

The reality and prospects of desert tourism in Algeria -Tamanrasset case study-

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Abstract :

The topic of desert tourism is one of the most important topics of the Algerian State's concern as a strategic alternative, due to the existence of all ingredients for success on condition of well-founded tourism planning, while trying to highlight the attractions of tourism in the desert, which is the objective of this research.

However, due to the reports and statistics on the shelter's capacity and the evolution of tourists, which reflects the continuity of the deteriorating touristic situation, we have made recommendations on the development of desert tourism in Algeria, especially in the province of Tamanrasset, the subject of our study.

Keywords : Tourism, desert tourism,desert tourism ingredients, Tamanrasset state.

Jel Classification Codes : Z32 , Z39

1. INTRODUCTION

The perception of tourism has evolved and changed and has become an important vital economic source that brings funds and creates multiple jobs for citizens. In addition, tourism is an important media and civilization sector for exchanging views and experiences through the tourist's personality and his observations during his visit and his mingling with the people of the country which he chooses as destination. Like other States, Algeria is endeavoring to develop the tourism sector and to seek prospects for it in order to diversify national sources of income. One of the most prominent types of tourism that aspires to be developed and implemented is the purported "desert tourism", which in recent years has witnessed a remarkable development, especially after the improvement of internal security situation. The province of Tamanrasset is one of Algeria's most important desert tourist areas because of its natural and historical resources, which qualify it as a perfect tourist hub. In order to study this issue, we have raised the following problematic:

What is the reality of desert tourism in Algeria? What are the prospects for its development? How can this be achieved in Tamanrasset?

In response to the problematic, we have decided to raise the following hypotheses:

First hypothesis: The reality of Algeria's desert tourism is fluctuating despite the fact that it has a significant variety of merits to be reckoned with.

Second hypothesis: The prospects for the development of desert tourism in Algeria are evident in the creation and modernization of hotels in the southern region, as well as in the provision of incentives to invest in them.

Third hypothesis: The real importance of tourism in Tamanrasset is reflected in the diversification of the province's tourism activities and the restoration of ancient K'sours, with the use of various media for promotion.

Research objectives: This study aims to:

- Highlighting tourism attractions in Algeria's desert areas.
- To identify and assess the realities of desert tourism in Algeria and to develop future aspirations that may contribute to its improvement;

- Highlighting the tourism fundamentals in the province of Tamanrasset and the mechanisms for the development of tourism activity in order to promote the sector in this province.

Research methodology: For the purpose of understand the topic and responding to the problematic, the descriptive approach was used as an appropriate way of reviewing the interpretative concepts of desert tourism and the analytical method to highlighting its reality and prospects in Algeria.

2. The theoretical framework for desert tourism

2.1 What Tourism Is:

- **Definition of tourism:** Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, and it is difficult to determine its ranges and determine what can be considered as tourism and what can't be (Swarbrooke, Leckie, Beard, & Pomfert, 2003, p. 05) . There are many definitions of tourism, the most important of which can be mentioned below:

- Tourism may be defined as an activity related to the departure of an individual from the environment in which he or she resides and stays for a period not exceeding one year continuously for the purpose of recreation and entertainment or other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity for the purpose of earning money. (Steven Page, 2008, p. 15).

- Tourism is also defined as an attractive factor for tourists and satisfying their wishes in terms of visiting different natural places, identifying their terrain, plants and wildlife, as well as visiting local communities to learn about their customs and traditions. (Kafi Mustapha, 2013, p. 32).

- Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali had also defined tourism in (Times and future of tourism), as a " phenomenon of human activity, defined from the earliest time as temporary reallocations by persons leaving their homelands or domiciles to other places or countries for purposes other than habitual residence". (Khaled Ben Abderrahmene, 2014, p. 14)

- The French Higher Council for Tourism considers tourism to be "the set of relationships and services resulting from a person's temporary stay in a new and distinct environment, away from his habitual residence for the

purpose of following his needs or fulfilling them as long as the stay is not materially profitable". (Ghadhban, 2015, p. 34)

- Picard was defines as tourism in 1910 as "the set of devices and their work system, not from the point of view of the person moving from one place to another. (i.e. the traveler himself) but mainly from the point of view of those whom he meets in the country to which he moves carrying his full wallet, so they benefit directly, such as hotels in the first place or indirectly, from what he spends to satisfy his need whether to pursuit knowledge or for pleasure " (Wassila & Tajeddin, 2018, p. 293)

- Some defined it as the twentieth century industry, overlapping and combined industry, integrated industry, industry without chimneys, soul food or 21st century petroleum. Tourism is an enabler of cultural and civilizational communication among peoples and also a source of employment in various sectors. (Ismail, Mouhamed, & Ilhem, 2017, p. 180).

- Tourism refers to the fact that travel for pleasure outside one's daily space and stay there temporarily, but also to an economic sector that includes all activities related to tourist satisfaction, travel and accommodation. (Simon, 2019, p. 07).

- The United Nations Conference on Tourism and International Travel, held in Rome, 1963, defines tourism as "A social and human phenomenon based on the movement of an individual from one's place of permanent residence to another for a temporary period of not less than 24 hours, and not more than 12 months for the purpose of recreational, therapeutic or historical tourism, and tourism such as a bird with two wings: foreign tourism and domestic tourism" (Saadi & Laalem, 2016, p. 75).

-From previous definitions, we can conclude that the concept of tourism varies according to researchers' and scholars' perception of this field", there are those who consider it an activity of recreation and entertainment that allows the exchange of cultures and experiences among peoples. Others, defined it as an economic phenomenon with implications for the trade movement as well as the development of international relations and investment areas. Muslims, however, considered the tourism as travelling or walking all around the world according to the Koranic

expression where the tourist was traveling the horizon for science, trade or jihad.

- **The importance of tourism:** Tourism is particularly important as it aims to achieve a range of multifaceted and diverse objectives:

- Tourism contributes to support the local and global economy.
- Attracting capital to the country especially the hard currencies.
- Helps to employ a large number of work force and eliminate unemployment.
- Tourism is a rich market in various industries.
- Preservation of cultural heritage and tourism resources through the use and exploitation of cultural, historical, religious and artistic heritage.
- Tourism encompasses all economic activities in the State and abroad. It affects and is affected by production and consumption activity, transport and trips, communications... etc. (Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, p. 58)
- Tourism has social importance, reflecting the geographical and demographic aspects of the population as well as the specific features of their behavior, relationships and cultural characteristics relating to customs and traditions. (benjaroua & Ismaili, 2016, p. 229)
- Strengthening relations with peoples resulting from knowledge and access to cultures and civilizations. (Ghadhban, 2015, p. 50)

2.2. Motivations of tourism: The motivation of tourism means the real reasons why a person undertake a tourist activity. The motivations are is specific, the type of tourism is dependent on its motivation, and the motivation of tourism can be summarized in:

- **Religious motivations:** visiting holy sites in each religion such as Hajj, Umrah and the visiting shrines of the prophet's companions for Muslims and visiting the Vatican State for Christians.
- **Historical, cultural and educational motivations:** To attend some important events in the world, festivals, cultural concerts, ancient historical monuments and archaeological sites such as visiting the pyramids in Egypt and Petra in Jordan, Timgad and Jameela in Algeria, or to learn about the lifestyle of societies and their social and cultural way of life for the purpose of knowledge.

- **Motivations for rest, recreation and leisure:** spending leisure time in quiet places, on the coasts of beaches and beautiful areas of the world, escaping the routine, hustling cities or for leisure.

- **Medical motivations:** The individual often carries out tourism under the motivation of hospitalization, or treatment in thermal baths or desert sands and spending time to convalesce and relax from a cured disease.

- **Ethnic motivations:** This is often motivated by expatriates from their homelands who want to restore their family links and visit their birthplace, loved ones and friends in their motherland before migration.

- **Sports motivations:** If the tourist aims to do sports activity such as participating in a sports tournament or watching it such as the Olympic Games and football world cup for which the organizing country often attracts tourists whose motivation is purely sporting.

- **Economic motivations:** doing business, concluding deals, as well as low prices for tourism services in a country are economic drivers that control the flow of tourists or are the reasons for tourist activity. (Ismail, Mouhamed, & Ilhem, 2017, pp. 181-182)

2.3.Types of Tourism: The most important of these species we find:

- **According to geographical area criterion:** - Domestic tourism: The move of a tourist from his or her habitual place of residence to visit another place or area within the borders of his State of residence, so that he travels a distance of at least 40 km for any purpose other than work or earning money.

- Regional tourism: Tourists travel between neighboring countries, so that it form is one touristic area such as Arab, African or South Asian countries.

- External tourism: Any movement of tourists from one country to another for tourism must be temporary.

- **According to the purpose or aim:** - Religious tourism: travel and movement within or outside the borders of the State for the purpose of visiting holy sites.

- Medical tourism: tourism to reach self and body pleasure in modern centers and hospitals.

- Sports tourism: moving elsewhere for a temporary period with the aim of exercising sports or enjoying watching it.

- Cultural tourism: This type is related to familiarizing tourists with the culture of the country and the civilizations that passed by it, from handicrafts, traditions and customs, architectural art, language... etc. There are other types under this branch, including beach and desert tourism, exhibition tourism, festivals... etc. (Wassila & Tajeddin, 2018, p. 294)

3. Desert Tourism:

3.1. Definition of desert tourism: desert tourism is a new concept of a new product emerging in the context of the growth and prosperity of the tourism sector. It is one of the most important types of tourism known for its natural diversity on the one hand and for its high demand on the other. Thus, desert areas are the source of attraction for tourists due to its diverse terrain from mountains, hills, gravel-carpeted heights, rocks, valleys, reefs, and sand, this area helps spread vegetation only within narrow limits, due to drying soil and lack of rain. There are many definitions of desert tourism, we will address some of them as follows:

- Desert tourism is defined as: the movement of human beings from one's own country to a desert area for hiking, reconnaissance or exploration. It is every establishment in a desert environment looking for various natural, historical and cultural capabilities, accompanied by activities associated with this environment of entertainment, recreation and exploration. (Chiraz & Dalila, 2013, p. 73)

- It is also defined as: all activities resulting from travel and residence of persons in a particular desert area for more than one day and less than one year. Desert tourism includes all activities related to visiting oases and historical, archaeological and cultural places in a particular desert area within or outside the country and not for the purpose of permanent employment or residence. (benjaroua & Ismaili, 2016, p. 226)

- There are those who define desert tourism as: a type of tourism based on the cultural and historical heritage of desert areas, including oases, hotels and tourist complex located in these areas. (Saadi & Laalem, 2016, p. 78)

- It has also been defined as a type of ecotourism (natural) in desertic areas, including natural manifestations of dunes, strip mountains, dry valleys and natural oases, and human manifestations of a Saharan peoples' way of life and culture that is fully harmonious with the nature of the Desert, which in its natural and human interaction constitutes an unusual pattern of urban and rural lifestyles. (Ibtissem, p. 258)

- It also means "a kind of natural tourism, that cover a desertic area with all its components, including landscapes, mountains, valleys, oases, etc., and human manifestations as the building pattern, the way of life, and the customs and traditions, to form in their interaction a desert lifestyle convenient to the desert environment, as opposed to the other type of tourism based on the shift to modern tourism practices. (pools, luxury hotels... etc.) that are incompatible with desert nature " (Bchara, 2021, p. 06)

- From the above, a comprehensive definition of desert tourism can be given as: excursions and visits to desert natural areas in order to enjoy the spectacular manifestations of nature and its accompanying cultural landmarks as well as to achieve social and economic gains for local communities.

3.2. Definition of desert tourist: Anyone who intends to travel to the Desert for a vacation outside his home or place of work, for a period of more than 24 hours and not to become a permanent residence and not to exceed one year, in order to enjoy the desert nature, see natural areas and historical monuments and learn about the cultural and social dimensions of the region's inhabitants. (Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, p. 57)

3.3.Desert tourism forms and the requirements for its revitalization: desert tourism can be classified into several types and according to the motivations that a tourist seeks to stimulate. Therefore, desert tourism is performed in various forms, including:

- Medical tourism: This type of tourism is needed for physical and psychological treatment and other diseases diagnosed among tourists. It is performed in order to fully recover or alleviate pain and aches. It is divided into two types according to the means used in the treatment:

- Medication with sand

- Thermal therapeutic tourism (using thermal and sulphuric springs)

- Recreational tourism: It aims to recover the psychological and physical forces of the individual, knowing that every human being will search for diversification in his life, escape from routine and the noise of cities and attend festivals such as desert song festivals.
- Sports tourism: It consist in travelling and staying in the desert for participation or promotion of sports competitions such as: Desert bike and cars racing, skiing on sandy slopes, as well as camel racing.
- Cultural tourism: It aims to increase a person's knowledge by identifying unknown areas and learning about history, archaeological areas, customs and traditions, such as visiting the Tassili reserves and the Janet hill in the Algerian Sahara.
- Exploratory tourism: It is one of the most important and dangerous types of desert tourism because it seeks to find the unknown and to go to inhabited places in order to access new knowledge or verify questionable information. The desert is the fertile area intended by explorers and researchers to learn about the creatures, systems and laws existing in the desert as well as the customs and traditions of peoples. (Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, p. 59)

3.4. Desert tourism revitalization requirements: Following a long-term strategy centered on upgrading several tourism hubs and to improve tourism product revenues. States have expanded their use of the desert as a tourist and cultural windfall.

- Integrating desert tourism into economic transactions, investment and sustained care;
- Adoption of mechanisms to enhance finance tourism investment that opens up golden opportunities in the desert.
- Stimulate the role of tourism agencies and involve them in various efforts related to the development of the tourism sector, as they are among the effective stakeholders in this industry, and the need to better accompany these agencies by sector officials.
- Creating a data bank on reception facilities along roads to desert areas;

- To promote a new dynamic in order to restore the activity of the tourist movement in the South by intensifying media visits for the national and foreign press.
- Develop domestic tourism programs in coordination with the relevant authorities and encourage citizens to visit to these areas.
- Creation of teams composed of representatives of tourism agencies to develop programs and communication plans with foreign clients.
- Rehabilitating local holidays and festivals and improving the quality of traditional handicraft.
- Upgrading air transport to tourist's preferred desert areas and linking them to European countries' airports. (Chiraz & Dalila, 2013, p. 76)

3.5. Motivations of desert tourism: There are many motivations and they are different from one person to another, the most important of which are:

- Historical and cultural motivations: to watch ancient historical monuments and archaeological sites or to view people in the desert and their lifestyle.
- The motivations of rest, recreation and entertainment: with the aim of enjoying the quiet places and escaping the daily routine atmosphere of work.
- Health motivations: with the purpose of moving away from the cold atmosphere and heading to warm places, or for the purpose of therapy, convalescence and relaxation.
- Ethnic motivation: with the aim of visiting their own homeland “Sahara” through the renewal of family ties or the desire to visit places previously visited and has made a certain impression.
- Sports motivations: for the purpose of watching sports competitions or cheering a particular team such as horse tournament.
- Exploratory motives: to explore sites and archaeological areas, as well as desert customs and traditions. (Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, p. 58)

3.6. Desert Tourism Principles: Tourism development in desert areas requires the following:

- Integrating, sensitizing and educating the local population in desert areas, environmentally and touristically.

- Building sound tourism management through the exploitation and conservation of the natural and human resources of the Desert for exploitation by future generations.
- The need to provide an information organ that provides all necessary instructions and guidance to tourists.
- Limiting the capacity of desert tourist areas in order to avoid overcrowding as well as damaging the natural and social environment and provide all services awaited by tourists. (Ibtissem, p. 259)

4. Diagnosis of the realities of Algeria's desert tourism and mechanisms for its development

4.1.The Reality and fundamentals of desert Tourism in Algeria

4.1.1. Tourist attractions in the Algerian Sahara: Tourist attractions constitute the basis of the tourist product and without them there is no tourism. These factors are as follows:

- Topographic features: Algeria's desert contains a rare type of topography. It combines mountains, sand, valleys and countryside, each of which has a different beloved tourist pattern, as well as hot thermal water, which is used as a natural remedy for skin diseases, joint pain, inflammations...Etc.
- Historical, archaeological and religious fundamentals.
- Natural fundamentals: The peaceful desert environment is beautiful and picturesque.
- Social fundamentals: inhabitants of desert areas are well known by their generosity and hospitality.
- Biodiversity and ecology: there are diversity in rare wild animals that live only in the desert, especially in Algeria's desert, such as Fennec "Desert fox", a bighorn sheep (It is a kind of goat-like deer that lives in the mountains, especially in Illzi and Tamanrasset), It is a threatened and protected species from hunting. The gazelle Marica (desert gazelle), as well as a species of African cheetah and many rare birds such as bustards... etc., as well as various floras, especially for therapeutic purposes.
- Regulated hunting parties are also factors of attraction for desert tourism
- Desert sport such as skiing on the sand.

- Excursions, recreation and safaris.
- Political stability, public safety, security is also considered... etc.

(Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, pp. 59-60)

4.1.2. Desert tourism in Algeria: Algeria has a very large territory, much of which are diverse desert lands: soft sand desert with moving dunes and the mountain desert mixed between volcanic stone rock and sand in which oases, lakes and high mountain peaks such as the towering peaks of the Hoggar Mountains. The Algerian desert varies into five or six different desert areas, replete with various types of plants, trees, animals, and creatures. It is a rich environment and its weather is very attractive, with its sun, warmth, heat, sunrise and distinctive sunset in the most extravagant Ahaggar mountains, so that it constitutes an important essence in the tourism product, which is the most important pillar of the success of this type of international tourism. (Ahmed, 2013, p. 230)

- Algerian desert hubs:

The Algerian desert occupies 75 per cent of Algeria's area and is divided into three hubs: South-East, South-West, and the Great South (Al-Tassili, Al-Hoggar). These hubs are characterized by the possibilities and potentials that make them perfect destinations for tourists from within or outside the country because of their beauty and secrets that tell human life throughout history.

- Southeastern hub (Oasis): This hub includes each of the province of Ghardaïa, Biskra, El-Oued and Ouargla. The provinces included in this hub also have common fundamentals and possibilities. We find:

- A natural fundamentals of the hub: for the climate: Algeria's desert is characterized by a uniform weather of the cold continental type in the winter and hot in summer. It is also characterized by a few rains with winds and seasonal storms during the period between the month of February and May.

This hub is located in the heart of Algeria's desert and consists of an area of approximately 160,000 square kilometers, bordered north by the provinces of Laghouat, M'sila, Batna, Khenchela and Tébessa. This hub borders the State of Libya and the provinces of Adrar and El-Bayadh from the East and the province of Illizi and Tamanrasset. From the point of view of topography: the hub is characterized by three main geological zones,

namely, Erg, plateau and valleys, characterized by dunes, stone lands and semi-desertic Atlas and valleys such as: Oued Righ, Oued M'zab and Oued Mia.

- Archaeological and historical fundamentals: The Roman and Arab-Islamic historical heritage, religious archaeological sites and antique palaces.

- Cultural fundamentals include: the mizabian customs and traditions, carpet fabric, architecture, secular cooking art and dates day. Hub customs and traditions do not differ in the organization of local events, parties and festivals.

- **South West hub (TOUAT):** This hub includes both the provinces of Bechar, Adrar Timimoun and El-Grara, and it incorporate common characteristics and components so that we find:

- Natural fundamentals: regarding the geographic location: South-west Algeria is bordered by the provinces of Naâma, El-Bayadh, East Tamanrasset, Ghardaïa and Morocco from the West. In the South, it is bordered by Niger and the Republic of Mauritania. This hub is set in 603,000 square kilometers. As regard to topography: this hub is characterized by stone inscriptions in Taghit, the Great Western Erg, wells, Foggaras and dams.

- Archaeological and historical fundamentals: This hub is characterized by antique K'sors such as Bougaris, Moghul and El-hamr, north of Bashar city. This hub is also known as the hidden secret of giant shrines and historical centers such as the K'sor of Taghit, Beni Abbas, and the nationhood of the sand rose fields as well as the monuments of iconic personalities

- Cultural fundamentals: The region is characterized by a common folklore called Al-Haidus and a spiritual heritage defined by regional traditions such as fantasia, visits and annual events.

- **The Great South hub (Al-Tassili):** This hub includes the province of Illizi and Janet, and his touristic potential is as follows:

- Natural fundamentals: For the location: this hub is located in the Great South, bordered in the north by Ouargla, Ghardaïa. By the Republic of Libya in the east and Tamanrasset from the west. Finally, Niger and Mali

from the south, with an area of about 284,618 square kilometers. The terrain of this hub is characterized by plains, plateaus and mountains.

- Archaeological and historical fundamentals: There are shelters for stone inscriptions classified as world heritage by UNESCO in 1981.

- Cultural fundamentals: what distinguishes this hub is the spiritual heritage materialized in its holidays such as: Sbiba Day, Tassili Day, Haydes Day, Jana Day, Sidi Ali ben Newi Day, Assihar Day, Tafist Day... etc. It is characterized by many traditional handicrafts.

- **The hub of the great South (Al Ahaggar):** This hub includes the province of Tamanrasset. This region occupies an international position conferred upon it by UNESCO so that it enjoys many touristic potentials and possibilities.

- Natural fundamentals: For the location: the area occupies a strategic geostrategic position estimated at 456,200 square kilometers, bordering the north of the provinces of Ouargla, Ghardaïa and Illizi in the east and Adrar from the west, the south is however bordered by Niger and Mali.. The hub consists of plains and plateaus above 2000 meters and mountains such as Tahat Summit, Wilman and Assekrem. The hub also has Timeksert waterfalls. As for the plants, the area is covered by more than 300 plant species such as Wormwood and Tirkat for medication use.

- Archaeological and historical fundamentals: There are archaeological sites attesting the man's existence since the Paleolithic era, such as the Tinhinane shrine, the K'sar of Mussa Ibn Mestan, the Silt Kasbah, the Bajouda K'sar in Ain saleh, the Ouled Sidi Mokhtar Kasbah and Father Fukou temple, as well as fossil forest in the Tedikelt area.

- Cultural and religious fundamentals: The Ahaggar hub is characterized by many cultural festivals and events such as Assihar: an economic cultural and tourist event held from January to February. However, the Tafsit festival is held during March and April.

- Religious fundamentals: Reflected in visits include the visit of Moulay Hasan to the north of Tamanrasset during the month of August, and the visit of Sabeen Saleh during the month of May in Ain Saleh, as well as the visit of Daghmoli to the north-west of Tamanrasset during the month of May. The hub is also known for its great diversity in traditional handicrafts,

including: traditional ornamental handicraft such as bracelets as well as leather handicraft such as tents, pottery handicraft for pot making, wood making and traditional clothing. (benjaroua & Ismaili, 2016, pp. 226-228)

4.1.3. Material fundamentals: the shelters' capacities and the evolution of tourists in the Algerian Sahara are as follows:

- **Shelter capacity:** The following chart shows Algeria's shelter capacity for various years:

Table 1: Shelter capacities in Algeria (2015-2020)

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Shelter capacity	6363	4912	9284	4775	5895	2996

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Traditional Industry's statistics

From the chart above, we note that Algerian desert shelter capacities are constantly fluctuating. This reflects the beginning of interest in desert tourism and the various natural, cultural and historical fundamentals that attract many local and foreign tourists and thus the need to provide them with shelter capacities to reflect this on important incomes that can effectively contribute to financing local development in the southern regions of Algeria. However, the figures are declining in the following years, especially in 2020, to 2996, which is explained by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the sector as a whole and in all countries of the world.

- **Evolution of the number of tourists:** The following chart shows the development of the number of tourists in the Algerian desert in different years:

Table 2: Number of tourists in Algeria (2015-2020)

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Residents	373218	597132	837112	143300	240927	418127
Foreigners	50416	5067	50217	87125	23501	85712
Total	877234	103140	339130	014326	264428	275140

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Traditional Industry's statistics

We note from the above chart that the total number of tourists residing in the Algerian Sahara has been steadily declining, with approximately 877,234 tourists in 2015 but decreasing in a striking manner in the years following. This is explained by the State's neglect of the tourism and

logistics services that serve the sector, in addition to the lack of a real and clear strategy by the governing authorities to promote this sector.

The lack of political will had adversely affected the sector and further deteriorated it, since there is no adequate infrastructure and no modern tourist facilities with weak hotel capacity, its lack of diversity and its weak transportation and communications network compared to what is being developed in the rest of the world's deserts, in addition to the absence of strategies for marketing tourism products and the inability to commercialize the destination of the Algerian Sahara, especially at the international level to attract foreign tourists, as well as a lack of qualification and professionalism of employees in establishments, tourism services and hotels.

It may also be noted that the number of residing tourists far exceeds foreigners, reflecting the continuing deteriorating situation of desert tourism in Algeria, as a result of the change of foreign tourists' destination owing to the precarious conditions in the country, the high prices of tourism services and the poor quality of tourism supply in the presence of attractive competitive markets, as well as the travel difficulties and the lack of visa facilities.

4.2.Mechanisms for the development of Algeria's desert tourism sector:

Many States, including Algeria, rely on desert tourism to support economic growth and diversify sources of income. Their promotion directly affects society's standard of living and its cultural and civilizational level. Therefore, the role of desert tourism has emerged as an effective tool for economic, social and cultural development as a result of its contribution to:

- Provide hard currency to the state and take advantage of currency conversion differences.
- Create new jobs and contribute to the fight against unemployment.
- Increase income and improve the balance of payments not only by the amount of tourists' expenditure but by the so-called "economic multiplier", because tourism investments lead to a series of investments that contribute to increasing income.
- Encourage investment, diversification and orientation of national capital towards new enterprises.

- Attracting foreign capital to invest in the tourism sector (construction of hotels, touristic villages... etc.).
- Promotion and development of other services to assist the tourism sector.
- Exploitation of natural resources and using them in different ways.
- Take advantage of the tourist payments received by the State for the granting of visas to enter the country.
- Increased daily expenditure of tourists for tourism services (basic and secondary) and expenditure on demand for productive goods and services for other economic sectors.
- Restoring the workforce's strength as a result of the comfort and recreation provided by desert tourism.
- Improving communities' standard of living and developing their lifestyle.
- Achieving cultural and civilizational communication and strengthening relations among peoples and granting access to other cultures and civilizations.
- Preservation of national historical monuments, customs and traditions, promotion of traditional handicrafts and enrichment of cultural heritage. (Chiraz & Dalila, 2013, pp. 73-74)

- Procedures for the promotion of desert tourism in Algeria:

As part of the promotion of the tourism sector in Algeria, the Government has announced the adoption of a national strategy for the period up to 2025, which involves more professional monitoring of the rehabilitation of tourism infrastructure in the southern provinces. The Algerian Government has allocated 2 billion dinars for the rehabilitation of public touristic hotels in the provinces of Adrar, Ghardaïa, Tamanrasset, Illizi, Ouargla, Laghouat, and the establishment of tourism expansion zones in the provinces of Ghardaïa and Tamanrasset.

The Finance Act 2009 also includes stimulus measures for investment, including an 80% reduction in the price of land allocated for tourism investment in the South, as well as a 5.4% reduction in the interest rate applied to bank loans for project completion.

Desert tourism in the Tassili region is a top priority, given its importance for foreign tourists. The region's tourism development scheme includes the construction of desert-style hotels, the completion of many tourist villages, including one in Janet, as well as additional legal protection for national Parks in Ahaggar and Tassili, and the protection of tourist areas in old oases threatened by anarchic construction. Within the framework of the Tourism planning for 2030, which opened the way for radical changes in thinking and action to revitalize the tourism sector in Algeria, a number of material and non-material fundamentals have been identified, a program of action has been established for the development of the desert tourism product and its compatible projects, and the opening of many pathways for tourist sites. In addition to the restoration of ancient K'sors, the resurrection of popular cultural heritage and the establishment of 10 information and tourism guidance offices, including Illizi office and a planned office for Janet, with a view to eliminating the weakness of communication and working to polish Algeria's touristic image abroad to emulate the models in other countries that made progress in this area. Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism is currently adjusting a roadmap through a tourism promotion workshop to market Algerian tourism products and publicize desert tourism as well as the organization of exploratory sessions for Algerian journalists and participation in national and international exhibitions. Tourism officials in Algeria predict that desert tourism incomes can double in the coming years if we successfully promote the Algerian Sahara on the list of tourist destinations in the main market that have enormous possibilities for exporting tourists mainly in Western Europe, the Middle East and China. (Ilyes & Soriya, 2016, pp. 65-66)

- Algeria's Comprehensive National Strategy for the Promotion of Desert Tourism:

Algeria has adopted a national strategy for the promotion and development of desert tourism commensurate with the nature and specificity of the desert areas. It has also begun to rehabilitate tourism infrastructure in the southern provinces, which have been affected during the security crisis by the decline in the number of foreign tourists and the State's lack of interest in hotel maintenance.

- Preparation and modernizing hotels in the southern region to upgrade desert tourism:

Hotels were established in the south in accordance with the Tourism Development Scheme under the supervision of the State Investment Company, Hotels and Tourism. The latter initiated a broad plan for the rehabilitation of public hotels in the southern Algerian provinces, including: Timimoun, Taghit, Beni Abbas, Bechar, Aïn Sefra, Ghardaïa, Biskra and Tamanrasset. The project will also be implemented to build six pilot tourist villages that meet all applicable conditions and standards in tourism. These projects will be achieved in the first phase in Janet and Illizi, where two pilot villages meeting all applicable conditions will be built. The construction of these villages requires supporting them with various entertaining activities, sports facilities, recreation and shops, as well as environmental care, the use of renewable energies, the treatment of contaminated water and the removal of waste in order to preserve the biodiversity of desert areas. All these projects will provide more than 20 thousand job positions.

- Providing incentives to invest in desert areas:

The State has provided stimulus to tourism investments, particularly in the Hoggar and Tassili region, which is rich by its natural, cultural and civilizational fundamentals; for their promotion and inclusion in the global market to attract tourists from all over the world and the development of specialized frameworks in the field of desert tourism and service improvement, such as shelter capacity and technology listing in addition to supporting tourism promotion and marketing given the importance of developing tourism adapted to desert diversity and preserving the environment, the need to remedy the current gap in Algerian desert tourism in order to enter the world market. (Saadi & Laalem, 2016, pp. 94-95)

5. The Reality and Prospects of Tourism in the province of Tamanrasset

5.1.Introduction to the province of Tamanrasset:

- Introducing the Province of Tamanrasset: The city of Tamanrasset dates back six hundred thousand years in which the primitive man emerged and built an ancient civilization, culminating in the Algerian

desert. The drawings and stone inscriptions that preserve the region's history attest to this. This city represents today the richest open-air museum of prehistoric arts, UNESCO classified the National Park of Ahaggar as the preserved world heritage. It is one of the world's largest Park for its concealment of natural wealth and successive different human civilizations that have made it a destination for tourists and a transit area for different civilizations and communities (Malik & Sabah, 2016, p. 121).

Tamanrasset was promoted to a province in the 1974 administrative division and currently has 07 districts and 10 municipalities, and is considered a province with a low population density especially given its vast area (Basma, 2017-2018, p. 139).

- **Tamanrasset geography:** Tamanrasset in the Algerian urban context, barely classified among the middle-sized city class, this city is the capital of Ahaggar, one of the arid areas of the desert (Belkacem, 2013, p. 03). The province of Tamanrasset, in the far south of Algeria, is located about 2,000 km from the capital, Algiers, its geographical location has made it in the heart of the world's largest deserts. The province has an area of 557.906 km, representing a quarter of Algeria's area. Bordered from the north by Ghardaïa province, from the north-east by Ouargla province, from the east by Illizi province and finally by Niger and Mali from the South, along a border strip of approximately 1,200 km. (Mouhamed, 2014-2015, p. 02).

- **Tamanrasset Map:**

Figure 1: Map of Algeria showing the location of Tamanrasset



Source:

https://tenes.info/nostalgie/TAMANRASSET/Carte_geographique

5.2. Tourism types in Tamanrasset

- **Cultural tourism:** This type is based on visits to historical monuments and sites such as Tinhinane Shrine, K'sors, drawings, stone inscriptions and monuments along with various cultural activities such as Taffist, Spring Day, Imzad, Tindi and Tinhinane Festivals, as well as celebrations of a religious nature such as Ziarat Daghmoli and sabeen in Ain Salah, and celebrations for foreign tourists on the occasion of end-of-year holiday.

- **Ecotourism and natural tourism:** It took the form of touristic session across various landscapes such as mountains, dunes and valleys, as well as the highlands of the Tahat Wakarakar mountains and reaching the peak of the Assekrem to enjoy the most beautiful sunrise and sunset, after which tourists limp on the valleys and small lack and may meet wild animals present in the area such as gazelles, mouflons and rabbits.

- **Sports tourism:** This tourism brings those who are fond of mountain-climbing, car rally and motorcycles, along with the Hoggar marathon, which was launched in 2006, as well as camel racing.

- **Hiking tourism:** tourists depend on commuting in air-conditioned buses equipped with so-called "dormitories-buses" that roam the Sahara.

- **Exploratory tourism:** It attracts highly cultured tourists and researchers in history and ancient civilizations, requiring the provision of highly educated translators in archaeology and history, which is what the region lacks.

- **Touristic tours and sessions:** It is the most performed in Al-Hoggar. It is a touristic session that starts from a spot to get back to it. The start is from Tamanrasset. This type is widely proposed by all tourist agencies. Some sessions arrive to Illizi, Adrar and the southern border of Mali and Niger, and rely on four-wheel drive cars or on the camelback. (Bakhti & Bahyani, 2020, p. 168).

- Tourism fundamentals in the Province

The tremendous touristic destinations of the province of Tamanrasset constitute an important asset for the dedication of a privileged touristic area, which remains in need of further efforts to value it, allowing it to be given a

wider space to enhance its status and upgrade its destination as a tourist hub. (Bakhti & Bahyani, 2020, p. 167). These fundamentals are as follows:

5.2.1.Natural fundamentals:

- **Location:** The Tamanrasset province site is a strategic location for tourism activity. It is a gateway for tourists from European countries to the depths of the black continent, because Algeria is a link between the continents of Africa and Europe. (Mustapha & Emhamed, p. 310).

- **Weather:** (latitude 22 degrees, 48 north, longitude 5 degrees, 27 east, height 1362 meters), where a desert climate prevails and the average temperature in the evening is 13 degrees summertime, 29 degrees with the recording of heat paradoxes or extreme cold as summer tropical rains in the months of August and September.

- **Terrain:** Consisting of plains and plateaus above 2000 and mountains such as Tahat Summit 2918 m, Ilman 2760m, Assekrem 2728m.

- **Vegetation:** Vegetation consists of more than 300 plant species, used for healing such as Artemisia, Taberkat, etc., and for pastoral purposes.

5.2.2. Historical, cultural and religious fundamentals:

- **Historical fundamentals:** The province contains archaeological sites attesting to the existence of man from the Paleolithic Age to modern times. These include the Tuareg Queen Tinhinane Shrine, which dates back to the 5th century, the K'sar of Ibn Mestane, located in the Soro area and built between 1916-1918. The Silt Casbah in the Silt District, Bajouda K'sar in In Saleh, Father Foucault Temple in the Assekrem Area, Tamekssart Falls and the Fossil Forest.

- **Cultural fundamentals:** The region is characterized by many cultural festivals and events, including: Assihar, an economic cultural and tourist event held from January to February. Also, there is Taffsit Festival, a tourist cultural event held during March and February. Finally, the cultural festival of Amazigh song and music which is a tourist cultural festival held during December.

- **Religious fundamentals:** There are many religious Ziarat that attract tourists: Ziarat Daghmoli, Ziarat Moulay Hassan, Ziarat Moulay Abdullah, Ziarat Sabeen Saleh... etc. Each of which has a specific month.

5.2.3. Traditional handicraft: The province of Tamanrasset is known for its exuberant diversity in traditional handicrafts: traditional ornamental industry such as anklets and bracelets, leather handicrafts such as bagpipe and tent, pottery handicrafts such as pots, wood handicrafts such as decorative boxes, as well as traditional clothing handicraft characterized by embroidery and color making it highly popular among tourists.

- **Infrastructure:** Tamanrasset contains 2556km of land roads, 2121km of which are national roads and 430km are provincial roads, and three airports, including one international located in the provincial capital and two inland airports located in Ain Saleh and In Guezzam.

It also has an enormous capacity for accommodation and reception since there are 07 hotels and 16 camps in addition to 82 tourist agencies, not to mention that it includes many touristic associations, including three tourist offices: The Local tourism office of Tamanrasset, the Local Tourism Office of Ain Saleh, and the Local Tourism Bureau of Inger. (Malik & Sabah, 2016, pp. 122-125).

5.3.Obstacles and tourism prospects in the province of Tamanrasset

5.3.1.The main obstacles to tourism activity in the province of Tamanrasset:

- The expansion of the southern border strip with the States of Mali and Niger, and the difficulty of controlling and monitoring the border, makes the province of Tamanrasset receive continuing waves of illegal migrants, thus putting the city under several social problems and scourges.

- Some animal species, especially deer and bighorn sheep, suffer persistent and illegal hunting, which threatens them with extinction.

- The suspension of Fogarras was accompanied by the demise of several areas of palm oases and thus a loss of agricultural and touristic activity.

- The loss of the area's architectural identity due to the introduction of a semi-collective, storied housing pattern that is alien to the area's environment.

- The sharp rise in air fares in recent years has deprived the province of several inland tourists.

- The promotion of tourism offer in the region is carried out through narrow and limited-scale operations by tourism agencies active in the province, while the vast media outlets are not effectively exploited, which explains the stereotypical and traditional picture of tourism demand in the province.

5.3.2. Mechanisms for the development of tourism activity in the province of Tamanrasset: In order for tourism to take its true place in the province of Tamanrasset, some necessary mechanisms must be applied, including:

- Cracking down the phenomenon of illegal migration suffered by the province's neighboring African States on its southern border;
- Diversification of the province's tourism activities through the development of hot springs and their exploitation in medical tourism.
- Inventory of stone inscription sites and rock drawings scattered in the province and allocation of each site with a technical card containing detailed information about it.
- To restore the skeleton of Queen Tinhinane at the Bardo Museum in the capital to its place of origin, in order to give greater archaeological value to the current location of the funeral shrine of this Queen.
- The restoration and rehabilitation of the K'sors and ancient Kasbah because of their architectural and historical value.
- The need to preserve the distinctive architectural character of the desert areas in each of the province's structures.
- Strengthening and encouraging craftsman in various traditional handicrafts, as well as establishing educational centers for such trades.
- Reconsider the current form of tourist tours by approaching local residents so as to benefit all segments of the province's population rather than remaining confined to the tourist agency alone.
- Encouraging Arab tourism in the province and encouraging the participation of tourism agencies in various national and international exhibitions;
- Using the various media outlets to promote tourism and focus on sensitizing residents to the importance of preserving the assets. (Mustapha & Emhamed, pp. 318-322).

5.3.3. Tamanrasset tourism development planning 2030:

As part of the tourism development planning, the province of Tamanrasset has received a tourism planning scheme 2030 which is part of the National Planning Plan; since the achievement of its 2015 General Report was completed after several stages, beginning with a comprehensive diagnosis of the territory to determine its location and then identify the appropriate strategy and streamline the plan of action. The General Report consists of four parts:

- **Part I: Status of premises, prospective diagnosis:** This phase aims to determine the main location through a comprehensive diagnosis aimed at: the outcome of spatial, geographic, historic, cultural, social, economic and environmental realities, as well as to identify current regional organization, study the components of the tourist supply, identify current and future customers and identify strengths and weaknesses.

- **Part II: Development scenario, progress prospects and tourism preparation strategies:** Two scenarios for development and progress were presented at this stage based on the results of the diagnosis process at the first stage, the first scenario is based on the balancing of external and national flows, and the second is based on the preference and prioritization of domestic tourism. Each scenario is based on proposals and estimates of the development processes flows, shelter and economic returns in the short term 2015, average 2020, and long 2030.

- **Part III: Adopted strategy:** In line with the authorities' orientation to encourage local tourism, the second scenario was adopted to prioritize domestic tourism. Accordingly, five dynamics were proposed: Work to value the territory as a tourist destination in order to increase its attractiveness and competitiveness, develop tourism hubs through investment rationalization, apply a quality scheme to support the attractiveness of the territory, coordinate joint sectoral cooperation, and implement an operational funding scheme to support tourism activities and investments.

- **Part IV: Province tourism preparation strategy and implementation program:** This part includes the action plan consisting of a material and financial program for the completion of programmed

operations and projects, as well as the streamlining of a schedule for the follow-up and evaluation of achievement according to a set of indicators, and also proposed technical data sheet for all proposed programs and projects. (Basma, 2017-2018, pp. 173-175).

6. CONCLUSION

The Algerian State had to find alternative solutions in diversifying its economy in line with its assets. Desert tourism emerges as one of the most important strategic options. Our study shows that the Algerian Sahara has the potential and qualifications to become an important touristic hub at the regional and global levels. But it has not been able to seize a prestigious place on the global tourism map compared to other countries. The province of Tamanrasset is one of the world's most important models and largest open-air museum, which is characterized by unique natural and cultural fundamentals and a formidable living system, that was why it was entitled to be a praised touristic destination and a destination for Algeria's desert tourism.

The results can be reviewed as follows:

- The Algerian Sahara is endowed with a variety of tourist destinations and qualifications that make it a world destination in the future. It is rich in landscapes, cultural and historical monuments and other assets.
- Desert tourism received attention only after the adoption of the Tourism Planning, which translates its orientation towards the development of the sector by valuing its natural, historical and cultural capabilities and placing it in the service of a non-hydrocarbon economy.
- Desert tourism is an economic source for the southern regions.
- The province of Tamanrasset is the best mirror reflecting the realities and possibilities of desert tourism in Algeria.

In the light of the findings, the following suggestions may be made:

- The restoration and rehabilitation of the province's ancient K'sors, due to their architectural and historical value.
- The need to strengthen and encourage craftsman carrying out various traditional handicraft in the province, given the importance of traditional manufactures in tourism activity.

- To exploit the various media in the process of promoting tourism in the province, creating websites and supplying them with all information related to tourism activity;
- The need to preserve the distinctive architectural character of the desert areas in all facilities in the province.
- Taking advantage of the experiences of the leading countries in the field of desert tourism.

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