



The Digital Tourism Industry and its Role In Achieving Tourism Development in Algeria

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Abstract:

This research paper seeks to reveal how the digital tourism industry contributes to achieving sustainable tourism development in Algeria, by defining the concepts of the digital tourism industry and sustainable tourism development, examining the legal, institutional, strategic and technical mechanisms of the digital tourism industry in Algeria, and assessing the extent to which it contributes to achieving sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: digital tourism industry, tourism development, digital transformation.

Introduction:

In the context of current technological developments, the digital tourism industry is the largest and most significant global industry; it is considered a fundamental activity due to its direct impact on social and economic sectors. As a result, digital tourism has grown rapidly to become the world's greatest social and economic force, and an effective tool for achieving sustainable tourism development.

The digital tourism industry serves as a means of achieving physical and psychological well-being through the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate the enjoyment of diverse and enriching tourist destinations.

Furthermore, it contributes to improving the environment and providing comfort to citizens, whilst also helping to promote and highlight the cultural aspects of different peoples.

This paper therefore aims to highlight that a focus on the digital tourism industry can achieve sustainable tourism development; accordingly, we pose the following research question: How can the digital tourism industry contribute to achieving sustainable tourism development?

To answer this question, we adopted a descriptive approach, which helped us to examine the concepts of the digital tourism industry and tourism development, and we employed an analytical approach to understand how the digital tourism industry contributes to achieving sustainable tourism development.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the study, we adopted a two-part framework comprising three main themes: the first theme focused on the concept of the digital tourism industry and tourism development; the second theme examined the contribution of the digital tourism industry to achieving sustainable tourism development; whilst the third pillar was devoted to examining ways of harnessing the digital tourism industry to achieve tourism development in Algeria within the current digital environment.

1. The concept of the digital tourism industry and tourism development.

Today, the world is witnessing a marked interest in the subject of the digital tourism industry and its role in achieving tourism development, particularly in light of the new and accelerating digital transformations. Consequently, the need and importance of clarifying the fundamental concepts have increased; this study forms an integral part of this interest by addressing the concept of the digital tourism industry and the concept of tourism development

1.1 The Concept of the Digital Tourism Industry:

Tourism is a cultural, economic and organisational activity involving the movement of individuals to a country other than their own and their stay there for a period of not less than twenty-four (24) hours for any purpose other than paid employment within the host country.

Tourism is a phenomenon of our time, arising from the growing need for rest and a change of scenery, for an appreciation of the beauty of nature and the deepening of this appreciation, for a sense of joy and pleasure in staying in a region with its own distinctive character, and also from the need for increased communication, particularly between different peoples and communities within the human race.

Furthermore, the International Academy of Tourism considers that 'tourism' is a term applied to leisure travel; on this basis, it encompasses the range of activities organised to facilitate such leisure travel, and constitutes an industry that works collectively to meet the needs of tourists.¹

¹ - Houari, Miraj and Mohamed Suleiman Jerdat, 'Tourism and its Impact on Global Economic Development: The Case of the Algerian Economy'. Al-Bahith Journal. Issue 1, 2004, p. 22.

The tourism industry comprises public and private organisations that collaborate in the development of products and the marketing of goods and services to serve the needs and well-being of tourists; the term ‘tourism’ is generally used to describe travel and reflects certain instances of the increasing expansion of leisure travel undertaken by those referred to as tourists.

No other industry in the world has enjoyed such popularity and growth as the tourism industry did in the final years of the last century, when global tourism expenditure reached significant levels and some tourist destinations around the world began to generate substantial revenue from tourism.¹

Against the backdrop of the current digital transformation, tourism has evolved in a way never seen before, driven by an increase in leisure time, rising living standards and levels of education, and the expansion of rapid transport networks. The current digital era is regarded as the ‘**age of digital**’ tourism, characterised by a tremendous expansion in tourism activity through the use of digitalisation. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in the use of digitalisation by tourism establishments, major hotel chains, and public and private tourism organisations, as well as travel agencies and others, to deliver their services and promote tourism in their respective countries.²

Digital tourism helps to provide the necessary information required by various stakeholders in the tourism sector through the use of the internet. Furthermore, the digitalisation of tourism also contributes to reducing the costs of tourism services, such as bookings and payments, enabling tourism organisations and service providers to keep pace with the demands of tourism supply and demand, both nationally and internationally.³

1.2 The Concept of Tourism Development and Its Components:

There are numerous definitions that have been put forward for the term ‘tourism development’, most of which are characterised by their diversity and variation; this has made it difficult to arrive at a comprehensive definition, a characteristic common to most terms. However, this does not prevent us from attempting to present some definitions that seek to encompass all the various aspects of the term. Before addressing the definition of tourism development, we must first address the definition of tourism.

Tourism, as defined by the German scholar Freuller Guyer, is: ‘a phenomenon of our time that stems from the growing need for rest and recreation, an appreciation of the

¹ - Murad, Zayed. ‘Tourism as an Industry in the National Economy’. International Symposium on: The Economics of Tourism and its Role in Sustainable Development, University of Biskra, 9–10 March 2010, p. 4.

² - Abdelkader, Ouinan, ‘Tourism in Algeria: Potential and Obstacles (2000–2025) in the Context of the New Tourism Strategy of the SDAL 2025 Master Plan for Tourism Development’, PhD thesis, University of Algiers, 2013, p. 7.

³ - Sakik Malek, Ghattas Abdelghafar, ‘Solutions for Digitalisation in the Tourism Sector in Algeria: Electronic Applications and Platforms as a Case Study’, The Economic Researcher Journal, University of Bordj Bou Arreridj, Vol. 11, No. 01, December 2024, p. 471.

beauty of nature, and a sense of joy and pleasure derived from staying in areas of special natural beauty.’

The United Nations Conference on International Tourism and Travel, held in Rome in 1963, recognised that tourism is ‘a social and human phenomenon based on the movement of an individual from their place of permanent residence to another location for a temporary period of not less than twenty-four hours and not more than twelve months, for the purposes of recreational, therapeutic or historical purposes; and tourism, like a bird, has two wings: outbound tourism and inbound tourism.’¹

It comprises several elements, the most important of which are:²

- Tourist attractions, which include natural features such as landforms, climate, wildlife and forests, as well as man-made features such as parks, museums and historical archaeological sites.
- Transport in its various forms: land, sea and air.
- Accommodation, whether commercial, such as hotels, or private, such as guesthouses and holiday flats.
- Supporting facilities of all kinds, such as tourism advertising, tourism administration, handicrafts, banks and others.
- Infrastructure services such as water, electricity, telecommunications, the internet and digital tourism applications, amongst others.
- Development implementing bodies, as tourism development is usually carried out by the public or private sector.

2. The contribution of the digital tourism industry to achieving tourism development in Algeria.

Algeria is one of the countries with significant tourism potential that could make it a destination for most of the world’s tourists. Since independence, Algeria has worked to put in place a series of measures and policies aimed at developing the tourism sector and achieving tourism development, the most important of which are:³

2.1 The tourism industry from a legal perspective:

The Algerian legislature has enacted a series of laws aimed at establishing and regulating the tourism sector, most notably the Law on the Sustainable Development of Tourism No. 03-01, issued on 17 February 2003, which aimed to create a favourable and stimulating environment for the development of the tourism sector; Another law relates to the use of beaches: Law No. 03-02 of 17 February 2003, which sets out the general rules governing the use and exploitation of beaches by tourists, with the aim of enhancing,

¹- Houidi Abdeljalil, ‘The Interactive Relationship between Ecotourism and Sustainable Development’, *Journal of Social Studies and Research – University of El Oued*, Issue 09, December 2014, pp. 212–213.

²- Nour al-Din Hormuz, ‘Tourism Planning and Tourism Development’, *Tishreen University Journal of Scientific Studies and Research, Economic and Legal Sciences Series*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2006, p. 17.

³- Si Hamdi Abdelmoumen and Soufi Alaa al-Din, ‘Tourism Development as an Alternative to Reducing Oil Dependence in Algeria’, *Al-Ma’arif Journal of Legal and Economic Sciences*, Vol. 03, No. 01, 2022, pp. 96–97.

protecting and making the most of them. Subsequently, Law No. 03-03, dated 17 February of the same year, was enacted, relating to tourism expansion zones and tourist sites, followed by the Investment Development Act, as amended and supplemented by Decree No. 06-08 of 15 July 2006, in addition to the designation of 25 June as National Tourism Day by a decision dated 29 May 2011.

2.2 The tourism industry at an institutional level:

Algeria has worked to establish institutions aimed at promoting and developing tourism, the most significant of which is the Ministry of Tourism and Traditional Industries, which was established by Decree No. 474-63 dated 20 December 1963, which defined the tasks entrusted to it; The National Tourism Office was also established by Decree No. 88-214 dated 31 October 1988, as amended by Decree No. 92-402 dated 31 October 1992; its purpose was to draw up tourism promotion programmes and ensure their implementation. Subsequently, the National Agency for Tourism Development was established by Executive Decree No. 98-70 of 21 February 1998, alongside the National Institute for Tourism Studies, which was established by Executive Decree No. 98-94 of 10 March of the same year, Subsequently, in 1994, Executive Decree No. 94-39 of 25 February was issued, establishing the National Committee for the Facilitation of Tourism Activities.

2.3 The Tourism Industry from a Strategic Perspective:

Algeria has also drawn up a Strategic Plan for Tourism Development 2025 (SDAT), which identifies and classifies tourist areas across the country and specifies the type of tourist activity in each. This plan also serves as the reference framework for tourism development in Algeria. This plan reflects the public authorities' commitment and vision for tourism development, with the aim of making Algeria a tourist destination. It also sets out how the state ensures the tripartite balance of social justice, economic efficiency and environmental sustainability across the whole country. The plan aims to:

- Promote an economy that is less reliant on hydrocarbons and organise a tourism offering geared towards the domestic market.
- Establishing an international reputation for Algeria as a tourist destination and elevating it to the status of a premier Mediterranean tourist destination.
- Contribute to the creation of new jobs, thereby ensuring long-term support for the country's overall economy.
- Boosting other economic sectors through cooperation and coordination with the strategies of those sectors, given that the 2025 SDAT Master Plan forms part of the 2025 SNAT National Strategy.
- To continuously develop Algeria's image and define a new concept of tourism that enables its integration into the global tourism market.

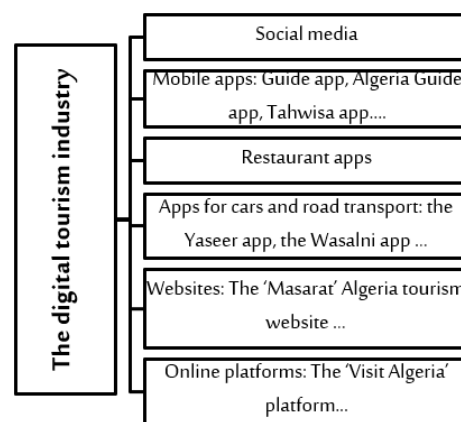
In addition to establishing premium tourist hubs and building premium tourist villages, it also aims to implement a tourism quality plan, strengthen public-private partnerships and develop a tourism financing plan. Algeria has also implemented the 'HORIZON 2025' project, which aims to develop Algerian hotels to ensure their ongoing

compliance with the standards set by the World Tourism Organisation (*UNWTO*), thereby improving their ratings and attracting both domestic and international tourists.¹

2.4 The Digital Tourism Industry from a Technical Perspective:

The use of digitalisation in Algeria's tourism sector is on the rise, with the aim of achieving sustainable tourism development through the use of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, mobile applications and social media.

Figure 1 illustrates the most important digital tools and applications available and in use within the tourism sector.



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: Sakik Malek, Ghattas Abdel-Ghaffar, op. cit., pp. 472, 475.

3. Ways to revitalise the digital tourism industry to achieve tourism development in Algeria within the current digital environment:

To revitalise the tourism sector in Algeria, stakeholders in the sector must implement projects to develop the tourism sector and apply a sustainable tourism development strategy to revitalise the sector by harnessing the vast and diverse tourism potential of our country, and work towards the digitalisation of the tourism sector to bring it into line with ongoing digital transformations. This requires government policies to be directed towards improving the tourism investment climate and developing and training tourism human resources in the field of digitalisation, and opening the door for the private sector to contribute, as the tourism industry bears a greater responsibility than the public sector for attracting tourists and improving the quality of facilities and services.²

Algeria is now capable of revitalising and digitising the tourism sector; as the natural aspect is already in place through the abundance of historical sites and natural resources, the most significant of which are the desert landscapes; these are major tourist

¹- Si Hamdi Abdelmoumen and Soufi Alaa al-Din, op. cit., pp. 96, 97.

²- Hani Nawal, 'The Competitiveness of the Tourism Sector in Arab Countries', Al-Bahith Journal, Mohamed Khider University, Biskra, Issue 13, 2013, pp. 77, 78.

attractions and give the country a comparative advantage in this sector, but a comparative advantage alone is not enough; the state must implement and encourage digitalisation and make it a strategic objective.¹

Citizens should also be made aware of the importance of digital tourism as a future-oriented industry that must be revitalised and developed, given that it is one of the key drivers of comprehensive development; digital tourism serves to increase national income and meet the country's foreign exchange needs.²

The Algerian government must also focus more on investing in human resources through training, upskilling and, where necessary, reskilling, with the aim of delivering and managing development programmes, particularly in the tourism sector, as well as increasing the volume of investment directed towards the tourism sector.

Given the state's current focus on supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, an economic strategy specific to these organisations should be developed to serve the economy; that is, they should be adapted to meet economic needs. Consequently, these organisations should be guided towards investing in the digital tourism sector with a view to promoting its growth.³

Summary:

Algeria has sought to develop the digital tourism industry by implementing numerous reforms aimed at upgrading the tourism sector, improving its performance and making it one of the key sectors contributing to the advancement of the national economy and the diversification of income beyond the hydrocarbons sector. However, in practice, a number of challenges have arisen that have prevented the genuine and effective implementation of the principles of the digital tourism industry, which requires the following:

- Eradicating digital illiteracy and promoting an information technology culture within the tourism sector.
- Providing suitable working conditions in the tourism sector.
- Providing sufficient opportunities for employees in the tourism sector to learn the skills required to use new technologies.
- Cooperation between the state, various civil society organisations and the private sector on the digitalisation of the tourism sector.

To draw on leading national and international experiences in the digital tourism sector.

¹- Zerzar Al-Ayashi and Madahi Murad, 'Desert Tourism in Algeria as a Sustainable Tourist Destination: Reality and Prospects', *Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi* magazine, Issue 433, March 2015, p. 61.

²- Masoudi, Rachida, 'Drivers of Development in the Context of the Search for Independent Sources of Funding for Comprehensive Development', Algerian Journal of Globalisation and Economic Policies, University of Algiers 3, Issue 06, 2015, p. 79.

³- Si Hamdi Abdelmoumen, Yousfi Alaa al-Din, op. cit., p. 101.

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