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Global and Algerian Pioneers in Sustainable Ecotourism: Best Practices and Local Adaptation

DJAMAI Sara [1], HERMOUCHE Imen [2♦], MANSOURI Mouna [3]
[1] ECOFIMA, University of Skikda, (Algeria), s.djamai@univ-skikda.dz.
[2] ECOFIMA, University of Skikda, (Algeria), i.hermouche@univ-skikda.dz
[3] ECOFIMA, University of Skikda, (Algeria), m.mansouri@univ-skikda.dz

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Abstract:

This study explores Algeria's ecotourism journey by examining three key destinations: Ahaggar, Taghit, and Taza, and comparing them to prominent international examples from Costa Rica, Bhutan, and Slovenia. The findings highlight that the success of these global leaders in sustainable ecotourism is rooted in a blend of strong national identity, effective certification systems, and practical market strategies that connect conservation with economic opportunity.

However, in Algeria, despite the existence of an encouraging policy framework and strong stakeholder interest, progress remains limited due to weak coordination, insufficient funding, and a lack of specialized skills. Based on these results, this study suggests that strengthening Algeria's ecotourism potential depends on translating global best practices into the local context through well-designed policies, continuous capacity building, and the creation of a national certification mechanism that ensures quality and sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Ecotourism; Green Entrepreneurship; Comparative Analysis; Sustainable Development.

JEL Classification : L83, O13, Q01, Q56, Z32

♦ Corresponding author

1.Introduction:

Since the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which established the foundational principles for managing, conserving, and sustainably developing forests worldwide, the idea of "green sustainability" has grown into a central concern across sectors—especially in tourism. Sustainable practices have become increasingly woven into tourism development strategies, bolstered by the United Nations' declaration of 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism and the creation of specialized peer groups that same year. What began as a peripheral notion has now become a mainstay of national development plans in countries like **Costa Rica**, **Bhutan**, and **Slovenia**. These nations have shown that putting sustainability first isn't just possible—it can give destinations a meaningful competitive edge, fueling economic growth, creating jobs, and safeguarding biodiversity.

1.1 Research problematic: Algeria boasts an extraordinary natural heritage, widely regarded as among the most distinctive in the world. From the sweeping dunes of the Sahara and the dramatic Ahaggar Mountains to the Taza Biosphere Reserve and ancient oasis systems, the nation's potential for ecotourism remains largely untapped. Although the national Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique (SDAT) 2030 recognizes the need for sustainable development, a significant gap persists between policy ambitions and on-the-ground realities. Stakeholders express an interest in supporting sustainability, but genuine commitment, adequate knowledge, and effective coordination are still missing. Persistent structural obstacles—including fragmented governance, limited training opportunities, underfunded initiatives, and an enduring focus on security—continue to impede real progress.

1.2 Research hypotheses: Relying on the previous discussion, the main hypothesis of this research is that Algeria's ecotourism sector has the potential to achieve meaningful progress and gain international recognition by thoughtfully adapting proven global strategies to its own realities. Specifically, by implementing national certification schemes, investing in continuous training and skills development, and promoting market-oriented approaches, Algeria can bridge the persistent gap between policy intentions and practical outcomes. Strengthening these areas will not only improve the sustainability of tourism benefits for local communities and stakeholders but also position Algeria as a regional example of sustainable tourism practice in North Africa.

1.3 Research importance: The relevance of this paper arises from the significance of sustainable ecotourism as one of the main pillars for preserving natural resources and protecting the country's biodiversity, especially in light of the global trend toward adopting tourism strategies that promote value creation and foster local economic development.

1.4 Research objectives: The objectives of this study are:

- To highlight the theoretical concept of sustainable ecotourism and green entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, while examining their various environmental, economic, and social impacts.

- Identify a number of leading international experiences in the field of sustainable ecotourism, such as those in Costa Rica, Bhutan, and Slovenia, which are reference models that can inspire the design of more sustainable tourism policies and strategies.

-Shed light on Algeria's tourism potential and learn about some successful experiences

in the field of ecotourism, such as those in Tamanrasset, Taghit, and Ahaggar.

- Attempt to analyze and compare global models with those in Algeria to highlight differences and similarities to identify the most important obstacles and challenges facing the country.

1.5 Methodology and tools: In terms of methodology, the research used a comparative analysis framework, which allowed for contrasting Algerian ecotourism initiatives (in Ahaggar, Taghit, and Taza) against renowned international models in Costa Rica, Bhutan, and Slovenia. The approach involves a detailed literature review, examination of policy documents—including the Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique (SDAT) 2030 and local regulatory frameworks—and the synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data from both global and Algerian case studies.

1.6 The plan the structure of the paper is organized as follows: after an introductory overview, the second section is dedicated to exploring the theoretical framework of sustainable ecotourism and its benefits. Section 3 sheds light on the ecotourism case study. However, Section 4 discusses the main ecotourism initiatives—Ahaggar, Taghit, and Taza in Algeria. Section 5 identifies both similarities and contrasts of the Algerian aspect against the leading case study experiences. Finally, the paper presents the main conclusions summarizes the key findings and reinforces the central hypothesis that Algeria's ecotourism can become a regional model for sustainable tourism if guided by coherent policy frameworks and well-adapted strategies.

2. Theoretical Framework:

2.1 Concept of Sustainable Ecotourism:

Ecotourism has gained increasing attention in recent years as a form of tourism that prioritizes sustainability, responsible travel and environmental protection. Unlike traditional forms of tourism, which often have a negative impact on the environment and local communities, (Matlab & § others, 2024, p. 2)

There are many definitions of ecotourism that can overlap with sustainable tourism, in this part of the research we will attempt to highlight various concepts related to the ecotourism, sustainable tourism and sustainable ecotourism.

- **Sustainable tourism**

The concept of "Sustainable Tourism" was developed by the World Tourism Organization in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Process. and lead to the management of all resources in such a way as to satisfy aesthetic needs so it means tourism that meets the needs of modern tourists and local residents and, at the same time, provides enough opportunities for future generations, (Matlab & § others, 2024, p. 3) we can also define it as the type of tourism that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In other words, it promotes the conservation and more efficient use of natural and cultural resources.

- **Ecotourism definition**

Ecotourism is defined as travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying scenery and its wild animals and plants as well as existing (Ngurah, 2023, p. 1) Ecotourism is a nature tourism that contributes to

conservation, through generating funds for protected areas, creating employment opportunities for local communities, and offering environmental education. (Dimitrios, 1999, p. 98) we can say It is an alternative type of tourism which is concerned with maintaining the natural and cultural integrity of certain tourism areas within a natural environment. Although many tourism operators use the term ecotourism to describe and advertise their tourism products, it is actually a special interest market

For many scholars and professionals in the field, sustainable tourism takes on a different meaning from ecotourism. The most widely held assumptions concerning the difference between sustainable tourism and ecotourism are that sustainable tourism as a minimum must meet the definition of sustainable development that was posited in Our Common Future, namely to be an activity that will be able to be practiced by future generations without handicaps or limitations due to the actions of the current generation, whereas ecotourism should meet the above definition and in addition include some type of interpretive experience of the local ecology where this facet is not necessary for the conceptualization of sustainable tourism.

- **Sustainable Ecotourism**

examining the issues of sustainability within ecotourism however, it is generally associated with the direct and indirect benefits of the impact of tourism on the natural environment, economy, and local communities from destination to destination

figure (1): the benefits of sustainable ecotourism

Environmental impacts
• provides incentive to protect environment, both formally (protected areas) and informally • provides incentive for restoration and conversion of modified habitats • ecotourists actively assisting in habitat enhancement (donations, policing, maintenance, etc.)
Economic impacts
• revenues obtained directly from ecotourists • Creation of direct employment opportunities • strong potential for linkages with other sectors of the local economy • stimulation of peripheral rural economies
Sociocultural impacts
• ecotourism accessible to a broad spectrum of the population • Aesthetic/spiritual element of experiences • Foster environmental awareness • among ecotourists and local population

2.2 Green Entrepreneurship in Tourism

- **Green Entrepreneurship**

This concept has gained increasing attention since the 1990s, leading to the emergence of many terms used synonymously to describe it. Among the most commonly used are: environmental entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, and ecological entrepreneurship. Based on this, the main definitions of green entrepreneurship can be presented as follows:

- Green entrepreneurship can be defined as entrepreneurship from an environmental perspective. It specifically revolves around "the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of economic opportunities that exist within environmentally embedded market failures." (boualchour & gomri, 2021, p. 69)
- Green entrepreneurship is also defined as a deliberate and planned behavior, and a complex process involving multiple stages. It is a type of business that combines environmental awareness with entrepreneurial activity and shifts towards a sustainable business model. (katiba , chater, & salmi, 2025, p. 435)
- Green entrepreneurship, also known at times as environmental or sustainable entrepreneurship, is defined as a business strategy in which environmental and ecological factors play a key role in the establishment and growth of enterprises. The goal is to create value by addressing environmental issues while maintaining economic viability. (Arya, Gayathri , & deepa, 2024, p. 89)

Based on these definitions, it can be said that green entrepreneurship is now seen as part of a new global societal trend that is relied upon to save humanity from the dangers of climate change. The focus on green policies is now stronger than ever, as green entrepreneurship has become a primary driver of action.

- **Entrepreneurship in ecotourism**

Ecotourism is considered one of the most prominent practical fields of green entrepreneurship, as both concepts intersect in their pursuit of balancing economic development with environmental preservation.

Building a model for the development and planning of ecotourism is a strategic step aimed at achieving sustainable development at both the economic and social levels. This approach focuses on strengthening the relationship between ecotourism and sustainable community development by relying on green entrepreneurship as a key instrument to enhance the appeal of ecotourism destinations. Adopting such a model not only contributes to the preservation of natural resources but also helps create economic opportunities for local communities, in alignment with the requirements of both environmental and economic sustainability. (Alromeedy, 2025)

The relationship between the two concepts can be highlighted through several key dimensions as follow:

- **Innovation and Green Investment:**

The concept of green entrepreneurship is developed through several variables are green creativity, green proactiveness, green innovativeness, green risk-taking, green opportunity focus, green resource utility, and green value creation that support ecotourism program.

(soenarto & others, 2019, p. 259)

Ecotourism relies on green entrepreneurial initiatives such as developing eco-friendly accommodations, utilizing renewable energy, and offering tourism experiences that promote environmental awareness. In this context, green entrepreneurship emerges as a tool for creating innovative tourism projects that meet sustainability standards and open new economic opportunities.

- **Local Communities**:

Both concepts contribute to supporting local communities by generating local job opportunities, building skills, and boosting local economies in ways that respect environmental and cultural specificities; we can say that ecotourism is a practical embodiment of green entrepreneurship, as it is one of the sectors that directly benefits from environmentally conscious entrepreneurial thinking. It demonstrates how profit can be achieved in a way that is environmentally responsible. The development of this type of tourism largely depends on the innovations and projects introduced by entrepreneurs committed to environmental sustainability. (soenarto & others, 2019, p. 260)

3. International Best Practice Models

Sustainable ecotourism has emerged as one of the most significant trends in the global tourism sector, it has become an effective tool for conserving natural resources, protecting biodiversity, and fostering economic development for local communities. In the face of global environmental Sustainable ecotourism has emerged as one of the most significant trends in the global tourism sector, Tourism is no longer limited to leisure alone, it has become an effective tool for conserving natural resources, protecting biodiversity, and fostering economic development for local communities. In the face of global environmental challenges such as climate change and resource depletion, a number of pioneering international experiences have succeeded in striking a balance between visitor enjoyment, environmental protection, and the well-being of local populations. These experiences serve as reference models that can inspire the design of more sustainable tourism policies and strategies. Countries such as Costa Rica, Bhutan, the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), Kenya, Norway, and New Zealand stand as living examples of how ecotourism can act as a driver of green development and a laboratory for global best practices

3.1 Costa Rica Experience: CST (Certification for Sustainable Tourism)

Costa Rica has established itself as one of the world's premier "green" destinations. Renowned for its remarkable biodiversity, the country boasts more than a dozen national parks and protected areas, preserving over 10% of its primary forests. It's no surprise, then, that Costa Rica ranks as the number two ecotourism destination according to National Geographic (Vasquez, Benavent, & Redondo, 2011, p. 544).

In 1997, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT) launched a national program known as the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST). This initiative was among the first—if not the very first—to fully integrate the core elements of sustainable tourism. CST evaluates best management practices, examines the environmental and social impacts of tourism services, and considers both client perceptions and the alignment between service offerings and promotional messaging (unated nation , 2025).

The CST's main objective is to make sustainability a tangible, practical, and essential part of tourism competitiveness in Costa Rica. It aims to improve the use of natural and social resources, encourage active involvement from local communities, and offer a new foundation for the competitiveness of the entrepreneurial sector (ICT, 2025).

- **Benifites and Objectives of CST**

The CST represents a new source of competitiveness, a way of differentiating the tourism industry from competitors, in which the development of a tourism product is encouraged, with a connotation of sustainability, thus opening up new possibilities for marketing and international promotion

In addition to the support that the Costa Rican Tourism Institute offers at the promotional level, the company certified with the CST, can use the brand as a differentiating factor of its offer. This in addition to the efficiency in the operation that is achieved under this scheme, by promoting savings and efficient use in the management of resources, has a positive impact not only on the quality of the product, but also on the cost-benefit ratio. (ICT, 2025)

The CST was designed to guide the tourism industry toward sustainability by setting clear goals as follow: (G.Lepree, 2009, pp. 62-63)

- Promote Environmental Protection by encouraging businesses to reduce negative impacts on ecosystems; Promote conservation of biodiversity, forests, water, and energy resources; Support reforestation and protection of endangered species.
- Encourage Social & Cultural Benefits such as; Strengthen the role of local communities in tourism development; Promote respect for cultural heritage and traditions; and Ensure fair distribution of tourism benefits (jobs, income, opportunities), evaluates the interaction of the company with the local communities and the population in general.
- Improve Economic Sustainability: by Helping businesses become more efficient by saving resources (energy, water, waste) ; and Ensure long-term profitability without harming the environment, and evaluates the interaction between the company and its surrounding natural habitat.

3.2 Bhutan A Global Model of High Value, Low Impact Sustainable Tourism

Bhutan is a small, landlocked country in the Himalayas the country's economy and development has been centrally organized through Five Year Plans since then, Today, the largest economic sectors in Bhutan are hydropower and tourism. (Frida, 2024, p. 13)

Bhutan's unique approach to development is, known as Gross National Happiness (GNH) is the guiding principle for socioeconomic development in Bhutan, and the achievement of GNH is the main aim of all public policy in Bhutan, it is based on the simple notion that happiness should be the foundation for development (Frida, 2024, p. 14)

In line with these views, Bhutan's development strategy is therefore rests on the four pillars of development: (Chhewang, Vermeulen, & Glasbergen, 2007, p. 55)

- ✓ sustainable and equitable economic development;
- ✓ ecological preservation;
- ✓ cultural preservation;
- ✓ good governance.

Bhutan's tourism policy is firmly rooted in the principle of sustainability, where tourism is regarded as an activity that must be environmentally friendly, socially and culturally acceptable, and economically viable under its renowned policy of "High Value, Low Volume."

For this reason, the kingdom has sought to develop a tourism sector that maintains a delicate balance between attracting visitors and generating economic returns on the one hand, and protecting the environment and preserving its living cultural heritage on the other.

The tourism policy was updated in 2022 with the introduction of a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of 100USD per tourist per night. This fee is reinvested into service and infrastructure projects that benefit citizens and tourism workers, The Department of Tourism, guided by a vision of positioning Bhutan as a green, sustainable, inclusive, and high-value destination. Its strategy is based on key principles, including:

- Developing forms of tourism aligned with the national development philosophy of **Gross National Happiness (GNH)**.
- Strengthening the **"High Value, Low Volume** approach, which includes:
- ✓ Targeting responsible tourists seeking authentic and high-quality experiences.
- ✓ Maintaining a balance between the carrying capacity of natural and cultural resources and the volume of tourist flows.
- ✓ Ensuring that tourism remains an economic driver without undermining national security, the environment, or tangible and intangible heritage.
- ✓ Promoting inclusive and equitable growth, while guaranteeing sustainable tourism development.

Bhutan's experience stands as a pioneering global model of sustainable ecotourism, demonstrating that controlling tourist numbers while increasing the value of the travel experience can serve as an effective tool for protecting the environment, strengthening cultural identity, and at the same time generating balanced and inclusive economic benefits.

3.3 Slovenia's Green Tourism System

Slovenia is sometimes presented as the green pearl in the heart of Europe, With the fact that Slovenia is a green country, the following characteristics of Slovenia have been exposed: is among the most forested countries in Europe. In quantity of river water per inhabitant, Slovenia is one of the richest countries. and the most nature-wealthy in Europe. Drinking water in Slovenia is among the purest in Europe, and even in the world, based on these facts, the story the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism was developed. (Majecta , Bozinovski, & Bostjan, 2018, p. 229)

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism was introduced in 2014 as a result of a long-term process and cooperation of multiple stakeholders from public, private and civil sectors, Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST) is a tool developed at the national level and a certification programme that carries out the following tasks under the Slovenia Green umbrella brand: (Slovenia Green, 2025)

- brings all efforts directed towards the sustainable development of tourism in Slovenia,

- offers tools to destinations and service providers that enable them to evaluate and improve their sustainability
- promotes these green endeavours through the Slovenia green brand.

The scheme's key strategic objective is to introduce sustainable models to Slovenian tourism, to both tourism service providers and destinations. All the objectives of the strategic guidelines are in line with sustainable development and demonstrate concern for the economic, social, cultural and natural environment. (Slovenia Green, 2025)

Through this system, Slovenia awards the Slovenia Green Label, a quality certification and official recognition of a destination's or provider's commitment to sustainable practices. The label is granted at different levels (Gold, Silver, Bronze) depending on the degree of compliance with the criteria. (Slovenia tourism strategy, 2022)

Thanks to this innovative approach, Slovenia has gained a leading position as one of the most sustainable destinations in the world. It has been repeatedly recognized by international organizations such as Green Destinations among the top sustainable travel destinations. This policy has helped transform tourism into a driver of local economic growth without harming the environment, while at the same time preserving the country's rich natural and cultural diversity.

4. Algerian Leading Examples

4.1 Eco-lodges in Tamanrasse

Ecotourism in the Ahaggar region represents a critical sustainable alternative to mass tourism models, which have been frequently implicated in processes of environmental degradation and cultural commodification. The Ahaggar Cultural Park, designated as a zone of international conservation importance, protects an exceptional confluence of natural and cultural assets, comprising endemic biodiversity, distinctive volcanic geomorphology, significant prehistoric rock art sites, and living Tuareg cultural traditions. The regulatory authority for this area is the National Office of the Ahaggar Cultural Park (ONPCA), a public administrative entity operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. Established by Presidential Decree No. 87-231 on November 3, 1987, and subsequently reorganized and renamed via Executive Decree No. 11-87 of February 21, 2011, the ONPCA is tasked with implementing a rigorous regulatory framework. This framework includes limiting visitor numbers, enforcing mandatory guided tours, and monitoring access through designated entry points and surveillance centers. The primary ecotourism activities facilitated within the park—trekking, camel caravan routes, and regulated 4x4 circuits—are designed to provide experiential engagement with the natural and cultural environment. However, the sector's potential is currently constrained by transnational security challenges in the Sahel and subsequent access restrictions, which have curtailed international visitation and heightened the focus on domestic tourism promotion. Notwithstanding these constraints, ecotourism in the Ahaggar continues to be articulated in policy and practice as a principal mechanism for sustainable development, with objectives centered on the protection of fragile ecosystems, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the channeling of socio-economic benefits to local communities (بودودة و كحول، 2022، الصفحات 670-672)...

4.2 Sustainable Oasis Tourism in Taghit – Opportunities and challenges.

Based on Benslimane and Semaoune (2020), you can summarize the opportunities and challenges at this point (BENSLIMANE & SEMAOUNE , 2020):

- Opportunities

The primary opportunities are not presented as tangible assets but as a foundation of positive stakeholder perception, which is a crucial prerequisite for development:

1. **Strong Perceived Benefits**: Stakeholders (including public authorities, local communities, NGOs, associations, and private tourism businesses) overwhelmingly perceive sustainable tourism as beneficial. They agree (avg. score 4.09/5) that it can deliver positive ecological, social, and economic advantages for the Taghit region. This consensus is a powerful asset for building a coalition for change.

2. Highly Positive Attitude: There is a strong, favourable attitude (avg. score 4.28/5) among stakeholders towards promoting and supporting a sustainable tourism approach. This indicates a receptive environment for new policies and initiatives, as there is little ideological resistance to the concept itself.

3. Strategic National Framework: The existence of the Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique (SDAT) horizons 2030 provides a national strategic vision and policy framework that promotes sustainability, including objectives like valuing historical heritage and ensuring social equity. This offers top-down legitimacy and direction for local efforts.

- Challenges

The study identifies profound challenges, primarily related to implementation, capacity, and governance, which currently hinder the realization of these opportunities:

1. The "Attitude-Behaviour Gap" (Lack of Real Commitment): The most critical finding is the stark contrast between positive attitudes and insufficient action. The perceived commitment of stakeholders' own organizations is rated as very low (avg. score 1.93/5). This indicates a significant gap between supporting the idea in principle and dedicating resources or taking concrete steps towards its implementation.

2. Major Knowledge Deficit: Stakeholders demonstrate a low level of knowledge (avg. score 2.29/5) about the core principles of sustainable tourism and the specific content of the national SDAT 2030 strategy. This lack of understanding is a fundamental barrier to effective action, as stakeholders cannot implement a concept they do not fully grasp.

3. Perceived Obstacles to Implementation: Stakeholders identified key operational barriers:

- Lack of Real Intentions on the Ground (45.6%): Cited as the primary obstacle, this suggests a deep-seated cynicism or inertia, where official strategies are not translated into actionable projects or political will.
- Lack of Competence (36.8%) and Lack of Coordination/Partnerships (36.8%): This points to a critical skills gap within the sector and a failure of different stakeholder groups (public, private, NGOs) to work together effectively, leading to fragmented and inefficient efforts.

- Absence of Stakeholder Pressure (25%): Stakeholders themselves feel they are not effectively holding tourism authorities accountable, indicating weak governance and advocacy mechanisms.

4.3 Youth-Led Ecotourism Initiatives in Taza Park – Responsible and Experiential Travel

The Park National of Taza (PNT) presents a fertile ground for youth-led ecotourism initiatives, offering a unique blend of natural capital and a management framework focused on education and sustainability. The park's status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2004 underscores its global importance and commitment to balancing conservation with human activity. For a youth-led initiative, the core opportunity lies in leveraging the park's exceptional biodiversity—including its pure Zeen oak forest (the only one in Algeria), endemic species like the Kabyle Nuthatch, and the Barbary macaque—to create immersive, educational experiences for responsible travelers. The existing infrastructure, such as the "Grotte Merveilleuse" (a key tourist draw with over 82,500 visitors in 2009) and other sites like Ghar El Baz and the Ain Djenane relaxation area, provides established circuits that young entrepreneurs can integrate into guided, interpretive tours focusing on speleology, wildlife observation, and local ecology.

The park's official strategy, which explicitly includes "actions de sensibilisation, d'information et d'éducation environnementale" (awareness-raising, information, and environmental education actions) through tools like guided visits, exhibitions, and "classes vertes" (green classes), creates a supportive policy environment for youth-driven educational tourism. Furthermore, the management's efforts in promoting local terroir products to improve rural living conditions align perfectly with a responsible tourism model that youth can champion, directly linking visitor experiences to local economic benefits.

However, such initiatives face significant challenges. The primary hurdle is the need for specialized training in ecotourism guiding, conservation principles, customer service for international visitors, and business management to ensure both environmental integrity and economic viability. Youth leaders would need to navigate the park's rigorous regulatory framework, designed to limit visitor numbers and protect fragile ecosystems, transforming this constraint into a selling point for low-impact, high-value travel. Securing initial funding for equipment, marketing, and certification would be another critical challenge. Ultimately, a successful youth-led model in Taza would hinge on creating deep, experiential travel products—such as wildlife monitoring workshops, sustainable foraging tours, or cultural heritage trails—that are not just tours but transformative educational experiences, thereby fulfilling the park's mission of preservation and valuation while offering a compelling alternative to mass tourism (Aït-Iftène, 2025).

5. Comparative Analysis

This section offers a comparative analysis of the global best practice models (Costa Rica, Bhutan, Slovenia) and Algerian leading cases (Ahaggar, Taghit, Taza). Comparison is made on their strategic orientation, implementation mechanism, and ensuing implications, offering both converging paths and diverging realities.

5.1 Convergences and Divergences between Global and Algerian Models

- **Convergences (Similarities):**

- **Philosophy Base:** Underlying philosophy of both the international and Algerian models conceptually relies on a nationally backed vow of sustainability. This is evident in such philosophic guidance as Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH), Slovenia's "Green Pearl" national identity, and Algeria's visionary Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique (SDAT) horizons 2030.
- **Rhetorical Commitment to the Communities**: All of the models explicitly articulate the importance of working with local communities and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism gains in their policy documents and stated objectives.

- **Divergences (Differences):**

- International models are promotional and proactive in style, using sustainability as a well-defined selling point so that they can market a specific tourist clientele. Algeria's strategy, although in existence policy (e.g., SDAT 2030, ONPCA regulation), is regulatory and reactive in style, with the focus on preserving and maintaining capacities rather than marketing them aggressively on the international platform.
- Arguably the most important difference is the presence of robust, clear national certification systems (CST, Slovenia Green Label). These establish robust guidelines, improvement targets, and a trusted brand to have faith in for consumers. Algeria lacks any nationally accepted sustainability certification for tourism businesses or travel destinations, leading to a low-quality, unauthenticated approach to "ecotourism."
- Global models have made sustainability profitable. Bhutan does so directly through the high-value SDF. Costa Rica and Slovenia do so by allowing certified firms to command premium prices. The Algerian model, particularly in Taghit and for youth projects in Taza, is lagging in economic sustainability and translating environmental riches into sufficient revenues for conservation and communal well-being.
- In the international models, community benefit is an audited and quantifiable requirement within their certification schemes (e.g., CST measures "interaction with local communities"). In Algeria, the Taghit case study indicates a high "attitude-behaviour gap" where there is good support of stakeholders but tangible commitment and benefits to communities remain low because there is a shortage of competence, coordination, and sincere intention.
- The foreign cases are globally renowned, integrated destinations. An individual plans the whole vacation to Costa Rica or Bhutan for the ecotourism experience. The Algerian cases are standalone places in a bigger, unexploded tourism framework. Their potential is hindered by factors beyond their control like security problems (Ahaggar) and internal vulnerabilities like poor coordination and marketing.

5.2 Key Success Factors and Common Challenges

- **International Model Success Factors:**

  - Strong National Vision & Branding: Consistent, overarching national strategy linking tourism development to fundamental values (sustainability, happiness, green identity).
  - Successful Public-Private Partnerships: Interactions between national tourism boards, private sector firms, and local communities to create and implement standards.
  - Market-Driven Certification: Creating a valuable brand (CST, Slovenia Green) that businesses want to achieve through having a competitive advantage and access to the market.
  - Value over Volume: A deliberate preference (as witnessed in Bhutan's policy) to appreciate high-spending but low-impact tourists to ensure sustainability and quality.
  - Investment in Reinvention: Bhutan's SDF fees get reinvested in the sector as directly as possible, establishing a cycle of self-reinvention.

- **Shared Problems (International and Algerian):**

- Sustaining Balance between Conservation and Commercialization: All models face this eternal conflict. All models struggle with finding right carrying capacities and avoiding environmental degradation due to tourism activities.
- Guaranteeing Equitable Benefit Sharing: Prevention of leakage and ensuring that revenues indeed reach local communities and conservation per se as such is a perpetual issue everywhere.

- **Key Challenges Shared in the Algerian Context**:

  - The Gap of Implementation: The most basic challenge, as discovered in Taghit, is the vast gap between policy (SDAT 2030) and practice, driven by lack of true commitment, information, and ability.
  - Fragmented Governance and Poor Coordination: Absence of a strong, centralized national government or program to guide, certify, and promote sustainable ecotourism leads to fragmented initiative and inefficiency.
  - Perceptions of Security: Global security issues in regions like the Ahaggar restrict international numbers of visitors, a substantial constraint not faced to the same degree by the international models used for benchmarking.
  - Deficiency of Training and Skills: As was evident with the case of Taza, there is a serious lack of training in ecotourism guiding, business administration, and customer relations in overseas markets.

- Access to Finance: Local and youth-led ventures lack the ability to access the starting capital for marketing and development, a challenge normally addressed elsewhere through special green funds or micro-financing schemes linked to tourism policies.

In conclusion, while Algeria boasts tremendous natural and cultural resources on par with globally advanced ecotourism models, its examples are quintessentially different in development maturity, strategic focus, and governance models. The international models have higher-quality, comprehensive, market-oriented systems, while the prospects for Algeria are currently deterred by implementation hurdles, lack of national branding cohesion, and underlying tourism industry structure problems.

6. Conclusion:

This study highlights the clear difference between market-driven models of sustainable ecotourism developed by global leaders and the emerging, opportunity-rich initiatives in Algeria. It also indicates that the success of countries such as Costa Rica, Bhutan, and Slovenia depends on a proactive national strategy. This strategy combines a strong sustainability brand with practical tools such as certification systems (CST Slovenia Green), a value-over-volume approach (SDF in Bhutan), and methods for reinvesting tourism revenues in environmental conservation and local communities. The study shows that sustainability for these countries is not just a regulatory concept; it is a fundamental part of their economic identity.

However, Algeria's experience in places such as Ahghar, Taghit, and Taza reveals a significant gap between political objectives and actual practices. Despite its considerable natural and cultural resources and a national strategic framework (SDAT 2030), the ecotourism sector faces significant challenges. These challenges include a “significant gap between attitudes and behaviors,” fragmented governance, a lack of specialized training and certification, and insufficient financing options, in addition to external factors such as security perceptions and restricted access to international markets. As a result, Algerian projects remain isolated and struggle to achieve the economic success and growth seen by their international counterparts.

Therefore, Algeria's future path should not be limited to simply copying foreign models. Rather, it must strategically adapt its key principles to suit the local context. Bridging the implementation gap requires an approach that promotes value creation. On this basis, developing a nationally recognized sustainability certification will be essential to ensure quality and build market confidence. In addition, robust capacity-building programs for mentors and entrepreneurs are necessary. By fostering genuine partnerships between the public and private sectors and local communities and creating dedicated sources of financing, Algeria can leverage its enormous potential and transform itself into a strong and successful ecotourism sector that benefits its people and its priceless natural heritage.

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