods to inspect "Logia," the usual venue for this religious ritual. The meeting takes place in two phases: morning and evening. In the morning, residents from both neighborhoods, along with other areas, descend to the Agriou Valley to witness the competing neighborhoods. The residents' presence is a factor in favoring one neighborhood, adding a point in its favor. Tuaregs from Niger, Mali, Tamanrasset, and Libya flock to witness this event. Each team from the neighborhoods enters from their respective sides: Mihan from the south and Zilouaz from the north. After the dancers wear the

special attire for the dance, roles are assigned by elders and experts. The selected dancers wear "Tekoumbet" and dance to the rhythm of tambourines and poetic chants by women. Women are divided into two groups: one reciting poetry with clapping, and the other playing tambourines. When both teams reach the arena, they stand in their respective areas, waiting for the start, signaled by "Tenfar."

"Tenfar" means "to break free" or "to release." Unlike the language, dancers here represent an attack formation that sends shivers down the spine, leading to the description of Sebeiba as a bloodless war. Each team showcases their dance skills, while women recite poetry with rhythmic movements, clapping, and forming lines on either side. The tambourine players follow the men in a trotting dance. After the first round, the second round, known as "Aghlai Notay" in the Tuareg language, begins.

This means "turn of the year" or "renewing the vow," involving sword clashing to create a sound that blends with the singers' voices as the sun sets, casting golden rays that reflect on the indigo-dyed fabric. This fusion of natural beauty and human creativity creates a stunning spectacle. The images show the Sebeiba Festival, where men dance in the center

while women surround them, reciting poetry and clapping, providing motivation for men to confront their opponents.

Fig.7. Sebeiba Festival - Djanet (Southernmost Algeria)



- **Seboua Celebration in Timimoun :**

The Seboua celebration is a religious, cultural, social, and economic event held annually in the Timimoun region (southwest Algeria). It commemorates the passing of a week since the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) birth anniversary, which falls on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal each year. This occasion is also tied to the memory of the revered saint Sidi El Hadj Belkacem, born around 921 AH / 1515 AD in the village of "Ousef." He studied in his hometown before traveling to Morocco, where he learned the Jazuliya Shadhiliya Sufi order under Sheikh Ali ibn Ibrahim. Sheikh Ali granted him permission to return to the Gourara region and establish his zawiya, which became a center for knowledge and hospitality. Sheikh El Hadj Belkacem was

also known as the leader of the pilgrimage caravan to the holy sites in the Gourara region. Some of his notable works include "A Treatise on Monotheism," "A Treatise in Praise of the Prophet," "A Treatise on the Miracles of the Prophet," and "A Poem in Supplication."

UNESCO has listed "Seboua of the Mawlid" in Gourara as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as announced during the 10th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Windhoek, Namibia, with representatives from 175 countries in attendance. Seboua is considered a religious, social, and cultural event, as well as an economic week in the Gourara region of southwestern Algeria.

The Seboua celebration begins with the arrival of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in the "Zerka district" of the ancient Timimoun castle by visiting "Sidi Mohammed Ou Abdel Hai," a descendant of Sidi Musa and Al-Masoud Al-Tasfauti. The Quran is recited, known locally as (Al-Rabia), and the Hadra is held in the Zerka house in the Taybiya tradition, announcing the beginning of the recitation of Al-Busiri's Burda on the first day, followed by the Hamziyya. Three days before the Prophet's birthday, celebrations begin with the Baroud parties in the ancient Manjour district. On the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal, a visit is made to "Lalla Haija," the wife of Sidi El Hadj Belkacem and one of his cousins. According to legends, she was a pious woman, and "Lalla Haija" starts the festival by celebrating the Prophet's birthday (on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal),

and the sheikh concludes it with Seboua (on the 18th of Rabi' al-Awwal). On Seboua day, people from various tribes meet at a place called (At-Belhaj) and engage in folkloric skirmishes to gain control of the field pit. In the end, they gather in a reconciliatory display by reciting Al-Fatiha at the zawiya house, symbolically representing reconciliation between the tribes of Gourara at the Zawiya of Sidi El Hadj Belkacem.

Fig.8. Seboua Celebration in Timimoun - (Southwest Algeria)



3.4 Historical Churches and Temples

In addition to Islamic religious sites, Algeria is home to many historical churches and temples that date back to the colonial era. These churches have stood for centuries and are among the most significant religious monuments, playing a crucial role in attracting tourists, especially Europeans who are interested in exploring their long-standing religious heritage. Some notable examples include:

- **Great Temple in Oran:**

Located on Mohamed Baghdadi Street, this temple was originally a Jewish synagogue built in 1918 and is considered one of the largest and most beautiful synagogues in Africa. It features basalt stones sourced from Jerusalem, Palestine, its very high elevation, and decorations made of mosaics and stained glass. After independence, in 1963, the Algerian government converted it into a mosque named "Abdallah Ibn Salam Mosque".

Fig.9. Abdallah Ibn Salam Mosque/Great Temple of Oran (West Algeria)



- **Saint Augustine Cathedral:**

Located in the historic area of Boukhadra, this cathedral is one of the historical tourist landmarks in Algeria. It dates back to the early days of French colonial rule in Algeria, where the French built it on the

ruins of the ancient Hippo temple. The cathedral is known for its luxurious European architecture, resembling the churches of the French Renaissance period, and is adorned with basalt and pure gold statues.

Fig.10. Saint Augustine Cathedral - Annaba (East Algeria)



- **Notre Dame d'Afrique Cathedral:**
One of the most famous and important tourist landmarks in Algeria, located in the Bologhine neighborhood in central Algiers. Its construction began in 1872 and took approximately 14 years to complete. The cathedral's architectural design combines the aesthetic lines of

Maghrebi art and modern Byzantine architecture.

Fig.11. Notre Dame d'Afrique Cathedral - Algiers



Despite Algeria's wealth of globally and locally renowned religious tourist sites, religious tourism remains the least demanded type of tourism, both domestically and internationally. This can be attributed to the lack of attention from officials towards the religious tourism sector. Most religious landmarks are located in rural areas that are difficult to access, and there is a lack of promotion for these sites as destinations for domestic tourism. Additionally, a prevalent and incorrect perception among a large segment of society is that religious tourism is solely linked to spiritual aspects, neglecting its cultural and scientific

dimensions. Visiting shrines and religious sites to learn about their history is often associated with superstitions and innovations.

The absence of a clear policy for religious tourism promotion and marketing has negatively impacted the demand for religious tourism. For example, publications and printed materials that narrate the history of religious landmarks are almost non-existent, and some have been vandalized or destroyed. What remains today are merely stories and tales passed down by the residents of these areas about the saints and their blessings.

4. Conclusion and Discussion of Study

Result

Religious tourism is one type of tourism that has been marginalized and has not received sufficient attention and development from the Algerian state, especially considering the vast amount of underutilized spiritual assets (mosques, shrines, temples, and churches highlighted in this study, as well as those not mentioned).

Religious tourism in Algeria has the potential to be a significant driver of socio-economic growth and development, creating job opportunities, preserving culture and heritage, and promoting religious awareness. This can be achieved if human and financial resources are well-invested, necessary infrastructure is provided, an enabling environment is created, and a good government policy is implemented. However, this requires addressing several challenges and implementing various mechanisms to activate religious tourism in Algeria.

- Ways to Activate Religious Tourism in ALGERIA

- Revitalize and promote festivals with religious significance or those linked to religious occasions internally.
- Utilize national and international media to promote religious tourism sites and shrines.
- Develop a well-thought-out and incentivizing strategy to promote visits to religious heritage sites as part of regular tourist trips.
- Restructure and develop infrastructure and establish tourism structures in line with tourism market requirements.
- Change the perception among foreign tourists that Algeria is solely a desert tourism destination.
- Establish close cooperation between tourism bodies, airline companies, and security agencies.
- Provide competitive pricing for tourism services.
- Enhance the role of travel agencies in promoting domestic religious tourism.
- Include the concept of religious tourism in Islamic studies curricula and organize school trips to religious tourism sites.
- Create electronic applications that provide information about religious tourism sites.
- Improve infrastructure around religious tourism sites to accommodate increased tourist numbers, especially roads leading to rural areas with many shrines and where religious celebrations and festivals are held.
- Upgrade transportation options to access religious tourism sites.
- Conduct regular restoration of religious tourism areas, particularly those that are not well-known locally or internationally.

- Local government bodies should catalog all religious tourism sites and festivals in their regions and disseminate information to citizens to highlight these religious tourism sites and events.

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