

Tourism without Promotion: A Marketing Perspective on Algeria's Untapped Potential

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Abstract ;

This study aims to analyze the tourism sector in Algeria, focusing on its role in diversifying the economy and reducing reliance on hydrocarbons. It examines the sector's historical development, from the establishment of the National Tourism Office after independence, through investment and infrastructure development, to recent reforms promoting both domestic and international tourism. The study highlights the challenges facing tourism, such as infrastructure limitations and regional competition, as well as the opportunities arising from Algeria's natural and cultural assets and recent governmental initiatives. Additionally, the study includes a SWOT analysis of the sector and provides practical recommendations for sustainable tourism development and investment enhancement.

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1. *Introduction*

Tourism today is recognized not merely as a leisure activity, but as a strategic driver of economic development, cultural exchange, and territorial cohesion. Across the globe, countries—especially in the Global South—have increasingly invested in tourism to diversify their economies, generate employment, and strengthen their global presence. Through effective branding and sustained promotion, many emerging nations have succeeded in turning their natural and cultural heritage into competitive advantages on the international stage.

Algeria represents a striking paradox in this context. It possesses extraordinary tourism assets: from its vast and captivating Sahara Desert to Mediterranean coastlines, majestic mountain ranges, and a rich mosaic of Amazigh, Arab, Islamic, and colonial heritage. These elements position the country as one of the most promising, yet underexplored, tourism destinations in North Africa. With a territory fourteen times larger than Tunisia—one of the region's tourism success stories—Algeria's potential is undeniable.

Tourism in Algeria also represents a strategic avenue for economic diversification, aiming to reduce the country's heavy reliance on hydrocarbons, which contribute approximately 98% of foreign currency earnings and 60% of

budget revenues. Despite its vast natural, cultural, and geographical assets—including seven UNESCO World Heritage sites—Algeria has historically lagged behind neighboring countries in terms of tourist arrivals, revenues, and hotel infrastructure.

Tourism is a key driver of economic diversification in Algeria, offering vast natural, cultural, and geographical assets. With its strategic location, varied climate, and 85% Sahara coverage, the country holds strong potential for regional and international tourism. Despite ranking as the most competitive tourism destination in North Africa, Algeria still lags behind leading global markets in visitor numbers and revenue. Recent reforms have encouraged investment, resulting in new five-star hotels and expanded air connectivity. Government plans now focus on boosting Saharan and cultural tourism to increase GDP contribution, create jobs, and strengthen the sector's global competitiveness.

The country has witnessed various phases in tourism development, from limited investment after independence to periods of decline due to political and security crises. Recent reforms, including the facilitation of visa procedures, investments in hotel infrastructure, and the launch of the National Tourism Development Master Plan (SDAT 2025), have begun to stimulate recovery. Between

2022 and 2024, tourist arrivals increased from 1.6 million to 3.55 million, demonstrating the sector's growth potential. Nevertheless, challenges persist, such as insufficient infrastructure, low revenue generation compared to Morocco and Tunisia, regional competition, and the need to attract international tourists while engaging local communities.

Research Question :

How can Algeria develop a sustainable and competitive tourism sector that maximizes economic benefits, leverages its natural and cultural assets, and reduces dependency on hydrocarbons while overcoming infrastructural and regional challenges?

Significance of the Study :

- Highlights tourism as a means to diversify income sources and reduce Algeria's dependence on oil and gas.
- Provides analytical insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the tourism sector.
- Supports policymakers in designing strategies to improve infrastructure and encourage both local and foreign investment.
- Enhances understanding of tourism's impact on the national economy and local communities, including job creation and service improvements.

Study Objectives :

- Examine the current state of the tourism sector in Algeria in terms of infrastructure, revenue, and tourist arrivals.
- Analyze tourism's contribution to the national economy and GDP.

- Evaluate government policies and reforms implemented to strengthen tourism.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Propose practical recommendations for sustainable tourism development and enhancing Algeria's attractiveness to local and international tourists.

Methodology ;

- **Descriptive-Analytical Approach:** To assess the current situation of the tourism sector and analyze historical and statistical data.
- **Inductive Approach:** To identify relationships between government policies, infrastructure, and sector performance.
- **SWOT Analysis:** To determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Algeria's tourism sector.
- **Comparative Approach:** To compare Algeria's performance with neighboring countries such as Tunisia and Morocco in attracting tourists.

Study Tools :

- **Secondary Sources:** Statistical data, reports, and official documents regarding tourism development, tourist arrivals, and revenue trends.
- **Statistical Data:** Tourist numbers, tourism revenues, GDP contribution, hotel infrastructure, and tourism projects.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Evaluation of government policies, investment plans, and tourism reforms.
- **Tables and Graphs:** To display trends in tourist arrivals, revenue growth,

and sector development over the years, as well as hotel and project distribution.

2. Conceptual Framework: Tourism Promotion and Destination Marketing

In an increasingly globalized world, where competition between tourism destinations is intensifying, the success of a tourism sector is no longer determined solely by the availability of natural or cultural assets. Rather, it hinges on a destination's ability to effectively promote itself and market its image within an international environment saturated with information and alternatives.

2.1 The Concept of Tourism Promotion:

Tourism promotion refers to the set of communication activities aimed at attracting visitors by informing them about a destination's competitive advantages. These activities include advertising, public relations, digital marketing, tourism fairs, and institutional communication strategies. Promotion is not merely about conveying information—it is about creating a positive and compelling image of the destination in the minds of targeted tourists (Kotler, Bowen, & Baloglu, 2021).

Tourism promotion has been closely linked to human civilization since ancient times. Promoting tourist destinations and tourism businesses has evolved alongside humanity, with significant developments occurring over time. The industrial revolution played a crucial role in shaping tourism, particularly through advancements in technology and

transportation, which facilitated the movement of tourists and expanded tourism activities. Over time, tourism promotion became more complex, evolving from production-oriented strategies in the early 20th century to consumer-focused marketing strategies in the 1950s and 1960s. Today, tourism promotion is a key tool for achieving favorable financial results by continuously adapting to the needs and preferences of tourists, benefiting from modern technologies to improve promotional efforts for tourist destinations. (Diana & Ban, 2022)

Tourism types vary based on the reasons that lead a tourist to travel. These include cultural tourism, which involves visiting historical and cultural sites, and industrial tourism, where tourists visit factories and workshops for research purposes. There is also social tourism, which targets low-income individuals such as workers and students, and agricultural tourism, which involves visiting farms and agricultural areas to enjoy the natural beauty. Maritime tourism focuses on water-based activities such as diving and fishing, while nature tourism is related to trips to protected natural areas like national parks and forests. (Nawir, Alam, Indrajaya, & Kusumawati, 2022)

2.2 Destination Marketing:

Destination marketing refers to the promotion of specific areas such as countries, cities, or tourist attractions with

the goal of attracting visitors and encouraging them to book travel and accommodation services. This process relies on well-designed strategies that target specific market segments, often using digital tools focused on customer needs to attract both local and international tourists. While destination marketing can bring significant economic benefits to countries and local communities, poor planning may lead to negative consequences such as overcrowding, pollution, resource depletion, and deterioration of quality of life and the natural environment, especially when the number of tourists exceeds the destination's capacity to handle them. (Camilleri, 2024) Destination marketing includes all the methods aimed at influencing consumer behavior and encouraging them to choose a specific destination. This destination could be a country, city, resort, or a particular tourist attraction. Destination marketing is not only used by travel companies but also by tourism offices in certain countries or regions to attract more visitors, boost the local economy, and establish the destination as a distinguished tourist spot. It relies on a variety of tools, such as media advertising, press trips, exhibitions, workshops, email marketing, social media, and more. (Benaceur, 2023)

3. Tourism Promotion in Developing Countries:

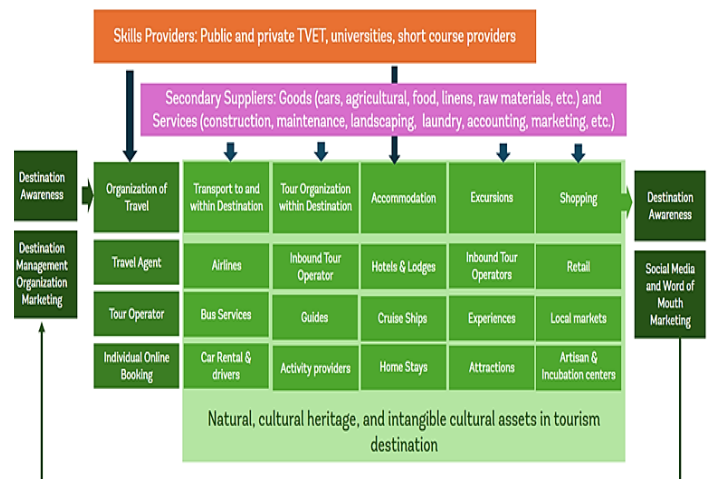
The tourism sector is a vital area that provides developing countries with opportunities to create inclusive jobs, grow innovative businesses, preserve natural and cultural assets, and increase economic empowerment, especially for women, who make up the majority of the workforce in this sector. The World Bank supports sustainable tourism by increasing revenues

from tourism, stimulating the growth of small and medium enterprises, improving community well-being, and preventing environmental degradation by directing tourism revenue towards environmental preservation and climate change adaptation. In 2024, tourism accounted for 10% of the global economy, contributing US\$10.9 trillion to global GDP, with the sector supporting 357 million jobs. When effectively managed, tourism helps expand markets for products and services, particularly in poor communities, and also contributes to biodiversity conservation and heritage protection, making it a key pillar of the blue/green economy. (World bank Group, 2025)

– **The tourism value chain includes many sectors:**

Jobs, values and impacts are created along each step of the value chain

Fig N° 1: The tourism value chain



Source: (World bank Group, 2025)

The diagram illustrates the integrated system of the tourism sector and its various relationships, starting with destination awareness, which is achieved through marketing by destination management organizations, leading to skills providers such as universities and training schools that prepare individuals to work in tourism. It also shows the role of secondary suppliers, such as goods and services that support tourism, in addition to travel organizations like travel agents, tour

operators, and local providers of accommodation and transportation. The diagram also highlights the importance of cultural and natural heritage and social media in enhancing awareness of tourist destinations and increasing interaction with tourists.

In developing countries, tourism is regarded as a promising tool for achieving sustainable development by creating job opportunities, stimulating the economy, and preserving cultural and natural resources. However, despite these potentials, its benefits remain limited due to the dominance of foreign companies, which leads to revenue leakage and reduced gains for local communities. Tourism faces several challenges, most notably weak infrastructure, lack of skilled labor, and the absence of policies that support community participation in planning and management. (Cobbinah, Black, & Thwaites, 2013)

In Algeria, these challenges are particularly evident: although the country possesses significant natural and cultural assets, the fragmentation of its tourism value chain, insufficient investment in training and infrastructure, and weak integration of local communities limit the sector's contribution. Without addressing these gaps, Algeria risks lagging behind regional competitors who have better succeeded in capturing tourism's full economic and social value.

4. Algerian tourism sector:

4.1 Algeria's Natural and Cultural Richness

Algeria offers exceptional natural and cultural diversity, from Mediterranean beaches and snow-capped mountains to vast Saharan landscapes. Despite being less developed as a tourist destination than its North African neighbors, it holds significant untapped potential. The country is home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Casbah of Algiers,

Timgad, and Tassili n'Ajjer. Rich in history and cultural heritage, cities like Algiers, Oran, and Constantine reflect a blend of Arab, Berber, Ottoman, and French influences. With improved security and government efforts to boost tourism, Algeria is re-emerging as a promising destination. (Algerian Embassy, 2025)

Fig N° 2: Algeria map



Source: (Central intelligence Agency, 2025)

Algeria offers diverse tourist attractions, ranging from UNESCO World Heritage sites and the dramatic landscapes of the Sahara Desert and Atlas Mountains to Mediterranean beach resorts. Despite its appeal, the tourism sector has historically been underdeveloped due to the country's reliance on oil and gas revenues, making Algeria the North African nation with the lowest number of tourist arrivals in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the sector's challenges, causing a sharp decline in both domestic and international travel. In 2021, tourism contributed about 4% to Algeria's GDP and employed roughly 550,000 people—below the pre-pandemic level of 630,000 in 2019. International tourist arrivals peaked at nearly two million in 2019, with the majority from Africa and Europe, notably Tunisians, followed by French, Moroccan, and Chinese visitors. Domestic tourism remains the backbone of the industry, generating \$5.8 billion in spending in

2021, compared to only \$30 million from international tourism. (Statista, 2024)

4.2 Economic Overview of Algeria:

Algeria, Africa's largest country and the third-largest Arab economy, regained upper-middle income status in 2024. Over the past two decades, it has achieved notable progress in human development through large-scale infrastructure investments and redistributive social policies. However, the Algerian economy remains heavily reliant on hydrocarbons, which between 2019 and 2023 accounted for 83% of exports and nearly half of budget revenues. Although the post-pandemic period witnessed steady economic growth—driven by increased public spending and surging hydrocarbon prices—unemployment levels remain high, particularly among youth and women. Inflation has also risen, largely due to escalating food prices, while recent declines in global oil prices and OPEC-imposed production limits have strained both fiscal and external balances. In response to these structural challenges, the government has implemented a series of economic reforms aimed at diversifying revenue sources, stimulating private sector activity, and enhancing the overall business environment. These include the introduction of new hydrocarbon and investment laws, partial liberalization of foreign ownership regulations, and policy shifts toward reducing public expenditures and imports while promoting non-oil exports. (World Bank Group, 2025)

– Tourism Development in Algeria: Historical Phases and Policy Shifts: (Bouchemal & Chaouche, 2023)

✓ Foundation Phase (1962–1970): Non-Strategic Beginnings

In the early years after independence, tourism was not considered a national priority, as the state focused its efforts on meeting the basic needs of the population under the socialist model.

The National Office of Algerian Tourism (NOAT) was established in 1962 to promote the tourism product. However, the absence of a clear strategic vision and weak infrastructure prevented the sector from becoming an effective contributor to the national economy.

✓ Development Plans Phase (1970–1977): Limited Investments

Tourism was integrated into the national development plans, with 700 million DA allocated in the first plan (1970–1973), representing 2.5% of total public investments. However, in the second plan (1973–1977), its share was reduced to only 1.4%, reflecting the continued marginalization of tourism in favor of other sectors such as industry and agriculture, which hindered its development to the expected level.

✓ Decline Phase (1980–1990): Impact of Political and Security Crises

Despite growing recognition of the importance of tourism during this period, the turbulent political and security context of the 1980s and 1990s disrupted the sector's development path. Initiatives aimed at domestic and international tourism were aborted, leaving Algeria almost isolated from the global tourism scene. This deepened the decline and weakened Algeria's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

✓ Recovery Phase (Post-2000): Reintegration into Development Policies

From the early 2000s, with the gradual return of stability, the state reintegrated tourism into its economic strategies, considering it a tool to diversify national income sources and reduce dependence on hydrocarbons. New

programs were launched to rehabilitate facilities, encourage investment, and place tourism at the core of economic recovery policies.

– **Adoption of SDAT 2030: A Strategic Framework for Tourism Development**

Algeria adopted in 2010 the Directive Scheme of Tourist Development 2030 (SDAT 2030) as the strategic reference for its tourism policy and as a tool that reflects the State's willingness to exploit its natural, cultural, and historical potential in the service of tourism development. This scheme aims to elevate Algeria's position in the international tourism market, particularly within the Euro-Mediterranean region, by making tourism an emerging industry that balances promotion with environmental preservation. For Algeria, tourism is not a secondary option but rather a national necessity and a key driver of economic development and diversification beyond hydrocarbons. (Belahcene & Brahim Ali, 2025)

– **Post-Crisis Recovery and Growth of Tourism Arrivals.**

Despite the fragility of the Algerian economy resulting from its heavy reliance on hydrocarbons—which account for approximately 98% of foreign currency earnings and 60% of budget revenues—and its suffering due to fluctuating oil prices, the tourism sector has begun to witness a significant recovery after the global health crisis subsided. The number of tourists to Algeria increased significantly from approximately 1.6 million visitors in 2022 to nearly 3.3 million in 2023, including 2.2 million foreigners, despite previously low targets in this area (BMI Fitch Solutions, 2023) (Northern African News, 2024)

In 2024, the sector recorded an even greater leap, with the number of tourists reaching approximately 3.55 million

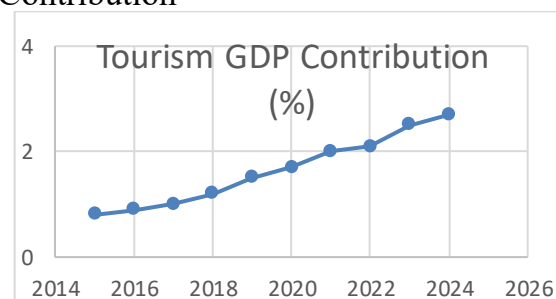
visitors, including 2.45 million foreigners and 1.09 million from the Algerian diaspora (Algeria Invest, 2025). (Saada, Hana ;, 2025)

This growth was achieved thanks to reforms that facilitated visa procedures, focused on desert tourism, and stimulated investment in the hotel infrastructure—with the opening of 47 new hotels and the addition of approximately 4,687 beds, in addition to the launch of more than 2,100 tourism projects and the creation of approximately 100,000 direct and indirect job opportunities. (Nadim Kawach, 2025)

– **Growth of Tourism's Contribution to Algeria's GDP (2015–2024)**

The figure shows a steady rise in tourism's share of Algeria's GDP, growing from less than 1% in 2015 to over 2.5% in 2024. While this reflects notable progress supported by reforms and growing arrivals, the level remains modest compared to the global average of around 10% and to neighboring countries like Morocco and Tunisia, where tourism contributes between 7% and 12%. This highlights both the potential and the gap Algeria still needs to bridge.

Fig N3°: Algerian Tourism GDP Contribution



Sources: Northern African News, 2024; Statista, 2024; Algeria Invest, 2025

The line graph shows a steady upward trend in the contribution of tourism to Algeria's GDP from 2015 to 2024. In 2015, tourism contributed only 0.8% to GDP, reflecting the sector's historically low impact on the national economy. Between 2016 and 2020, the contribution increased

gradually, reaching 1.7% in 2020, indicating the early effects of government reforms and investments in tourism infrastructure.

From 2021 onward, the growth accelerated, surpassing 2% in 2022 and reaching approximately 2.7% in 2024. This surge corresponds with improvements in hotel infrastructure, the implementation of the SDAT 2025 plan, and an increase in tourist arrivals, both domestic and international.

Overall, the graph demonstrates that tourism in Algeria is becoming an increasingly important economic sector, though its contribution remains modest compared to global standards. Sustained investment, promotion, and strategic diversification are crucial to continue this growth trajectory.

4.3 Hotel Infrastructure in Algeria: development in Africa. As shown in the table below.

Table n°1: African Ranking hotels

African Ranking	Country	Number of Hotels Under Development	Number of Rooms	Notes
1	Egypt	109	26,241	
2	Nigeria	50	7,622	
3	Morocco	52	7,169	
4	Ethiopia	31	5,128	
5	Cape Verde	16	5,056	
6	Tunisia	18	4,121	
7	Kenya	14	4,268	
8	South Africa	22	3,427	
9	Algeria	13	2,603	727 tourism projects registered (as of December 31, 2024), 90 to start operation in 2025, rehabilitation of 38 public hotels
10	Ghana	19	2,568	

Source : (Algeria Invest, 2025)

Based on the previous table, we can observe that Algeria's ninth place in Africa in terms of hotel development reflects that it is neither among the leading ranks nor at the bottom. This indicates a noticeable presence in the African market, especially considering that Algeria has not historically been a strong tourist destination compared to Egypt, Morocco, or Tunisia. However, this ranking, when compared to the country's natural and touristic potential — such as its long coastline, vast desert, and diverse cultural heritage — seems

lower than expected. This highlights a gap between the actual capabilities and the current level of hotel investment. In other words, Algeria is present on the map but far from the top, and it needs a qualitative leap in investment, tourism marketing, and business environment facilitation in order to compete with the countries leading the list.

– SWOT Analysis Of The Tourism Sector In Algeria :

Strengths	Weaknesses
– Algeria is the third-largest economy in the MENA region and the key driver of the Maghreb (World Bank, 2025). – The country possesses significant natural and cultural resources that remain underexploited (Saada, 2025). – Implementation of the National Tourism Development Master Plan (SDAT 2025), which emphasizes sustainability and the integration of related sectors such as transport, culture, and environment (Nadim Kawach, 2025).	– A rentier economy heavily dependent on hydrocarbons: 98% of foreign currency earnings and 60% of budget revenues come from oil and gas (World Bank, 2025). – Vulnerability to fluctuations in global oil prices, as evidenced by the \$1.84 billion trade deficit in 2019 (BMI Fitch Solutions, 2023). – Limited contribution of tourism to GDP: from only 0.8% in 2015 to 2.5% in 2018 (Northern African News, 2024). – Tourism revenues remain low—around \$300 million in 2017 compared to \$5.8 billion in Morocco (Saada, 2025). – Governmental plans often fail to meet their targets (e.g., 2.5 million tourists and \$2 billion in revenues) (Algeria Invest, 2025). – Algeria's ninth position in Africa in hotel development reflects a gap between its significant natural potential and the relatively modest level of hotel investment (Algeria Invest, 2025).
Threats	Opportunities
– Strong regional competition from neighboring countries like Tunisia and Morocco, each attracting around 10 million tourists annually (BMI Fitch Solutions, 2023). – Security perceptions still affect Algeria's international image, despite improved stability (World Bank, 2025). – Insufficient infrastructure and service quality in comparison with regional competitors (Algeria Invest, 2025). – High reliance on diaspora and transit visitors, with limited penetration of international tourism markets (Saada, 2025).	– Tourism represents a strategic necessity for diversifying income sources and reducing dependency on hydrocarbons (World Bank, 2025). – Growing global demand for sustainable and cultural tourism provides Algeria with an opportunity to position itself competitively (Saada, 2025). – Expansion of tourism zones from 6 in 1966 to 172 in 1988 highlights long-standing potential for development (Northern African News, 2024). – Recent reforms (e.g., facilitation of visa procedures, investments in hotel infrastructure) can attract more international visitors (Nadim Kawach, 2025). – Algeria ranked 9th in Africa in hotel development, with 13 projects (2,603 rooms) under construction and 727 tourism projects registered by the end of 2024—90 of which will start operation in 2025—indicating a growing potential to attract investors (Algeria Invest, 2025).

The SWOT analysis reveals that Algeria's tourism sector holds strong potential due to its rich natural and cultural assets and recent reforms. However, structural weaknesses—such as dependence on hydrocarbons, low tourism revenues, and unmet policy targets—combined with strong regional competition and infrastructure gaps, continue to limit growth. Sustained reforms and effective implementation are essential for turning opportunities into lasting gains.

5. CONCLUSION :

The study demonstrates that Algeria possesses exceptional natural and cultural potential, making it a promising tourist destination in North Africa. Despite recent reforms and national plans such as SDAT Development project, the tourism sector remains a limited contributor to GDP due to heavy reliance on hydrocarbons, underdeveloped hotel and service infrastructure, and strong regional competition. Nevertheless, the notable growth in tourist arrivals after 2022 and investments in new hotel infrastructure indicate a potential for sector recovery and sustainable development. To convert these potentials into tangible economic benefits, continuous reforms, service improvements, effective marketing strategies, and active involvement of local communities are essential. In this regard, Algeria can build a sustainable and competitive tourism sector by leveraging its cultural and natural assets, fostering human

capital, encouraging investment, and implementing policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection—thus transforming tourism into a strategic alternative beyond hydrocarbons.

Recommendations:

- Ongoing hotel projects should be completed and the quality of tourism services should be improved in order to meet international tourist expectations, while supporting facilities such as transportation, restaurants, and recreational services must also be developed to ensure a comprehensive tourist experience.
- Tourism products should be diversified with a particular focus on desert, cultural, ecological, and rural tourism, and innovative tourism packages need to be designed to attract both domestic and international visitors.
- Algeria's tourism sector should be promoted internationally through digital marketing strategies and social media platforms, in addition to active participation in international tourism exhibitions and conferences to enhance visibility and attract a larger number of tourists.
- Incentives should be introduced to encourage private and foreign investment in tourism and hotel

infrastructure, and administrative procedures must be simplified to facilitate the involvement of both local and international investors.

- Local communities should be actively engaged in tourism development projects to ensure economic benefits at the local level, while sustainable tourism standards should be implemented to protect the environment and preserve cultural heritage.
- Tourism and hospitality staff should receive proper training and professional qualification to enhance service quality, and greater efforts should be made to encourage youth and women to join the tourism workforce in order to support employment and skill development.

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