

Cultural Diversity as a Catalyst for Promoting Tourism Industry in Algeria

التنوع الثقافي كمدخل إستراتيجي لتعزيز صناعة السياحة في الجزائر

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Abstract

The present study investigates the importance of cultural diversity in sustainable development via the sector of tourism in Algeria. The paper inspects the concepts of culture, cultural diversity and tourism industry and avows that cultural heritage can be used as a relief agent for promoting sustainable development. In fact, this study advocates that the participation of Algerians in preserving their cultural heritage by integrating all components of culture into the design, measurement and practices of development can accelerate the country's economic and social development. Therefore, the diversity of Algerian culture should be seen as the capital of tourism and sustainable development.

Keywords: Algerian culture, tourism industry, cultural diversity, sustainable development.

1. Introduction

Although Algeria suffered badly from a serious civil war in the early part of the nineties, the country is certainly beginning to turn itself around and now is starting to encourage tourism in a slow but steady way. In effect, Algeria still remains a best destination that suited those with a lot of patience and confidence, favoring an unforgettable African adventure.

It is widely recognized that the tourism industry is making a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of many countries in the world through its role in expanding their economic base, increasing foreign exchange earnings, providing employment opportunities and enhancing standards of living. In other words, tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generated by the consumption of goods and services by tourist. The taxes received on businesses in the tourist industry and the opportunity for employment in the service industries associated with tourism is very beneficial.

Narrowly speaking, the present work is an attempt to demonstrate the cultural diversity as a good package for Algerian tourism industry, and this latter is considered as a new economic factor in the Algerian sustainable development. To conduct the present study, the following question is raised: *Does cultural diversity truly serve as a catalyst for tourism industry in Algeria?*

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2. Culture and Identity

2.1. Definition of Culture

Culture is a broad concept that embodies all aspects of human life, and it may mean different things to different people. This is why; it is hard to reach an agreement on a single definition of culture. The English anthropologist *E.B. Tylor* first set his definition in his book *Primitive culture* in 1871 stating that “*Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*”¹

In fact, culture is a highly complex phenomenon. Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) define culture as “*a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create.*”² Hence, culture is a way of life of a group of people where their behaviours, beliefs, values, symbols that they accept, and tradition constitute their identity and unity. In a sense, the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) defines culture as an

integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.³

This definition gives a thorough explanation to what is meant by culture as it refers to the collective set down of beliefs, values, knowledge, experience, attitudes, meanings, religion, objects and properties shared by human groups and are transmitted from generation to generation.

2.2.Culture and Language

Culture and language have an interdependent relationship as declared by Mitchell and Myles (2004) that they “*are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other.*”⁴

Moreover, the fact that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality clearly shows that language and culture are bounded together.⁵

According to Brown (1994), language reflects and shapes culture. It is the symbolic representation of people’s historical background, perception to life and their ways of living and thinking. Without culture, language would be dead and without language, culture would have no shape.⁶ Therefore, language and culture are closely connected and separating one from the other would cause a loss of their significance.

2.3.Definition of Identity

The term identity in social realm refers to the sense of belonging of any person to his /her group membership. Identity is an intricate subject that has attracted many scholars’ attention in different research areas and disciplines; this attention according to Austin (2013) “has meant that the unstated everydayness of identity has been subject to very close scrutiny, and,

accordingly, our understanding of the nature, impact and effects of identity has been rendered far more problematic as a result of these interrogations of the process of identity formation and as a result of the exposure of the invisible workings of identifying and being identified as this or that.”⁷ In the same line of thought, Helms (1993) described identity as *“a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perceptions that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group.”*⁸

It should be wiser to state that any individual in a given group membership assumes an identity and claims it for his- or herself relying on a feeling or perception of commonality with others in the same group whose central characteristics are definitely well identified and established as value and those shared characteristics are what constitute culture.⁷

3. Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity guarantees mutual enrichment for the future of humanity because it is a source of innovation, creativity and exchange.⁹ The diversity in cultural heritage is not an absolute deposit that should be preserved; it helps in unifying dialogue between all the expressions of identity. It is recognition of the daily dialogue as a founding principle that must be affirmed and preserved. Thus, there is a relationship between diversity and dialogue. “The causal link that binds them cannot be severed without jeopardising development’s sustainability. This is the process that forges cultural diversity into a common language that the whole of humanity can speak and understand. Thus, cultural diversity unites individuals, societies and peoples”¹⁰

4. Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is defined as a term for the different ways of life in society that have been transmitted by generations through the ages, including customs, places, morals and artistic methods. It consists as a result of living the life of the community of morals, principles, worship and ways of life followed in living. Cultural heritage contains the antiquities that constitute previous eras in the past, and it is a broad concept that includes all aspects of life, and we can observe cultural heritage in:

1. Architecture: (buildings, the shape of the place, the remains of antiquities)
2. Nature: (the countryside, its landscapes, coastal places, beaches, agricultural habits)
3. Handicrafts: (photographs, mosaics, books, manuscripts, documents, sculpture, tools, human creativity and all that indicates it).

Cultural heritage appears not only through tangible things, such as: handicrafts, buildings and landscapes, but also through intangible things such as: language, morals, principles and customs, history, stories told, songs, music and special rituals. In society, this is observed through food and cooking, the dress most people wear, house forms, traditional skills and works, religious occasions, performing arts, and storytelling.¹¹

Cultural heritage is the memory of people and nations. It expresses their identity and origins. It has an inestimable spiritual value and importance. Cultural heritage is also an element of tourist attractions. It attracts many admirers and tourists who are interested in cultures, history, customs, traditions and architecture and all forms of material and immaterial arts and oral expressions left by the first ancient civilizations. Therefore, we find that this type of tourism, which is expressed as cultural tourism or heritage tourism, has become popular in the world as a whole and has become a major economic resource for most countries.

5. The Legal Mechanisms to Protect the Algerian Cultural Heritage and Promoting Tourism

Since Algeria consists of rich cultural heritage that was left by many successive civilizations qualifies it to become a destination for internal and external tourists to visit the historical sites and especially the cultural monuments that are classified as World Heritage site such as Tassili and Al-Ahghar, Timgad, Jamila, Tipaza, M'zab Valley, and the Kasbah of Algiers.

These cultural properties are governed by special texts and provisions according to their type and category and the party to which they belong. Hence, Algerian policy makers enacted two legal frameworks for heritage tourism, a framework governing cultural property, which is the **law 04-98** related to the protection of cultural heritage, and a framework governing tourism activities, which is **Law 01-03** related to sustainable tourism.¹²

❖ The Legal controls contained in the Law N° 98-04:

The legal controls contained in Law N° 98-04 related to cultural heritage are represented in the protection systems that is applied to cultural property and the legal effects resulting from it, depending on the type to whom these properties belong, whether real estate cultural property, movable cultural property, or intangible cultural property.

1- Legal controls applicable to cultural real estate:

Real cultural property, whatever its legal status, is subject to one of the protection regimes provided for in Article 08, paragraph 02, depending on its nature and the class to which it belongs, as the case may be, which is registration in an additional inventory list (first) and classification (second) and creation in the form of “reserved sectors (third) as possible to be incorporated into public property by forced means to ensure its protection, which is expropriation for the public benefit and the state's use of the right of pre-emption (fourth).¹²

2- Protection of movable cultural property:

Movable cultural property is subject to the classification system or registration in the additional inventory as the case may be, according to special procedures established by Law N° 98-04 related to the protection of cultural heritage (First), the application of protection systems has legal implications in which all actions that affect the safety of the movable cultural property are restricted (Second).

3- Protection of intangible cultural property:

The objective of the protection of intangible cultural property is the study, maintenance and preservation of oral heritage, through:¹³

-Creation of blogs and data banks related to the intangible cultural heritage through identification and codification.-

-Classification, collection and registration by all appropriate means with persons or groups of persons or groups possessing the intangible cultural heritage.

- Preserve the integrity of traditions.

- The collected traditional and popular culture materials are subject to a preservation procedure appropriate to their nature.

- Dissemination of intangible culture by all means (exhibitions, conferences, publications and the establishment of museums).

- Identifying the persons who own an intangible cultural property.

❖ **The Legal controls contained in the Law N° 03-01:**

Similar to other laws issued in the context of sustainable development, such as the law of protecting the environment, tourism had a clear interest in the Algerian legal system, especially the law No. 03-01 related to the sustainable development of tourism, which moved towards the new vision of tourism by adopting its sustainability in order to preserve the ecological, natural, cultural and social tourism potentials in Algeria and this is what we will discuss in the first section, as it defines the legal mechanisms for controlling the activities of heritage tourism environmentally and this is what we will see in the second section.

1- The new orientation of tourism towards sustainability:

The Law N°. 03-01 related to the sustainable development of tourism, in its second article, aims to creating an appropriate and stimulating environment for:¹⁴

- Promoting investment and developing partnership in tourism

- Integrating the destination of Algeria into the international tourism market and advising for the promotion of the tourist image.

- Rehabilitation of hotel and tourism institutions in order to raise the capacity of accommodation and reception

- Diversifying the tourism offer and developing new forms of tourism activities

- Meeting the needs and aspirations of citizens in the field of tourism, recreation and entertainment

- Contributing to protecting the environment, improving the living environment, and valuing natural, cultural and historical capabilities

- Improving the quality of tourism services

- Promotion and development of employment in the tourism field

- Harmonious and balanced development of tourism activities

- Valuation of the national tourism heritage

In effect, it is noticed through these goals that the law focused on the issue of development, promotion, and diversification of tourism activities in the field of services and infrastructure and entering the global market for tourism in order to give impetus to tourism activities by linking it

to sustainability with the aim of contributing to protecting the environment and improving the living standards and valuing natural, cultural and historical capabilities; and here the clear interest of the legislator appears to link the issue of valuing cultural heritage with tourism in its positive relationship and according to the new vision of heritage tourism.

2- Environmental legal controls related to heritage tourism activities:

The Algerian legislator relied in Law 03-01 on the aspect of development and promotion of tourism activity more than the aspect of regulation of the sector and did not provide for the rights and legal protection of tourists, leaving this to the applicable legal texts or general rules within the framework of civil and criminal law, but in return, the state was forced to provide the necessary conditions for promoting eco-tourism investment by preparing programs and plans supporting tourism development and promotion.

▪ **Preparation of programs and plans:**

The promotion of tourism investment depends on the development of programs and plans in a manner that is consistent with the urban fabric of the region and its cultural and historical heritage under the supervision of the state with the development of the necessary measures to encourage tourism investment through: ¹⁵

- Establishing programs to develop tourism activities as a priority within the areas of tourism expansion.
- Preparing a tourism development plan that contributes to:
- Harmonious development of tourist facilities and structures and rational exploitation of tourist expansion areas and tourist sites and their preservation.
- Integrating tourism activities into the tools of regional development and reconstruction.

Tourism preparation is carried out within the framework of respecting the rules of protection of cultural heritage and urbanization.

▪ **Supporting tourism development:**

The state takes supportive measures and actions and provides assistance and grants privileges and specific financial and fiscal policy for tourism investment in order to encourage rapid and sustainable development of tourism and creating positive effects on the national economy. It also seeks, in this context, to develop other tools to support the tourism development process, and the measures to assist and support the tourism activity aiming to achieve the following: ¹⁶

- Giving impetus to economic growth.
- Inclusion of tourism development within the dynamics of development and technological adaptation
- Encouraging the creation of new institutions and expanding the scope of their activities
- Promote the dissemination of media of a commercial, economic and professional nature related to the tourism sector

- Encouraging every action aimed at increasing the number of reception sites and structures directed to tourism
- Encouraging competitiveness within the sector
- Upgrading a suitable environment to stimulate entrepreneurship and develop tourism
- Adopting a policy of training and managing human resources and encouraging professionalism, creativity and innovation.
- Enable investors to benefit from appropriate financial tools and services that meet their requirements.
- Improving banking services related to the study of financing files for tourism projects
- Encouraging the emergence of an economic and legal environment that provides support for tourism activities and guarantees the conditions for its promotion in harmonious framework.

▪ **Promotion and Tourism Information:**

It is all media and communication work directed to valuing tourism capabilities for commercial use. It includes, in particular, market studies and communication programs, and resorts to various forms of marketing such as exhibitions, publications, specialized media and modern technologies in the field of visualization, execution and publishing.

To this end, it is so remarkable that Algeria, with its diverse heritage tourism potentials of exceptional global and local value, may attract a lot of tourists. Although tourism is not considered a main economic resource for Algeria, but it is one of the precaution and prevention mechanism for which the Laws No. 98-04-have been issued to protect cultural heritage as well tourism activities as Law 03-01, where the Algerian legislator linked this protection to sustainability and specified rules and special legal regulations and provisions to some extent to protect cultural heritage and at the same time value it in the service of development Heritage tourism and its development.

6. Tourism Industry

Tourism is considered as a “smokeless” industry with few, if any, environmental impacts. Tourism industry is a term used “to describe firms and establishment providing attractions, facilities and services for tourists. Economic activities are normally grouped into industries according to their products as tourists use a range of attractions, facilities and services; they are customers of a number of industries as conventionally defined.”¹⁷

Tourism industry is a compound term being fragmented into several industries that, taken together, constitute what is commonly referred to as the travel and tourism industry.¹⁸

Tourism industry comprises components of other industries that do not cater exclusively to tourists;¹⁹ therefore, a discussion of the environmental impacts of tourism needs to consider what percentage of use is related to tourism in each industry. Sectors of the tourism industry include transportation (e.g., airlines, buses, automobiles), lodging, restaurants, the cruise industry, amusement parks and resorts, and general retail and merchandise stores.²⁰

6.1. Types of Tourism

The most frequently identified types of tourism are described beneath: ²¹

- 1) **Cultural Tourism** :any activity in which the primary motive is the search of knowledge through architectural heritage such as cities, villages, archeological sites ,gardens, religious building or intangible heritage such as traditional festivals and national or local customs .
- 2) **Recreational Tourism**: the recreational fleet has developed significantly over the recent years as well as marine industry which provide rental cruise, sailing boats, plunged underwater, sea fishing, etc.....
- 3) **Thermal and Thalassotherapy Tourism**: any travel in order to undergo natural treatment based on water of thermal springs of high therapeutic value or saltwater. They cover a customer that requires treatment in an environment equipped with care facilities, relax and entertainment.
- 4) **Saharan Tourism**: tourism in the Sahara is based on exploitation of the different natural historical potentials accompanied by recreation and specific discovery to this environment (Sahara).

6.2. Tourism Aspects

There are many aspects of tourism that contribute to the development of any nation and amongst the most of them are the followings: ²¹

- 1) **Environmental Aspects**: nature gives tourism the raw material such as land forms thermal springs, mountains, gardens, the sea, etc.... These resources are of paramount importance that must be protected by the state because they can be damaged if certain thresholds were not respected.
- 2) **Sociological Aspect**: tourism provides to humans the discovery and appreciation of unknown places, meetings, cultures, people, languages etc.....
- 3) **Economic Aspects**: tourism sector must work with several other sectors to ensure proper operation through which the contribution of these sectors would bring economical growth since tourism is an activity of services that requires several operations and mutual contributions of specific sectors such as production, marketing and investment; therefore it leads to boosting the range of employment and the national income.

7. The Socio Economic Dimension of Tourism

Tourism and handicraft are of paramount importance for the development of many countries. These two sectors are considered the source of domestic income and substantial foreign exchange earnings, and more than that, they are the source of employment potential. The developing countries are encouraging tourism to attract every year millions of tourists and so done in Algeria's neighbours; Morocco and Tunisia; they have turned the tourism industry into one of their main sources of hard currency while Algeria still striving to find a rescue pattern to improve the tourism sector. ¹⁶ In this vein, tourism nowadays is considered as “a capital intensive

industry, increasingly concentrated both at the production level (tour operators, hotels) and distribution level (travel agents, electronic ticketing), with all the inherent risks”²²

In fact, tourism in particular is a key source as far as its economic dimension is concerned owing to its provision of foreign exchange earnings and investment. It offers job creation (270 million worldwide), especially youth employment. It makes a reduction of external debt and diversifies the economy. As far as its social contribution is concerned, tourism have a vital role in providing the social welfare, gendering equality; understanding a mutual respect between societies and finally, preserving culture, since tourism is a user of the cultural heritage of mankind’s contribution to its enrichment.²²

8. Algerian Tourism Sector and Government Incentives

For many decades after the national independence, Algeria passed through a period of reorganization as an independent and sovereign country. During the seventies, Algeria was on the avant garde level of tourism. The Algerian investments at that time where coming from the public sector. The principal tourist and hotel construction still noticed nowadays testify to this achievement. The Algerian minister of tourism pointed out that, “in the mid 1980’s Algeria was comforted with economic problems which affected the tourist activity, this was followed by our country as a tourist destination.”²²

However, in 1999, there was the national conciliation, which gives the opportunity to recover the economic development afterwards by giving more importance and interest to tourism.

Algeria has 174 zones of tourist expansion spread all over the country and which are concerned by the tourism investment. For this reason, the ministry of tourism invites all national or foreign organizations to invest in this very profitable market. Consequently, Algeria introduced many incentives as regards investment, of which the Code of Investment (2001) that guarantees safe investments and interest to investors. The National Council of Investment supervises all monetary and contractual operations and studies the files of significant projects. And currently, Algeria has as a slogan entitled “*Our alternatives of development are tourism and agriculture*”.²³

Currently, 22 zones of tourist expansion are subject to a development study held by the National Agency of Tourist Development (ANDT). Nineteen of these zones retained for study are located on the littoral extending over more than 1.200 km and the three others are in *Tamanrasset ,Djanet and Timimoun*. However, the 22 concerned zones totalize a surface of development equivalent to 1443.83 hectares. “These sites are part of the projects of realization of 144 hotels, 550 villas, 3000 bungalows, 8 marinas and pleasure ports, 4 spas, 15 shopping centers and 4 sports centers.”²⁴

These tourist achievements must generate a capacity of logging of 50.000 beds. However the zones of Djanet and Tamanrasset have the priority and must be subject to special consideration since they are a privileged destination by foreign tourists and also because of the sensitivity of their ecosystem.²⁴

Concerning the development and the control of tourism real-estate, the development of a program and the launching of a study for the delimitation and the declaration of zones of tourist expansion are expected. It is also expected to achieve “a study relating to the thermal assessment,

which potential is evaluated to more than 200 thermal sources, and to the transfer of the lands in the chosen zones”²¹

9. The Potentials of Cultural Diversity for Tourism

In order to develop tourism, Algeria attempts to promote a strategy which seeks to establish a state policy based on the involvement of all the institutions in the development of tourism products and activities, either directly or indirectly.

Algerian tourism policy, then, is advocating a re-examining tourist teaching and qualifications as well as studies to the craft industry and hotel trade; besides, it calls Algerian universities to create faculties and departments for hotel management and tourism instruction. Furthermore, it is stated that the main tourism products that Algeria promotes are “mountain tourism in the Auras, beach tourism on 1200 km of beaches on the Mediterranean, Islamic tourism to the holy places in all provinces. The most important Islamic sites are *The Mosque of Oqba Ibn Nafai El Fihri*, and *The Zaouia Tijanya*, which has nearly 300 million followers in Africa and elsewhere. There is also therapeutic tourism, since Algeria has more than 200 very famous mineral springs. And finally, there is the Saharan tourism.”²²

In effect, Algeria is a culturally -rich country that has tremendous cultural components in terms of customs, traditions, handcrafts, thermal springs, fascinating sceneries all of which would contribute to sustainable development of the country and boosting the economical growth if wisely cared of and equally sponsored and promoted.

Conclusion

The authenticity of the nature, traditions and the diversity of local culture can be seen as a crucial aspect and valuable assets of tourism in Algeria. Hence, the Algerian strategy for tourism development aims at establishing a state policy based on the attainment of all the institutions to take part in the development of tourism products and services. At this point, probing a national tourism policy must adequately rely on these strengths to develop the tourism sector. Thus, to elevate the attractiveness of Algeria’s tourism industry and optimize sustainable development, government’s role should be that of supporting all sorts of tourism products which advocate employment, traditional craft enhancement and quality of services. Moreover, The Algerian Tourism Law devoted its provisions to the issue of development and preparation of tourist areas; and designated heritage tourism with special rules that control this activity, since it is considered as one of the most important elements of attracting tourists in Algeria, especially in terms of forming a human framework through management, evaluation, protection, direction, communication, media services, hospitality, reception, training, and encouragement to establish associations specialized in heritage tourism, traditional industries, oral and expressive cultures, and this is in order to improve and upgrade the tourism image in the international tourism market and in the world of investment within the framework of development sustainable tourism to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage.

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