

**Digital Tourism Marketing in Algeria: Reality and Challenges**

التسويق السياحي الرقمي في الجزائر: واقع وتحديات

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**Abstract:**

Despite Algeria's abundant and varied natural tourist attractions, which position it as a prime candidate for tourism leadership both regionally and globally, ranked among the top 52 tourist destinations worth exploring, the country's tourism sector has yet to achieve its potential. This underperformance highlights the necessity for implementing multifaceted and effective strategies. Among these, digital marketing stands out, utilizing information and communication technology as a core component for the extensive online promotion of natural resources, tourism, and hospitality services. This strategy promises to invigorate and elevate the tourism sector in Algeria, establishing it as a significant economic force beyond the hydrocarbon industry.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Tourism Marketing, Digital Tourism Marketing.

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## **1. Introduction:**

Tourism now plays a pivotal role in the global economy, often surpassing the outputs of other economic sectors due to the significant benefits derived from tourism exchanges. With the evolution of the digital business landscape, the tourism services sector has adopted a modern trajectory, heavily reliant on technology.

Electronic tourism services have become crucial for delivering competitive, high-quality tourism services in a marketing environment where the barriers of distance and time are virtually eliminated. This transformation has urged tourism businesses to embrace digital marketing strategies for tourism activities, to remain competitive in this new market environment. Algeria recognizes the economic significance of tourism, given its abundant resources and potential to secure a commendable position in the global market.

Currently, tourism features prominently in Algerian political discussions and developmental strategies. Despite these efforts, Algeria still faces challenges in enhancing the development and sophistication of this sector. At this juncture, the central issue can be articulated as follows: To what extent does digital tourism marketing enhance the visibility and promotion of Algerian tourist products in both local and international markets? To deconstruct this issue, we propose the following sub-questions:

- What is digital tourism marketing?
- What is Algeria's status in the global tourism arena?
- What are the prerequisites for successful digital tourism marketing in Algeria, and how can it be leveraged to distinguish Algerian states as renowned local and global tourist destinations?

### **Study Hypothesis:**

In response to the central question posed, we posit the following hypothesis:

- Digital marketing significantly enhances the visibility and marketability of Algerian tourism products, thus making them appealing to both local and international markets.

### **Study Importance:**

The significance of this study stems from the integral role of digital marketing in the progression of the Algerian tourism sector. Digital marketing serves as a critical conduit for delivering timely information to stakeholders and facilitating instant service requests from global users. The shift towards digital tourism, through the implementation of e-tourism platforms on the internet, is crucial. This transition aims to maximize the benefits of digital tools, surmount challenges, and penetrate competitive markets effectively, leveraging Algeria's robust tourism potential.

## **2. Nature of Digital Tourism Marketing:**

Technological advancements and the evolution of information and communication technologies have necessitated new modes of engagement. Electronic tourism services are now indispensable for any tourism-related activity. Whereas traditional marketing methods are increasingly seen as inadequate for promoting and stimulating tourism, digital marketing has become essential in enhancing the sector's profitability.

### **2.1 Definition of Tourism Marketing:**

Tourism marketing is defined as "the administrative and technical activities undertaken by tourism institutions both within and outside the country. These activities are aimed at identifying prospective tourism markets and influencing them, with the objective of developing and increasing inbound tourism traffic, and achieving alignment between the tourism product and the varied desires and motivations of different market segments." (Hamza Baali et al., 2019, p. 18)

It is further described as "all organized efforts and activities, executed in a coordinated manner by all providers of tourism services. These efforts aim to cater to the tastes of the recipients or those desiring various forms of tourism. This definition underscores that tourism marketing encompasses all elements of the modern marketing concept." (Hamed Obeidat, 2000, p. 22).

### 2.2 Definition of Digital Marketing:

Digital marketing is articulated as "the application of the internet and related digital technologies to achieve marketing objectives. Essentially, it utilizes the capabilities of the internet, along with various communication networks and multimedia tools, to meet marketing goals, offering new advantages and myriad possibilities." (Hawasni Saliha, 2013/2014, p. 128)

This field is also recognized as "a series of operations and activities conducted by a specific institution aimed at seeking new customers or capturing their attention to win and retain them, relying primarily on the application of information and communication technology, particularly the internet." (Mohamed El-Serfi, 2008, p. 13)

### 2.3 Definition of Digital Tourism Marketing:

Digital tourism marketing is described as "a commercial interaction where tourists engage with tourism establishments electronically, rather than through direct physical contact, encompassing the purchase and sale of goods and services via the internet." (Mohamed Omar Momen, 2019, p. 350)

It is also conceptualized as "the application of e-business in the travel and tourism sector, employing internet technologies to improve the operations of tourism suppliers and offer more effective facilities for tourist consumers." (Bouawina Salima, 2016, p. 53) Additionally, it is defined as "the marketing of services, offers, or tourism programs through the internet." (Mostafa Youssef Kafi, 2019, p. 83)

Characteristics that distinguish digital tourism marketing include: (Jahida Malouk, 2014, p. 188)

- **Broad Service:** Digital marketing in tourism is marked by its extensive service scope, allowing customers to interact with marketing websites at any time.
- **Global Nature of Digital Marketing:** The media utilized in digital tourism marketing are not confined by geographical boundaries, enabling global market reach via personal computers.
- **Rapid Conceptual Changes:** This type of marketing is noted for the swift evolution in its concepts and rules, driven by the dynamic nature of e-commerce linked to electronic

communication and information technologies. These technologies undergo rapid changes, necessitating equally agile legal frameworks to keep pace with developments.

- **Acceptance of Online Tourism Promotion Methods:** Given the international scope of digital marketing, cultural and civilizational differences significantly influence promotional methods. This allows countries to tailor their promotional strategies to align with their cultural contexts.

## 2.4 Importance of Digital Tourism Marketing:

Digital tourism marketing holds paramount importance, eclipsing traditional approaches where physical presence at the service location is necessary, often incurring significant examination expenses. Furthermore, traditional methods also impose time and cost burdens on marketing institutions. The critical advantages of digital tourism marketing include: (Hamza Dradka et al., 2014, pp. 87-88)

- Ease of providing information, it streamlines the provision of essential tourism information, available continuously around the clock.
- Securing trust in online payment methods, it enables tourists to access comprehensive data about tourism products via the internet, fostering confidence in online transactions.
- Reducing marketing and production costs, digital marketing enhances communication efficiency between service producers and intermediaries, reducing distribution costs and workforce requirements. For example, tourists can receive electronic airline tickets or hotel booking vouchers via email.
- Emergence of new tourism activities, it facilitates alignment with various tourist segments and the development of current tourism products through feedback mechanisms like opinion polls, which help identify new tourism trends and essential services needed by tourists.
- Increased competitiveness contributes to higher sales, revenues, and profitability for tourism institutions, reflecting positively on the added value of the tourism sector to the gross domestic product.
- The advancement in a country's electronic technological infrastructure, as indicated by e-tourism's popularity, enhances foreign investments and credibility in the business infrastructure of both government and private sectors, as reported in international evaluations. (Ahmed Hamad Allah Al-Samman, 2005, pp. 1044-1045)

## 2.5 Elements of the Digital Tourism Marketing Mix:

The digital e-marketing mix represents a comprehensive suite of marketing activities designed to attract tourists through electronic communication channels. These activities include several core elements as outlined by Linda Bouzroua (2020, pp. 382-384):

- **Digital Tourism Product:** The cornerstone of the digital tourism marketing mix, the digital tourism product serves as the foundation for the exchange process between the tourism institution and the tourist client. This product is a synthesis of both tangible

and intangible elements offered by tourism institutions via the internet, crafted to meet the needs and desires of clients.

- **Digital Tourism Pricing:** Pricing remains a critical component of the marketing mix, involving the strategic setting of prices for products and services offered by a tourism institution over the internet. Digital tourism pricing allows customers to quickly and effortlessly ascertain prices, benefiting from reduced costs. The vast number of suppliers and interactive marketing agents accessible via electronic channels enables consumers to easily compare price information across various digital marketing sites without the need to visit each site individually.
- **Digital Tourism Distribution:** The distribution function is integral to implementing the framework and content of an e-business strategy. It varies depending on the nature of the product marketed and sold online, whether goods or services. Distribution plays a pivotal role in creating time and place utility for the customer, offering a fresh perspective to the e-market where interactions in the exchange process can occur directly, without intermediaries. This leads to the emergence of the brokerage concept, which diminishes the distances and time between the producer and the customer, aiming to deliver electronic services to customers at the right time and at the lowest cost through various electronic channels.
- **Digital Tourism Promotion:** This element involves tourism institutions utilizing modern technologies, particularly the internet, to communicate and interact with both current and potential customers to achieve customer satisfaction. The promotional mix in digital tourism diverges from that of traditional tourism by reducing or eliminating the role of personal selling, while amplifying the significance of advertising and sales promotion strategies. This shift reflects the broader transition towards a more digitally interconnected approach to marketing within the tourism industry.

In addition to the previously discussed elements of the digital tourism marketing mix (product, pricing, distribution, promotion), new elements have been added as outlined by Linda Bouzroua (2020, p. 385):

- **Human Element (Public):** The digital tourism marketing operations' impact on the human element involves adopting new tools to perform traditional functions, such as web platforms, email, and news groups. This adaptation enhances interaction and efficiency in communications between tourism institutions and their clients.
- **Physical Evidence:** This element is epitomized by the environment in which the service is delivered, influencing the tourist's experience and the overall ambiance of the service environment. In the context of digital marketing, this is represented by the virtual atmosphere created on websites by software companies, where aspects like background music on the website play a role in shaping this environment.
- **Processes (Service Delivery Processes):** This element encompasses the manner in which services are presented and delivered, referring to all necessary processes to transform inputs into outputs. These include procedures, policies, and the sequence of activities required to provide the service, especially in relation to software-related services.

### 3. Size of E-Tourism Globally and in Algeria

#### 3.1 Global E-Tourism:

Global tourism sales were USD 2.1 trillion in 2012, escalating to USD 3 trillion by 2018, with a compound annual growth rate of 7% from 2012 to 2018. E-tourism sales globally were USD 510 billion in 2012 and rose to USD 950 billion by 2018, marking a compound annual growth rate of 10% during the same period, accounting for 27% of total global tourism sales (Malouka Bouroura and Tayeb Mosly, 2020, p. 33).

The travel and tourism agencies sector globally experienced considerable growth from 2015 to 2019, with a growth rate of 2.7%. Total revenue during these years amounted to USD 315.4 billion. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to a decline in the growth rate of travel and tourism agencies worldwide to 2.1%.

The World Tourism Organization estimated a global reduction in international tourists by 1% to 3% in 2020, contrary to the previously expected growth of 3% to 4%. The tourism sector faced severe setbacks in 2020, with losses ranging from 850 million to 1.1 billion international tourists and financial losses in tourism revenues estimated between USD 910 billion to USD 1.2 trillion. The sector also experienced job losses ranging between 100 and 120 million, significantly impacting travel and tourism agencies (IBISWorld, 2020).

Based on the projections by the World Tourism Organization for the year 2023, the international tourist arrivals are anticipated to attain levels between 80 and 95% of the figures recorded prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This expectation is contingent upon various influential factors, including the pace of economic activities globally, the resurgence of travel within the Asia and the Pacific region, and the evolving situation due to the Russian military activities in Ukraine.

Despite these multifaceted challenges, the organization forecasts a vigorous performance for the tourism sector in the upcoming period. Recent statistics released by the World Tourism Organization indicate that the year 2022 saw upwards of 900 million international tourists, a count that notably doubles the figures from 2021. However, this still stands at just 63% of the tourism volumes seen before the pandemic.

The recovery has been uneven across different regions; the Middle East, for instance, recorded the highest relative increase with tourist arrivals at 83% of their pre-pandemic levels, followed by Europe which welcomed approximately 585 million tourists, achieving about 80% of its former volume. Africa, North America, and South America each managed to recover roughly 65% of their pre-pandemic tourist traffic, whereas Asia and the Pacific have only reached 23% due largely to the prolonged and strict pandemic-related restrictions which have only started to ease in recent months.

The lifting of travel restrictions in China is expected to substantially aid the recovery of the tourism sector not just in Asia and the Pacific but globally (Melouka Bouroura and Tayeb Mosly, 2020, p. 33).

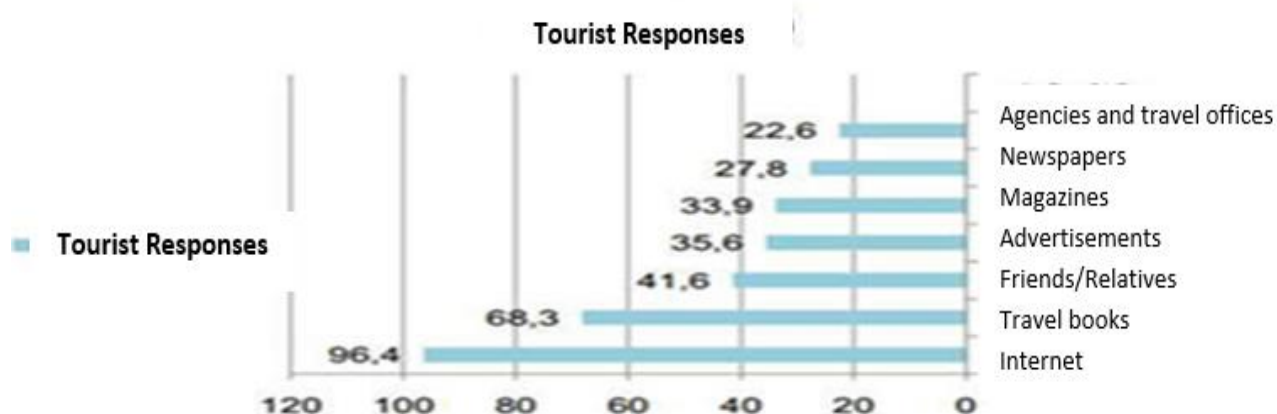
In the realm of digital presence, North America dominates the global landscape for online travel queries, commanding 43% of the total global electronic tourism searches. Europe holds the second position with 35% of the searches, whereas Asia accounts for just 15% of the total electronic tourism inquiries. The World Tourism Organization's January 2022 rankings

identify France as the preeminent European destination in terms of online tourism queries (Abdelkarim Ouahrani, 2020, p. 582).

The list of the top ten most visited countries by international tourists includes France, the USA, Spain, China, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, Mexico, Thailand, and Turkey. This shift towards the digital medium is echoed in the operational strategies of travel agencies worldwide, which are increasingly pivoting towards the internet for conducting research and accessing real-time information on tourist destinations.

Today, tourists are more likely to resort to the internet for information and booking tourism services than traditional travel agencies. The World Tourism Organization reports that about 95% of internet users utilize the platform to collect travel-related information and plan their trips, emphasizing the internet's integral role in contemporary travel planning. The following figure outlines the primary sources of information that tourists rely on in their travel preparations:

**Figure (03): The most important information sources relied upon by tourists in preparing for a trip.**



**Source:** Abdel Karim Ouahrani, "The Impact of Electronic Tourism Marketing on Modern Tourist Consumer Behavior," *Al-Bashaer Economic Magazine*, Volume 06, Issue 01, 2020, pages (577-591) p. 582.

From the data presented in the figure, it is clear that the internet is the predominant source of information for planning trips, with a staggering 96.4% of individuals relying on it. Within this demographic, 40% utilize mobile devices to access the internet. Books and friends are the next most common sources, followed by magazines, brochures, and newspapers, which have increasingly incorporated digital marketing into their platforms. Travel and tourism agencies, on the other hand, account for 22.6% of the sources used for trip planning, predominantly due to their continued reliance on traditional marketing methods. (Maskine Abdel Hafid, 2008/2009, pp. 117-118)

### 3.2 E-Tourism in Algeria:

Algeria's strategic geographical position and vast expanse make it uniquely endowed with diverse tourist attractions that cater to all tourism types. The success of marketing Algeria as a

premier tourist destination internationally hinges on the effective deployment of mechanisms that enhance the country's image as perceived by tourists.

### 3.2.1 Tourist Attractions in Algeria:

Algeria, spanning an area of 2,381,741 square kilometers, is the largest country in the Arab world and Africa and ranks tenth largest globally. Its stunning natural beauty plays a crucial role in attracting tourists. Each region of Algeria represents a distinct cultural space that has positioned it among the top 52 global tourist destinations in 2023, ranking 22nd worldwide, third in Africa, and first in the Arab world. The most significant natural resources are as follows:

#### A. Natural Attractions:

The Algerian coastline stretches over a distance of 1,200 km along the Mediterranean Sea, featuring beaches, bays, and an enormous marine wealth, including coral reefs and aquatic biodiversity.

- **Coastline:** Algeria boasts a coastline that extends over 1,200 km along the Mediterranean Sea, featuring a variety of beaches and bays, alongside a rich marine life that includes coral reefs and diverse aquatic species.
- **Climate:** The climate in Algeria is predominantly Mediterranean along the coast, characterized by average annual temperatures of around 18°C, which can rise up to 45°C during July and August, marked by heat and humidity. The high plateau regions experience a semi-hot climate, characterized by a long and sometimes wet cold season that spans from October to May.
- **Terrain:** The terrain in Algeria is categorized into four natural groups: the coastal mountains, the plains and high plateaus, the inner mountain ranges, and the desert regions. Notably, the Chrea Mountains in Blida Province reach an elevation of 1510 meters, while the Aurès Mountains and the high plateaus are other significant geographical features.
- **The Algerian Desert:** This vast area covers approximately 2 million square kilometers and is subdivided into four distinct desert regions, each offering unique natural landscapes and significant potential for tourism:
  - **Adrar Region:** Encompasses an area of 427,000 square kilometers with a sparse population, renowned for its breathtaking natural scenery.
  - **Illizi Region:** Known for the Tassili National Park located in the extreme south, a notable area for its natural and archaeological significance.
  - **M'zab Region:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognized for its cultural, historical, urban, and architectural importance, situated in Ghardaïa Province.
  - **Tamanrasset ("Hoggar"):** Houses a national park established in 1987 that is home to rare fauna, flora, and ancient rock engravings.

- **Mineral Springs:** Algeria boasts a rich assortment of mineral springs, dispersed across its diverse regions, representing a valuable tourism asset.

The National Institute for Tourism Studies has cataloged approximately 202 mineral water sources, which include 7 developed mineral water stations, 136 local springs, 55 regional sources, and 5 national springs. Prominent among these are Hammam Debagh in Guelma, Hammam Righa in Ain Defla, Hammam Ksana in Bouira, Hammam Salihine in Biskra, and Hammam Bou Hanifia in Mascara.

Detailed analyses of the physical, chemical, and hydrological properties of each source have confirmed their therapeutic benefits, thereby paving the way for the development of therapeutic tourism in Algeria. This initiative involves the creation of tourism and health institutions near these springs to maximize their therapeutic potential. (Souhila Habbal and Nour eddin Harouch, 2019, pp. 278-279; Ahmed Kattaf Abdel Fattah Allawi, 2010, pp. 4-6)

### B. Historical and Cultural Attractions:

Algeria's rich historical and cultural heritage positions it at the confluence of Islamic, Mediterranean, and African civilizations. Its plethora of archaeological sites, museums, and historical documents serve as testaments to the myriad civilizations that have flourished on this land, from the Amazigh and Phoenician to the Byzantine, Roman, and ultimately Islamic civilizations that have each left indelible marks on the sands of history. Among the most prominent UNESCO-listed tourist attractions are:

- **Timgad:** Founded by Emperor Trajan in 100 AD, situated in Batna.
- **Tipasa:** An ancient Roman city that showcases the expansive reach of Roman civilization.
- **Djemila:** Located in Setif, it stands as one of Algeria's oldest Roman cities.
- **Tassili n'Ajjer:** Home to over 15,000 engravings that document the climatic shifts and human migrations in the desert over 6000 years.
- **Beni Hammad Fort:** In M'Sila, founded in 1007 AD as the capital of the Hammadid dynasty.
- **M'zab Valley:** A region established by the Ibadi people, showcasing unique cultural and architectural heritages.
- **Kasbah of Algiers:** Renowned for its distinctive Islamic architectural styles. (Nadia Ben Saal, 2021-2022, pp. 174-175)

### C. Basic Transport Facilities:

Transportation serves as the backbone of the tourism industry, and Algeria is equipped with an extensive range of transport facilities that support the development of its tourism sector:

- **Land Transport Network:** Algeria's land transport infrastructure encompasses over 127,000 km of roads, with 96,000 km paved. This includes a 1216 km East-West highway, accompanied by 10,102 engineering structures, 3,478 of which are on the East-West highway itself.

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- **Air Transport Network:** The country is serviced by 58 airports, which include 15 international and various domestic airports that cover all provinces. The largest among these is Houari Boumediene Airport in Algiers, which has a capacity of accommodating 12 million passengers annually. Algerian Airlines, the national carrier, operates alongside various foreign airlines, facilitating robust connectivity. (World Tourism Organization, 2024)
  - **Maritime Transport Network:** Algeria's maritime infrastructure includes a robust network of 53 ports designated for both passenger and cargo transport. This network comprises 45 ports specifically tailored for fishing and leisure activities, strategically distributed across 14 coastal provinces.
  - **Tram Network:** The tram network in Algeria includes several lines that enhance urban mobility:
    - \_ A 23.2 km line in Algiers with 36 stations
    - \_ An 18.7 km line in Oran with 32 stations
    - \_ An 8.1 km line in Constantine with 10 stations
    - \_ A 14.26 km line in Sidi Bel Abbès with 22 stations
    - \_ A 9.6 km line in Ouargla with 16 stations
    - \_ A 15.2 km line in Setif with 26 stations
 All tram lines are managed and maintained by Metro Algiers, ensuring efficient and reliable service.
  - **Metro Network:** The metro system features an 18 km line in Algiers, which includes 19 stations and serves as a vital component of the city's public transport network, operated by Metro Algiers.
  - **Aerial Lifts and Cable Cars:** Various cities across Algeria, including Algiers, Blida, Tlemcen, Tizi Ouzou, Skikda, Annaba, Constantine, and Oran, are equipped with aerial lifts and cable cars. These facilities enhance the accessibility and attractiveness of scenic and cultural sites, offering unique perspectives of the urban landscape. Notable installations in Algiers include:
    - \_ Palace of Culture lift (420 meters)
    - \_ El Madania lift (237 meters)
    - \_ Lady of Africa lift (284 meters)
    - \_ Memorial lift (240 meters)
  - **Rail Network:** The National Railway Transport Company (SNTF) operates Algeria's rail network, which spans approximately 4560 km. This network includes:
    - \_ 4200 km of operational track
    - \_ 10,129 freight cars
    - \_ 380 passenger cars
    - \_ 17 self-propelled trains

- \_ 305 locomotives
- \_ 64 electric trains
- \_ 17 Coradia trains

### **D. Political Factors:**

In recent years, Algeria has experienced a relatively stable political environment, which has contributed to reducing security concerns and mitigating fears among potential tourists. This stability acts as a significant incentive, promoting Algeria as a safe and attractive tourist destination.

### **3.2.2 E-Tourism Statistics in Algeria:**

Despite possessing a wealth of attractive tourist destinations that position it as one of the most picturesque countries in the Arab world, Algeria's tourism sector has not yet achieved the desired level of development. In 2019, Algeria was ranked 116th out of 136 countries on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index with a score of 3.1 out of 7, according to the World Economic Forum.

This ranking places Algeria behind several other Arab and African nations, including Morocco (ranked 66th with a score of 3.9), Tunisia (ranked 85th with a score of 3.6), and Qatar (ranked 51st with a score of 4.1). A key factor contributing to the stagnation in the tourism sector is the inadequate marketing and promotion of its tourism offerings, compounded by a lack of advanced information and communication technology infrastructure. According to the International Telecommunication Union's ICT Development Index, Algeria ranked 102nd out of 176 countries in 2017, improving to 89th by 2019 but still trailing behind many of its regional counterparts like the UAE (ranked 4th), Qatar (36th), Morocco (72nd), and Tunisia (80th).

This technological gap affects both general e-commerce and specifically e-tourism capabilities. In 2022, Algeria welcomed 2,039,000 tourists, ranking it 11th among Arab countries and 85th globally in terms of tourist arrivals. The tourism revenues for Algeria amounted to approximately \$209 million in 2021, underscoring the sector's limited economic impact (Algerian News Agency, 2022).

### **3.2.3 Digital Tourism Marketing Techniques in Algeria:**

Algeria is proactively using the internet and modern technologies to cater to the needs of tourists. In a significant move towards modernizing its tourism sector's central administration, Algeria launched a digital platform in 2018. This platform facilitates the accreditation of travel and tourism agencies and supports the development of an information system for various other tourism-related services.

Additionally, a strategic cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts and the Ministry of Communication to bolster efforts in electronic promotion. Below are some pivotal digital tools employed by Algeria to market its tourism offerings:

- **Algeria's Tourist Paths Portal:**

This electronic gateway, officially unveiled on June 24, 2022, enables tourists to select destinations based on their interests and capabilities. This launch was part of the presentation of the "Strategy for Marketing the Image of Algeria as a Destination," developed in collaboration with the World Tourism Organization. This initiative is a component of the government's broader plan aimed at the digital transformation of public administration under the "2021-2024 Digitalization Program of the Tourism and Handicrafts Sector."

This comprehensive program envisages the digitalization of all activities and structures within the sector, including the creation of 26 electronic platforms and digital solutions, and the design of 58 local websites for facilitating access to various local tourist destinations. It also involves the implementation of a Geographic Information System to manage areas, sites, and tourism infrastructures efficiently. (Ibrahim Barkach, 2024)

- **Dzair Booking Electronic Portal for Tourism Hotels Promotion:**

In response to the modest presence of Algerian hotels on global platforms like Booking.com, the National Federation of Hotel Industry launched the "Dzair Booking" website at the beginning of 2020. This platform hosts a database of over 900 hotels across Algeria, aiming to promote these establishments and attract both foreign and local tourists. It allows users to make reservations and process payments using electronic cards. (Amina Hani and Fadloune Chachoua, 2020, pp. 243-244)

- **Additional Websites Created by the Ministry Include:**

- **"Algeria Tourism" Website:** This site offers booking services with various travel agencies and air transport companies, as well as tourist hotels, enhancing the convenience and accessibility of travel planning.
- **"National Office of Tourism" Website:** Operated under the Ministry of Regional Planning, Environment, and Tourism, this website provides essential information about tourist areas in Algeria, including national museums, camps, restaurants, hotels, and local travel agencies. However, it currently lacks interactive features such as online reservation or inquiry capabilities.
- **"National Algerian Office of Tourism" Website:** This website is less dynamic compared to the others, primarily due to its content being available only in French, which potentially limits its accessibility and appeal to a broader audience. (Abdelmajid Salmi and Samira Ben Aila, 2024)

- **Electronic Applications:**

The advent of electronic applications has significantly influenced marketing strategies, particularly with the pervasive use of social media which has become a fundamental aspect of internet users' lives. These applications not only serve as platforms for tourism advertising due to their connectivity and speed but also facilitate direct communication between the sender (marketing entities) and the receiver (potential tourists).

They disseminate tourism-related content promoted by various official and private stakeholders in the tourism sector. Notable applications promoting tourism in Algeria include:

- **Guide to Palaces and Archaeological Sites in M'zab Valley "Ghardaïa"**
- **Alegria Travel and Explore; Offline Country Guide**

- **Alegria App**
- **ONAT App**
- **Tourism Algeria App**
- **Siyaha Dz App**
- **Alger City Guide Touristique**
- **Lonely Planet App**

Despite their utility, these applications face several criticisms and challenges. A significant issue is their monolingual nature; approximately 90% of these apps operate in foreign languages, predominantly French, with only about 20% offering English interfaces. This linguistic limitation potentially restricts accessibility for a global audience.

Moreover, the professional quality of visuals within these apps often falls short; the photographs used frequently fail to adequately represent the aesthetic allure of tourist locations, suffering from poor angles and presentation. Additionally, most of these applications lack interactive functionalities that would allow users to contribute their own photos and descriptions of tourist sites, which could enhance user engagement and content richness.

#### **4. Prospects and Challenges of Digital Tourism Marketing in Algeria:**

Digital marketing has assumed a critical role in the tourism industry, driven by rapid advancements in technology and the ubiquitous use of the internet. This realm has become fiercely competitive within modern tourism marketing landscapes, playing an essential role in promoting tourism. The following points elaborate on the impact and potential of digital marketing in bolstering the Algerian tourism sector, as well as the challenges it faces:

##### **4.1 Contribution of Digital Tourism Marketing to the Activation of the Tourism Sector in Algeria:**

Digital marketing significantly enhances the Algerian tourism sector through several mechanisms:

- Facilitating the provision of information, tourism products, characterized by their experiential nature, rely heavily on the provision of comprehensive and trustworthy information. Modern tourists can access extensive details about tourism offerings, including flights, hotels, tourism programs, and car rentals, all through internet platforms. This ready access to information fosters trust and decision-making in potential tourists.
- Meeting the desires and needs of tourists, digital marketing empowers tourists to effortlessly compare various tourist sites and services, allowing them to select the most suitable options without physical travel. This capability is bolstered by detailed, visually-rich content that provides virtual tours and comprehensive previews of tourism products, enabling tourists to virtually experience destinations before making a commitment.

- Reducing the costs of tourism services provided, by streamlining marketing, production, and distribution processes, digital marketing significantly cuts costs associated with the tourism industry. For instance, tourists can receive electronic tickets for flights or vouchers for hotel accommodations directly via email, reducing the need for physical distribution and lowering overall expenses.

#### **4.2 Requirements for the Success of Digital Tourism Marketing in Algeria:**

To effectively enhance digital tourism marketing in Algeria, it is essential to address several foundational aspects that go beyond the country's existing tourism infrastructure and cultural and historical assets. The strategic improvements necessary for the advancement of digital tourism in Algeria are as follows: (Sabri Abdel Samie, 2006, p. 136)

- It is crucial for Algeria to enhance its technological capabilities to close the gap with more technologically advanced nations. This involves substantial investments in research and development within the tourism sector and associated fields.
- **Development of the tourism product and capacity of tourism institutions in Algeria.**
- Enhancing the ICT infrastructure is vital for supporting various tourism-related activities, including the development of electronic payment systems within the banking sector to facilitate e-commerce.
- Establishing a robust legal framework for e-commerce and e-tourism is critical. This includes implementing technical systems that secure and guarantee the confidentiality of electronic transactions. (Jahida Malouk, 2014, pp. 194-195)
- Employing a dynamic tourism marketing mix is necessary. This includes reevaluating the pricing strategies of tourism products to ensure they are competitive with those in neighboring countries.
- Training personnel in tourism organizations, travel agencies, and hotels on how to effectively use the internet for tourism promotion is crucial for achieving marketing objectives efficiently and cost-effectively.
- Enhancing the digital presence of Algeria's tourism sector through well-designed websites that effectively convey the country's tourism image is essential.

#### **4.3 Challenges Facing Digital Tourism Marketing in Algeria:**

Despite the potential for digital tourism marketing in Algeria, several challenges impede its effectiveness and limit its benefits for tourism institutions and tourists alike:

- **Organizational Challenges:** The adoption of digital marketing necessitates substantial changes in the infrastructure, structure, pathways, and organizational culture of institutions. There is a critical need for these entities to reorganize and integrate digital marketing activities into their traditional strategies while updating their operational procedures to stay abreast of technological advancements.
- **Website Technology Evolution:** Keeping pace with the rapid technological advancements in website design and development poses a significant challenge.

Enhancing the effectiveness and competitiveness of these websites is crucial for their sustainability and success.

- **Privacy and Security Concerns:** Maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of electronic transactions is paramount. The need for specific software to protect customer data and ensure privacy, such as Cookies, is essential.
- **Distrust in Electronic Payment Methods:** The reliance on credit card payments and other electronic payment methods in digital marketing comes with challenges. The development of secure electronic payment methods, such as Secure Electronic Transactions (SET), is vital to establishing customer trust.
- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** Overcoming language and cultural barriers is necessary to facilitate interaction among customers from diverse backgrounds. Cultural considerations must be addressed to ensure that they do not obstruct the utilization of commercial websites.
- **Additional Challenges:** These include the lack of necessary infrastructure, unclear e-marketing strategies among institution managers, and customer reluctance to engage in online shopping due to concerns over product quality and the perceived risks associated with online transactions.

Despite these obstacles, the significant role played by travel and tourism agencies in activating and developing tourism through electronic means is undeniable. With the substantial increase in the number of internet users in Algeria, from more than 11 million in 2016 to 32.09 million at the start of 2023, and a significant rise in social media usage, these agencies have a critical opportunity to capitalize on. The internet penetration rate in Algeria reached 70.9% of the population by January 2023, with social media users accounting for approximately 23.95 million, equivalent to 52.9% of the total population.

This substantial online presence underscores the success and potential for investment in digital marketing both locally and internationally. Thus, it is imperative for tourism agencies to focus on enhancing their online platforms and continue developing their digital presence to tap into this growing market, ultimately contributing to the broader promotion and advancement of the tourism sector in Algeria.

### 5. Conclusion:

Despite Algeria's abundant tourism potential that positions it to be a competitive player on the international stage, this sector remains underutilized. This underachievement stems from the absence of a well-defined strategy and the ineffective use of tourism marketing policies to promote the Algerian tourism product, especially when compared to the strategies implemented by other countries. It is essential to modernize and update the mechanisms supporting this sector and to embrace the principles of digital tourism.

More attention must be paid to marketing services electronically and fostering direct interactions between various tourist segments through the websites of tourism organizations. Implementing these changes will enable Algeria to become a formidable competitor in international markets. Therefore, it is crucial to provide the necessary resources to develop digital tourism applications and enhance digital marketing efforts. These measures will pave the way for the revitalization and promotion of the tourism sector in Algeria.

### 5.1 Findings:

Based on the discussions above and in response to the presented issues and in support of the study hypothesis, we can conclude the following:

- Digital marketing is one of the most significant developments in the field of tourism, combining tourism marketing with information and communication technology. It has the potential to assist developing countries in general, and Algeria in particular, to create a positive image, develop new products, promote tourism resources, expand their customer base, and increase the tourism sector's contribution to the national income.
- The elements of the digital tourism marketing mix are designed to provide added value to tourists through the application of information technologies and the internet. The primary goal of this mix is to enhance customer satisfaction.
- The adoption of digital tourism marketing technology necessitates several prerequisites, including a robust infrastructure in the field of information and communication technologies, a comprehensive legal framework for e-commerce, and the activation of electronic payment systems.
- Digital marketing significantly increases the volume of tourists, which facilitates entry into new markets and heightens local competition. This, in turn, leads to improvements in the quality of tourism services provided by various companies presenting their offerings online.
- There is a valuable opportunity for the Algerian state to rejuvenate the national economy by investing in the tourism sector with a focus on digital marketing. This is particularly pertinent given the increase in the number of social media users, which stands as one of the most important digital marketing tools. As of January 2023, there were approximately 23.95 million users, equating to 52.9% of the total population of Algeria. This underscores the success of investment in this area both locally and internationally.
- Algerian tourism websites currently lack interactivity and dynamism.

### 5.2 Suggestions and Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions are put forward to rejuvenate the tourism sector in Algeria:

- Algeria should leverage its abundant tourism resources through the implementation of clear, long-term digital marketing strategies and policies that effectively promote the Algerian tourism product using modern technologies.
- Particularly, the use of electronic payment systems across various sectors should be enhanced by providing support and oversight. It is also crucial to raise awareness among tourism agencies about adopting digital marketing by providing the necessary infrastructure for telecommunications technology and creating a supportive regulatory and legal environment.
- It is essential to coordinate efforts between tourism agencies and universities to conduct marketing research on the impact of electronic media on Algerian tourists and manage relationships with tourists within the agencies. Electronic media plays a significant role in enhancing the relationship between tourists and travel agencies.

- Electronic commerce and digital marketing, among others, should be included in training programs at all levels, including higher education.
- The state should enact legislation and regulations that define the regulatory frameworks to protect users of information technology and preserve the rights of consumers and vendors in the digital tourism environment.
- It is necessary to reconsider the language used in electronic applications promoting the Algerian tourism product by incorporating English instead of French. This change would allow for greater openness to other countries worldwide, while also catering to the Arabic language to stimulate domestic tourism and thus enhance tourism between Arab countries.

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