

Sports Tourism in Algeria: An Analytical and Foresight Study

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Abstract:

This study employs a foresight-based analytical approach to evaluate Algeria's sports tourism potential by examining infrastructure and institutional frameworks. Findings identify critical impediments, including spatial inequalities, fragmented coordination, and the lack of a cohesive national strategy, resulting in the underutilization of inherent resources. To bridge these gaps, the research proposes a robust national framework prioritizing facility rehabilitation and inter-sectoral integration across tourism, transport, and environmental sectors. This strategic alignment aims to cultivate a sustainable industry capable of fostering local development and advancing national economic diversification.

Keywords: Sports Tourism, Sports Infrastructure, Sports Sector, National Income.

Jel Classification Codes: Z31, L83, E01.

1. INTRODUCTION

The national economy increasingly relies on sports tourism due to its direct contribution to economic development and its role in enhancing countries' international visibility. Despite its growing importance within the global tourism industry as a strategic sector that integrates sporting activities with travel experiences, the extent to which this potential is effectively harnessed varies significantly across countries, particularly in developing economies.

Sports tourism refers to traveling for participation in sporting events as well as attending competitions, encompassing a wide range of sport-related activities. This tourism model relies on the development of local communities and cultural exchange to stimulate economic growth by attracting investment, creating new employment opportunities, and revitalizing travel-related service sectors. However, despite its potential, many regions—particularly in developing countries—have yet to fully harness these benefits, highlighting a significant research and policy gap in effective sports tourism development.

Despite recent reform initiatives aimed at improving sports infrastructure, sports tourism in Algeria continues to face multiple challenges, including gaps in strategic planning and underutilization of existing resources. The current situation highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive development strategy that transforms youth and sports organizations into effective economic assets, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Sports tourism represents a promising pathway for Algeria's economic transformation, as it generates investment opportunities and stimulates growth across various service and entertainment sectors. The growing emphasis on sports highlights the need for a forward-looking approach to anticipate the sector's future development while assessing its economic and social value within Algeria. Despite its potential, sports tourism in Algeria remains underdeveloped, and limited research exists on how to fully leverage this sector as a sustainable economic driver, which is critical for national development planning. Consequently, a comprehensive evaluation

is required to determine its current status and untapped potential, forming the basis for the research question formulated as follows:

What is the future of sports tourism in Algeria?

This question opens the door to a number of subsidiary or partial inquiries:

- What is the current state of the sports sector in Algeria?
- What are the institutions supporting the sports sector in Algeria?
- What model of sports tourism exists in Algeria?
- What factors hinder the success of sports tourism in Algeria?
- What possible scenarios can be envisaged for sports tourism in Algeria?

The research problem arises from the significance of sports tourism as a sector that integrates both economic and developmental dimensions. Despite its potential, limited research exists on how to effectively invest in and manage this type of tourism to maximize its contribution to the national economy and enhance Algeria's international image. This highlights the need for a systematic analysis of investment mechanisms and strategic approaches within the sector.

In light of the research problem, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the current model of sports tourism in Algeria;
- To examine the factors hindering the development of sports tourism in Algeria and explore potential scenarios for its sustainable growth.

To achieve these objectives, the study is based on the following hypothesis:

The development of sports tourism in Algeria, when guided by a forward-looking vision, plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development, particularly across its economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Building on this hypothesis, the study employs the descriptive method within the conceptual framework and the foresight-based analytical method to examine the current state of sports tourism in Algeria.

Accordingly, the research is divided into two main parts:

- The conceptual framework of the study.
- A description of the current state of sports tourism in Algeria.

2. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study addresses the notion of sports tourism, its types and its significance.

2.1 The Concept of Sports Tourism

This section examines the definition and clarification of the term "sports tourism."

2.1.1 Clarification of the Term "Sports Tourism"

Modern usage of the term "sports tourism" emerged during the early 1970s through World Council of Sport Science and Physical Activities activities in 1971. The World Tourism Organization together with the International Olympic Committee hosted the first scientific conference about sports tourism in Barcelona Spain during 2001. The first peer-reviewed journal dedicated to sports tourism research was published in 2003 (Muttalib, 2022, pp. 492-493).

2.1.2 Definition of Sports Tourism

To clarify the meaning of "sports tourism," it is necessary to examine the term from two perspectives: the linguistic and the economic.

2.1.2.1 Linguistic Perspective

The term "sports tourism" consists of two words:

- Tourism: The term describes people who travel to visit different places. The term "the water flowed" and "he traveled across the land" appear in religious settings to describe pilgrimages. A devout person who stays in mosques to worship and fast is referred to as such (Al-Samarrai, 2022, p. 24).
- Sport: The plural of *riyādāt* describes physical activities which require both physical exertion and skill (Al-Barghouthi & Salama, 2021, p. 296)

2.1.2.2 Economic Perspective

The economic dimension of sports tourism can be explained through the views of certain scholars and international organizations:

- Hall describes sports tourism as: “travel for non-commercial reasons to participate in or watch sporting activities abroad” (Melo, Sobry, & Rheenen, 2021, p. 24).

- The World Tourism Organization defines sports tourism as: “the travel experience of tourists who both attend sporting events as spectators and actively participate in these events.” These events typically include commercial and non-commercial elements which feature competitive aspects” (World Tourism Organization World Intellectual Property Organization, 2021, p. 79).

Building on these conceptualizations, sports tourism may be defined as “a tourism product without borders, disseminated through the social expansion of sport.” Based on this definition the following characteristics of sports tourism can be identified (Sobry, 2022, p. 33):

- Sports tourism constitutes a tourism product, as it falls under the category of “leisure recreation, and holidays.”
- Sports tourism transcends temporal and spatial boundaries.
- Sports tourism is realized through the social expansion of the sports domain.

2.2 Types of Sports Tourism

Sports tourism manifests in various forms and can be classified according to two main criteria: the conceptual criterion and the categories of sports tourism.

2.2.1 Conceptual Criterion

Sports tourism, from a conceptual perspective, may be divided into the following types (Sheikh, Hassan, Zaki, & El-Din, 2022, p. 323):

2.2.1.1 Tourism for Attending Sporting Events

This form of tourism is associated with major international championships and sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, and other major professional tournaments.

2.2.1.2 Tourism for Participation in Sporting Activities

This includes athletes, their families, and supporters who travel in order to participate in sporting events, thereby fostering the growth of sports tourism.

2.2.1.3 Tourism to Locations Renowned for Hosting Sporting Championships

The travel to destinations which organize major sports events or hold historical significance as the origin point for popular sports draws interest from athletes as well as their fans.

2.2.2 Categories of Sports Tourism

Sports tourism can be divided into different categories according to (KPMG, 2022, p. 05):

2.2.2.1 Destination-Based Sports Tourism

Visitors choose this type of destination because it provides conditions to engage in sports activities which are missing in their home area. People must travel to particular locations when their chosen activity requires specific geographical elements that their local area does not possess.

2.2.2.2 Sports Tourism in Alternative Destinations

The destination provides an environment that perfectly matches the requirements of a particular sport even though the sports tourist can normally practice this sport in their residential area. The activities are performed by large groups of people who typically participate in them near their homes during non-vacation times. The destination amplifies the sport's appeal while creating a better holiday experience.

2.2.2.3 Participation-Based Sports Tourism

Visitors can join in the event held by the destination when they arrive. These events normally feature contests between professional athletes and casual participants.

2.2.2.4 Spectator-Oriented Sports Tourism

People can attend the destination event which is available for viewing. Events at such locations include worldwide traveling competitions like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup as well as local events such as the Masters Tournament. Host countries actively compete to win such events because they seek to improve their national image and obtain the economic advantages that come with them. Major sporting events create enduring effects on the host city which can be either beneficial

or detrimental based on the event execution and public perception of success.

2.3 The Importance of Sports Tourism

Sports tourism represents one of the fundamental elements for shaping a clear vision of economic development. Its significance derives from several key aspects (Alaeddine, 2020, p. 192):

- Promoting public awareness in both sports and tourism;
- Increasing mobility and purchasing power within the host country;
- Generating widespread demand for hotels and various forms of accommodation;
- Expanding both direct and indirect media coverage before, during and after sporting events;
- Prolonging the average length of tourist stays and enhancing the expenditure levels of sports tourists.

3. Description of the Current State of Sports Tourism in Algeria

This section aims to examine the present condition of sports tourism in Algeria, focusing on the 2022 performance dashboard of the sports sector the supporting institutions the international sporting events held in Algeria from 2018 to 2023, the strategy implemented for promoting sports tourism the obstacles to its success, and the potential future developments.

3.1 The 2022 Performance Dashboard of the Sports Sector in Algeria

The following table presents the performance dashboard of the sports sector in Algeria for the year 2022.

Table (1): Performance Dashboard of the Sports Sector in Algeria, 2022

Indicators of the Sports Sector	Number
Sports facilities	5,564
Number of sports associations	17,087
Youth institutions	6,654
Coverage rate: 1 sports institution per	7,886 inhabitants
Coverage rate: 1 youth institution per	19,028 inhabitants
Number of undergraduate students	783,030
Number of association members	405,940

Source: (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2022).

From the table, the following observations can be made:

- In 2022, sports coverage was weak because there weren't enough sports facilities, both in terms of number and equipment. This lack of resources made it harder for people to participate in sports on a regular basis.
- There was a clear drop in the number of students who wanted to specialize in sports in 2022. This is because not enough people know how important this specialization is as a good way to make a living.
- The number of people who belong to sports associations went down in 2022. This drop shows that people aren't very interested in these kinds of organizations.

3.2 Institutions Supporting Sports in Algeria

Sports in Algeria constitute a strategic sector of paramount importance. They receive support from several institutions that play a central role in their organization, development and infrastructural enhancement, in line with national policies aimed at improving athletic performance and broadening the base of practitioners.

3.2.1 The National Fund for the Promotion of Youth Initiatives and Sports Practices

The National Fund for the Promotion of Youth Initiatives and Sports Practices is a public institution of an industrial and commercial nature endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy. It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Fund was established by Executive Decree No. 89-236 of December 19, 1989, later amended by two subsequent executive decrees: No. 98-236 of October 3, 1998, and No. 10-270 of October 12, 2010 (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

The Fund's responsibilities include (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019):

- Collecting, receiving, and managing resources as defined by applicable laws;
- putting forward and aiding in the execution of policies intended to eradicate inequalities in the funding of youth and sports activities;
- evaluating ways to allocate resources among the different youth

leisure and educational organizations, as well as the national system of physical education and sports, and making suggesting, and carrying out decisions in this area;

- helping to organize youth festivals and national and international athletic events on a technical and material level;
- providing material and financial support to youth activity associations and the development of young athletes;
- starting and carrying out investment operations that produce income and services associated with its mission;
- coordinating with sports promotion and organizational bodies and other sports institutions to manage and market advertising and promotional rights and spaces related to sports media;
- supporting the management and exploitation of broadcasting rights for both domestic and international competitions involving Algerian athletes by physical education and sports organizations;
- Taking care of the Fund's lodging facilities, catering establishments and sports facilities so that youth and sports organizations can use them;
- Supporting young sports talents in pursuing their academic studies and professional training;
- Awarding incentive prizes;
- Ensuring ongoing monitoring and evaluation regarding the use of subsidies and financial assistance provided by the Fund.

3.2.2 The National Center for Sports Medicine

The National Center for Sports Medicine functions as a key organization beneath youth and sports sector governance which executes national sports policies for athlete medical care and monitoring (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019). The center was founded through Executive Decree No. 371-06 on October 19, 2006 before receiving four ministerial decrees between 2008 and 2010 to establish its administrative and medical framework (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

The National Center for Sports Medicine works together with sector-related organizations to fulfill its mission through three main areas of focus (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

3.2.2.1 Medical Monitoring in Sports

This axis is concerned with (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019):

- Ensuring and organizing medical monitoring in sports and coordinating related procedures particularly in connection with the training and preparation of national teams, clubs and elite/high-level athletes;
- Establishing a medical protection system for elite and high-level athletes;
- Contributing to the promotion and dissemination of physical and medical culture;
- Participating in the development of a system related to physical fitness and the practice of sports.

3.2.2.2 Medical Care

This axis aims to (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019):

- Provide specialized medical care in sports medicine;
- Contribute to the design and implementation of appropriate medical-surgical treatments for athletes;
- Offer suitable medical support to sports institutions under the sector;
- Provide adequate resources for the recovery of fitness among elite and high-level athletes.

3.2.2.3 Training

This axis is responsible for (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019):

- Ensuring continuous training, retraining, and field internships for medical and paramedical staff;
- Contributing to research in medicine and life sciences that may be applied in the field of sports.

3.2.3 The National School of Aquatic and Underwater Sports

The National School of Aquatic and Underwater Sports came into existence through Executive Decree No. 10-311 which was signed on 5 December 2010. This school exists under the direction of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to develop instructors who specialize in multiple disciplines and to provide necessary facilities for all aquatic and underwater sports disciplines (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

3.2.4 The Olympic Complex Authority

The Olympic Complex Authority exists as a public industrial and commercial institution which possesses legal personality as well as complete financial independence. The institution came into existence through Ordinance No. 71-71 issued on 2 November 1971 and received additional support from Executive Decree No. 48-90 issued on 30 January 1990 which modified the original ordinance and received further improvements from Executive Decree No. 75-15 of 16 February 2015 that updated its statutes (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

Its main responsibilities include (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019):

- granting sports organizations and promotional bodies access to its facilities and equipment in order to facilitate the setup, lodging, catering and recuperation of different teams and sports categories;
- ensuring that training camps and meetings, as well as sporting and recreational competitions and events, are organized materially and technically within its facilities;
- helping to create training programs for athletes, technical staff sports-and-study programs and young sports talent;
- overseeing, protecting, and keeping up all of the sports facilities parking lots, and support services that it owns;
- Conducting studies, particularly those related to the conditions and standards for the use and management of sports facilities;
- arranging or taking part in professional development programs and training sessions for employees in charge of overseeing, protecting and maintaining sports facilities;
- Providing technical and human resources for the prevention of, and fight against, violence within its facilities;
- allowing the public to use its sports facilities and reception areas for leisure sports while encouraging accessibility for people with disabilities;
- Organizing and promoting all sports, artistic, recreational and cultural performances;

- Leasing advertising spaces located within sports facilities and their annexes;
- Overseeing the sale of tickets and passes for entry to the Authority's facilities, especially during athletic events and contests;
- Organizing conferences, seminars, and lectures in fields related to its areas of activity.

3.2.5 The National Agency for Youth Recreation

The National Agency for Youth Recreation was created through Executive Decree 89-215 of November 28 1989 which took over the functions of the Algerian Office for Public and Administrative Holiday Centers that ran summer camps for sports movement worker children. The National Agency for Youth Recreation functions as a government-run organization that operates under the Ministry of Youth and Sports to deliver social and educational and cultural programs which serve young people through its numerous facilities.

The Agency has established itself as a premier institution in outdoor recreational and educational activities for youth and children through more than five decades of operation. The organization has become a trailblazer in its sector because it draws strength from its established legacy together with the knowledge base of its personnel. (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2019).

3.3 International Sporting Events Hosted in Algeria (2018–2023)

The following table presents the international sporting events organized in Algeria between 2018 and 2023, categorized by the number of participating athletes and countries:

Table (2): International Sporting Events Organized in Algeria during the Period (2018–2023)

Title of the Sporting Event	Location	Year	Number of Athletes	Number of Participating Countries
African Youth Games	Algiers	2018	3,000	54
Mediterranean Games	Oran	2022	3,298	26
Arab Games	Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Tipaza	2023	3,500	22

Sources:

- MTB DATA, 2018.
- Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mediterranean Games 2022: The International Committee Determines the List of Selected Venues, 2022.
- Algerian Olympic and Sports Committee, 2023.

From the table, the following observations emerge:

– The number of athletes who participated differed throughout the three competitions. The African Youth Games of 2018 brought together a crowd of 3,000 athletes to compete. The Mediterranean Games of 2022 showed a minor participation growth by reaching 3,298 athletes but the Arab Games of 2023 attracted 3,500 athletes. The upward pattern indicates Algeria's enhanced ability to organize major international sporting events as well as rising popularity of multi-sport competitions in regional and continental domains.

– The number of participating countries changed based on the event type and geographical coverage. The African Youth Games of 2018 received 54 African nations which represents a high number because the event spanned the entire continent. The Mediterranean Games of 2022 had 26 participating countries because the event limited its scope to Mediterranean nations. The Arab Games of 2023 welcomed 22 Arab countries to participate which matched the regional and cultural scope of the event.

– The venues hosting these events showed distinct differences. The African Youth Games (2018) together with the Mediterranean Games (2022) held their events in Algiers and Oran but the Arab Games (2023) extended to five major cities which included Algiers Oran Constantine Annaba and Tipaza. The expansion demonstrates Algeria's enhanced sports facilities and its ability to organize multiple-event venues. The growth in infrastructure supports the development of sports tourism while generating various economic benefits from related sectors.

3.4 The Model of Sports Tourism in Algeria

This section explores the main types of sports tourism existing in Algeria through an evaluation of their different manifestations. These include destination-based sports tourism sports tourism in alternative sites, participation-based sports tourism, and spectator-oriented sports tourism.

3.4.1 Destination-Based Sports Tourism in Algeria

The Algerian shoreline with its stunning bays among the world's most beautiful and its picturesque beaches functions as an optimal location for sports tourism particularly water sports and diving activities. Oran, Skikda, Béjaïa, Jijel and Annaba (Algerian Investment Promotion Agency, 2025).

3.4.2 Sports Tourism in Alternative Sites in Algeria

The combination of cycling competitions together with mountain exploration activities functions as useful tools to develop sports tourism while discovering Algeria's mountainous territories. The practice of long-distance cycling adventures and bicycle tours attracts people from various age groups but mostly consists of young participants. People of all age groups enjoy these excursions because they provide both recreational activities and physical fitness along with stress relief and daily routine changes and pollution reduction through less car use and opportunities to connect with participants from different areas (Fella, 2022)

3.4.3 Participation-Based Sports Tourism in Algeria

The inclusion of sports events into national tourism initiatives through organizing competitions that welcome both domestic residents

and international guests for marathons in urban settings as well as natural environments such as the Aurès Mountains and Algerian coastal areas draws tourists who wish to experience Algeria's beauty alongside physical activities. The combination of sporting events with cultural and artistic festivals delivers tourists a unified experience which connects sports activities with traditional local heritage. Through this activity Algerian citizens develop better understanding of their country's tourism potential while they learn about new regions by engaging in sports.

The promotion of sporting events in Algeria heavily depends on building relationships with local sports clubs as a fundamental factor. The collaboration between clubs and sports federations leads to creating local competitions which motivate community members to participate. Tourism incentives including discounted tickets and special hotel and tourist facility promotions during sporting events serve to attract local tourists while boosting their desire to explore tourism destinations (Saadia, 2024)

3.4.4 Sports Tourism for Spectators in Algeria

International promotion of sporting events in Algeria opens an excellent chance to boost the country's presence on the worldwide tourism map. Algeria shows potential to serve as host for international sports events including the Africa Cup of Nations and athletic tournaments. Such events directly draw international tourists to the location. The organization of these competitions allows Algeria to obtain international recognition while proving its capability to host major sporting events as a sports destination (Saadia, 2024).

3.5 Factors Hindering the Success of Sports Tourism in Algeria

Despite Algeria's considerable potential, several factors hinder the success of sports tourism in the country.

3.5.1 Transportation and Logistics

One of the obstacles to the success of sports tourism in Algeria lies in transportation and logistics. Sports facilities must be connected to advanced modes of transport such as tramway and metro networks (Saadia, 2024).

3.5.2 Weakness in International Media Marketing

Sports tourism in Algeria faces challenges due to weak international media marketing of sporting events and the absence of comprehensive promotional strategies to showcase the country's tourism assets through such events.

3.5.3. Weak Infrastructure for Sports Tourism in Algeria

The underdeveloped infrastructure in certain sports and tourism areas requires significant investment in the modernization of sports facilities hotels, and public amenities (Saadia, 2024).

3.5.4 Absence of a Strategy for Developing Sports Tourism in Algeria

The lack of a clear strategy for sports tourism that promotes each targeted destination is attributed to several factors (Snina, 2021):

- Weak coordination between the private sector, sports institutions clubs, and sports federations;
- The absence of an economic dimension in Algeria's sports tourism strategy.

3.6 Possible Scenarios for Sports Tourism in Algeria

Sports tourism in Algeria faces the following potential scenarios:

- **Achievable Scenario** The tourism sector along with the handicrafts sector and the youth and sports sector need to establish stronger partnerships: This feasible scenario stands on solid ground because sufficient real-world evidence supports its implementation. The plan requires combining sports activities with tourism services alongside opportunities to display and sell local products. Economic activity will increase while tourism expansion will attract foreign visitors who bring in foreign currency to create job opportunities that help develop Algeria's economy (Algeria Press Service, 2019).

- **Likely Scenario** The adequate funding of sports and youth associations represents a potential direction that sports tourism might take but the present indicators fall short of its complete realization. Sports and youth associations experience negative impacts on their funding sources because of their inadequate management practices combined with insufficient control mechanisms. The clubs need to find funding from

alternative sources because they face financial constraints (Algeria Press Service, 2023).

– **Desired Scenario** The successful implementation of digital transformation stands as a necessary condition to fulfill modern technological requirements that affect multiple sectors including youth and sports. Various applications and digital platforms have been launched within a strategic framework during the past four years (Algeria Press Service, 2024). This represents the preferred direction for sports tourism development in the future. The complete realization of this objective faces substantial limitations from the current conditions.

4. CONCLUSION

Sports tourism exists as a separate tourism category which merges sports participation or sports spectating with travel experiences. This form of tourism includes numerous competitive and non-competitive recreational activities which take place both commercially and non-commercially through sporting events. Sports tourism exists in multiple forms which depend on its conceptual framework and categories; these include event attendance tourism and activity participation tourism and major sporting event location tourism. Sports tourism also generates revenue through destination appeal along with models which focus on audience participation.

The international sporting events organized in Algeria from 2018 to 2023 demonstrate how the nation is becoming an important sports destination across regional and international platforms. The country's advancement results from both the numerous organized events and their role in building Algeria's favorable reputation throughout global sports. The dynamic sports tourism sector now serves as a significant economic driver for the nation by creating employment directly and indirectly across tourism and transportation services and traditional industries.

The current sports tourism development in Algeria has not reached its desired developmental impact level despite ongoing efforts. The main obstacles to development stem from structural and organizational issues that include insufficient investments in sports and tourism infrastructure

along with inadequate transportation systems and limited supportive logistics services. The tourism sector must improve its coordination with youth organizations and sports associations and traditional industry groups while securing sustainable financial support for sports and youth associations. The digital transformation presents vital opportunities that must be utilized to support governance functions while promoting this tourism sector. Sports tourism will become an essential sustainable development mechanism for Algeria once these challenges are addressed through an all-encompassing strategic plan.

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