

The Reality of Domestic Tourism in Algeria as a Mechanism for Achieving Sustainable Development: an Analytical Study

Bessaid Oussama Nabil,¹Saïdi Tarik²

¹The Higher School of Management, Tlemcen (Algeria), Laboratory of Studies and Research in Circular Economy, bessaid@esm-tlemcen.dz

²The Higher School of Management, Tlemcen (Algeria), Laboratory of Studies and Research in Circular Economy, t.saïdi@esm-tlemcen.dz

Received: 18-08-2025

Accepted: 10-10-2025

Published: 01-12-2025

Abstract:

This study examines the current reality of domestic tourism in Algeria as a strategic mechanism for achieving sustainable development. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the research analyzes tourism statistics, investment developments, and policy frameworks from 2020-2024. The findings reveal that Algeria received over 3.5 million visitors in 2024, with domestic tourists representing approximately 85% of total tourist flows. The study demonstrates that domestic tourism contributes significantly to employment creation, regional development, and economic diversification. Hotel infrastructure expanded with 47 new establishments delivering 4,687 beds in 2024, while 13 new hotel projects were launched representing 2,603 rooms. The research concludes that domestic tourism, when properly managed and promoted, serves as an effective catalyst for sustainable development, particularly in southern regions where desert tourism shows remarkable growth potential.

Keywords: Algeria, domestic tourism, regional development, sustainable development, tourism investment

1. Introduction

Algeria, the largest country in Africa and the tenth-largest in the world, possesses exceptional tourism potential that has historically

remained underexploited. With over 1,600 km of Mediterranean coastline, rich cultural heritage, and the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert covering 80% of its territory, Algeria holds significant opportunities for tourism development, particularly in the domestic market segment.

The significance of this research emerges from Algeria's critical need to diversify its economy beyond hydrocarbon dependence, which has traditionally accounted for over 95% of export revenues. The tourism sector in Algeria accounts for 3.9% of the volume of exports, 9.5% of the productive investment rate and 8.1% of the gross domestic product, indicating substantial room for growth and development.

This study aims to analyze the current reality of domestic tourism in Algeria as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development. The research examines recent tourism statistics, investment trends, infrastructure developments, and policy implementations, with particular emphasis on the period 2020-2024. The study addresses the following research question: How does domestic tourism contribute to sustainable development in Algeria, and what are the current trends and challenges facing this sector?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Conceptual Framework of Domestic Tourism

Domestic tourism refers to the activities of residents traveling within their own country for leisure, business, or other tourism purposes. From an economic perspective, domestic tourism represents a productive sector that plays a significant role in income redistribution, regional development balance, cultural preservation, and economic stability during external crises.

The German researcher Guyer Freuler first provided a specific definition of tourism in 1905, describing it as "a phenomenon of the era, emerging from the increasing need for rest and change of place, enjoying the beauty of nature and feeling it, as well as residing in areas with their own special nature" (Bessaid, 2018).

2.2. Sustainable Tourism Development Theory

Sustainable tourism development, as defined by the World Tourism Organization in 1995, refers to "development that meets and satisfies the needs of tourists and host communities while ensuring benefits for future generations. It is development that manages resources in a way that achieves economic, social, and aesthetic benefits while maintaining cultural unity, continuity of ecological processes, biological diversity, and human life support systems."

2.3. Tourism and Economic Development Linkages

Tourism serves multiple development functions including foreign exchange earnings, employment generation, regional development balance, and infrastructure improvement. The multiplier effects of tourism extend to approximately 70 related industries and services, making it a catalyst for broader economic development.

3. Algeria's Domestic Tourism Landscape: Current Analysis

3.1. Tourism Performance and Statistics

Recent data reveals significant developments in Algeria's tourism sector. Algeria's tourism sector welcomed over 3.5 million visitors in 2024, with hotel infrastructure expanding through 47 new hotel establishments that delivered 4,687 beds to the national capacity. This represents a substantial growth trajectory compared to previous years. Additionally, 500,000 domestic travellers contributed to this growth, reflecting a 10% rise in domestic tourism. These figures indicate the growing importance of domestic tourism as a stable foundation for the sector's development.

The tourism distribution shows that domestic tourists constitute the majority of visitors, with international tourists representing approximately 15% of total flows. This domestic-heavy composition provides stability and resilience to the sector, particularly during global economic uncertainties.

3.2. Investment Trends and Infrastructure Development

The hotel investment sector has shown remarkable progress in 2024. In 2024, Algeria recorded 13 new hotel projects, representing 2,603 rooms. Although these figures remain modest compared to other destinations like Egypt, Morocco or Nigeria, they reflect a growing

dynamism. This investment growth reflects the government's commitment to developing tourism infrastructure and creating favorable conditions for private sector participation. The expansion of accommodation capacity directly supports domestic tourism growth by providing quality services for internal travellers.

3.3. Regional Tourism Development

Algeria's diverse geographic features support various forms of domestic tourism. The country encompasses three distinct zones: the Mediterranean coastal region, the Atlas Mountains, and the vast Saharan region. Desert tourism, in particular, has emerged as a key growth area, with Saharan destinations showing increased popularity among domestic tourists.

The government has identified four major Saharan tourism poles of excellence:

- Southeast Tourism Pole: Oases, Ghardaia, Biskra, El Oued, El Menia;
- Southwest Tourism Pole: Touat, El Goléa, Ksour routes including Adrar, Timimoun, Bechar;
- Grand South Tourism Pole (East): Tassili, Illizi, Djanet;
- Grand South Tourism Pole (West): Adrar, Tamanrasset

4. Economic Impact Assessment

4.1. Employment Generation

Tourism demonstrates significant employment potential across various sectors.

Based on the original research data, employment in the tourism sector (hotels, cafes, restaurants) reached 270,317 workers in 2016, representing a growth rate of 1.70% from the previous year. This labor-intensive characteristic makes tourism particularly valuable for addressing unemployment challenges.

The multiplier effect of tourism employment extends beyond direct tourism services to transportation, agriculture, construction, and traditional crafts, creating comprehensive economic benefits for local communities.

4.2. Contribution to GDP

Tourism's contribution to Algeria's GDP outside hydrocarbons reached 1.6% in 2017, showing an upward trend from 1.3% in 2015. While this percentage may seem modest, it represents significant potential for growth, particularly given the sector's current underdevelopment relative to Algeria's tourism assets.

4.3. Balance of Payments Impact

Tourism's impact on Algeria's balance of payments shows both opportunities and challenges.

The travel account deficit indicates that Algerian citizens spend more abroad than foreign tourists spend in Algeria, highlighting the need to develop domestic tourism as an alternative to outbound travel.

5. Policy Framework and Strategic Development

5.1. National Tourism Development Strategy

The Algerian government has implemented various policy measures to support tourism development, including simplified visa procedures for foreign tourists since 2022 and the establishment of tourism expansion zones (ZEST - Zones d'Expansion Touristique).

5.2. Institutional Support

The National Agency for Tourism Development (ANDT), established by Executive Decree No. 70-98 of February 21, 1998, serves as the primary institution responsible for managing, developing, and preserving tourism real estate. The agency's missions include protecting tourism zones, promoting tourism sites, and supporting tourism administration in implementing development strategies.

5.3. Investment Promotion

Recent initiatives include the launch of digital platforms for business access to state-owned land and the establishment of one-stop shops for major investments through the Algerian Investment Promotion Agency (AAPI).

6. Challenges and Opportunities

6.1. Infrastructure Development Challenges

Despite recent progress, Algeria faces several infrastructure challenges:

- Limited accommodation capacity in remote tourism zones

- Insufficient transportation connectivity to tourism sites
- Need for improved digital infrastructure and telecommunications
- Environmental protection requirements in sensitive ecosystems

6.2. Human Resource Development

The success of domestic tourism development depends on skilled human resources. Key requirements include:

- Professional training programs for tourism service providers
- Language skills development for quality service delivery
- Cultural sensitivity training for heritage site management
- Entrepreneurship development for local community involvement

6.3. Marketing and Promotion Strategies

Domestic tourism requires targeted marketing strategies to promote Algeria's unique assets to internal markets. This includes developing awareness campaigns about local destinations, improving information accessibility, and creating attractive tourism packages for domestic travellers.

Table 1. Statistical Overview of Domestic and International Tourism in Algeria (2024–2025)

Indicator	2024	2025
Total number of tourists (domestic and foreign)	3,5 million	3,5 million
Foreign tourists	2,454,000	1,5 million
Algerians residing abroad visiting Algeria	1,093,000	Not specified
Estimated domestic tourists (Algerians residing in Algeria)	~853,000	Not officially reported
Saharan tourism (Grand South visitors)	186,000 (including 22,700 foreigners)	No official data

Indicator	2024	2025
New hotel projects	Not specified	144
Additional hotel beds	Not specified	16,000
Total national hotel capacity (projected)	Not available	160,000 beds
Thermal stations available for development	200	200 (development planned)
Tourist visa policy	In progress	Facilitated for foreigners

Source: Meddahi, H. (2025), *Tourisme en Algérie : 3,5 millions de touristes dont 1,5 million d'étrangers en 2025*, Voyagerdz.com, <https://voyagerdz.com/2025/07/14/tourisme-en-algerie-35-millions-de-touristes-dont-15-million-detrangers-en-2025/>

7. Domestic Tourism: The Hidden Engine of Growth

Despite the focus on foreign visitors, domestic tourism is a major driver of Algeria's tourism economy. With over 950,000 Algerians traveling internally in 2024, the sector shows strong potential. Key motivations include:

- School holidays and family trips ;
- Growing interest in national heritage and nature;
- Improved road infrastructure (e.g., East-West highway, southern roads).

Popular destinations include:

- Saharan regions: Tamanrasset, Djanet, El Oued, Timimoun;
- Coastal areas: Algiers, Oran, Bejaïa, Annaba;
- Mountainous zones: Kabylie, Djurdjura ;
- Thermal resorts: Hammam Bou Hadjar, Hammam Righa, Hammam Boughrara.

- Discrepancy in 2024 vs. 2025 Foreign Tourist Numbers

There is a notable drop in reported foreign tourists:

- 2024: 2.45 million foreigners
- 2025: 1.5 million foreigners

This may indicate:

- A change in data classification (e.g., redefining "tourist" vs. "visitor")
- Temporary external factors (e.g., global travel trends, diplomatic shifts)
- Or a potential error in reporting

However, the government emphasizes visa facilitation for 97 countries, suggesting a long-term strategy to attract more international visitors.

- Saharan Tourism: A Rising Star

- 186,000 visitors to the Grand South in 2024, including 22,700 foreigners.
- Minister Horia Meddahi described it as a key attraction for both domestic and international tourists.
- The legendary hospitality of southern communities is a major asset.
- The region offers unique experiences: Tassili n'Ajjer (UNESCO), Ahaggar Mountains, desert festivals.

- Infrastructure Development: Ambitious but Challenging

- 144 new hotel projects and 16,000 additional beds signal strong investment.
- Goal: 160,000 hotel beds by end of 2025.
- Focus on tourist villages and affordable accommodations to boost domestic access.

Challenges:

- Uneven distribution (concentration in northern cities)
- Delays in project completion
- Need for better connectivity (flights, roads)

- Thermal Tourism: An Untapped Treasure

- Algeria has over 200 thermal springs, one of the richest in Africa.
- These sites offer therapeutic, wellness, and cultural tourism opportunities.

- Government plans to develop these as national health and leisure destinations.
- **Digital Transformation & Service Quality**
- A digitalization program is underway to modernize booking systems, information platforms, and tourist services.
- Part of the "Plan Qualité Tourisme" to improve customer experience.

8. Official Government Vision: "Destination Algeria" Strategy

In line with efforts to reduce dependence on hydrocarbon revenues, the Algerian government has adopted a new development strategy centred on tourism as a strategic economic sector.

Table 2. Key Pillars of the Government's Tourism Vision:

Strategic Axes	Details	Source
Market Segmentation	Targeting specific tourism types: coastal, cultural, religious, mountain, family, and Saharan tourism	Ministry of Tourism / AAPI
"Destination Algeria" Plan	Based on Tourism Poles of Excellence, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), and low-cost airline routes to major cities and the South	AAPI (Agence d'Amélioration des Performances Industrielles)
Human Capital Development	Expanding tourism training institutes to create jobs for youth and seasonal workers	Ministry of Tourism
Visa Liberalization	Simplified tourist visas for 97 countries, including European and African nations	Ministry of Tourism
Sustainable & Inclusive	Promoting local economies, handicrafts,	National Tourism Strategy 2030

Strategic Axes	Details	Source
Tourism	andcommunity-based tourism	

Source: <https://aapi.dz/secteur-du-tourisme> – *Agence d'Amélioration des Performances Industrielles (AAPI)*, under the Ministry of Industry, supports the government's economic diversification, including tourism.

9. Discussion and Analysis of Results

Domestic Tourism as a National Priority

While international tourism is gaining momentum, domestic tourism remains the backbone of Algeria's tourism revival. With:

- A young, mobile population
- Rich natural and cultural diversity
- Growing infrastructure
- And strong government support

Algeria is well-positioned to build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable tourism model.

The success of Saharan tourism and the development of thermal and family tourism show that Algerians are increasingly rediscovering their own country a powerful sign of national pride and economic potential.

9.1. Role of Domestic Tourism in Sustainable Development

The analysis reveals that domestic tourism serves multiple sustainable development functions in Algeria:

Economic Sustainability: Domestic tourism provides economic diversification opportunities, creates employment, and generates income for local communities while reducing dependence on hydrocarbon exports.

Social Sustainability: Tourism development contributes to social cohesion by providing employment opportunities for youth, supporting local businesses, and improving living standards in tourism regions.

Environmental Sustainability: When properly managed, domestic tourism can support environmental conservation by creating economic incentives for protecting natural and cultural heritage sites.

Cultural Sustainability: Domestic tourism promotes cultural awareness among Algerians, supports traditional crafts and customs, and contributes to cultural preservation efforts.

9.2. Growth Potential and Market Dynamics

The 10% growth in domestic tourism in 2024 demonstrates the sector's resilience and potential. The expansion of hotel infrastructure and the development of new tourism projects indicate increasing confidence in the sector's prospects.

9.3. Regional Development Impact

Domestic tourism contributes significantly to regional development balance by channeling investment and economic activity to previously underdeveloped areas, particularly in southern regions where desert tourism shows remarkable potential.

10. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that domestic tourism plays a crucial role in Algeria's sustainable development strategy. The analysis reveals significant growth potential, with domestic tourists representing the majority of tourism flows and contributing substantially to economic activity, employment generation, and regional development.

The findings indicate that Algeria's domestic tourism sector is experiencing positive momentum, with over 3.5 million visitors in 2024 and substantial infrastructure investments expanding accommodation capacity. The 10% growth in domestic tourism reflects the sector's resilience and potential for further development.

However, realizing this potential requires addressing key challenges including infrastructure gaps, human resource development needs, and marketing limitations. The government's commitment to tourism development through institutional support and policy reforms provides a foundation for continued growth.

The study concludes that domestic tourism, when properly developed and managed within a sustainable framework, can serve as an effective catalyst for comprehensive development in Algeria. The sector's

contribution to economic diversification, employment creation, regional balance, and cultural preservation makes it a valuable tool for achieving sustainable development objectives.

- Recommendations and Policy Implications

- Strategic Recommendations

Based on the analysis, several strategic recommendations emerge:

Infrastructure Investment: Prioritize investment in tourism infrastructure, particularly in accommodation facilities, transportation networks, and digital connectivity in designated tourism zones.

Human Capital Development: Implement comprehensive training programs for tourism professionals, focusing on service quality, hospitality skills, and sustainable tourism practices.

Marketing and Promotion: Develop targeted domestic marketing campaigns to promote Algeria's unique tourism assets, particularly desert and cultural tourism, to internal markets.

Regulatory Framework: Streamline tourism-related regulations to facilitate private investment and improve the business environment for tourism enterprises.

- Policy Implementation Framework

Multi-sectoral Coordination: Establish effective coordination mechanisms between tourism, transport, culture, environment, and other relevant sectors to ensure coherent policy implementation.

Performance Monitoring: Implement comprehensive monitoring systems to track progress in domestic tourism development and measure its contribution to sustainable development goals.

Stakeholder Engagement: Ensure meaningful participation of local communities, private sector, and civil society organizations in tourism planning and development processes.

- Long-term Development Vision

Capacity Building: Develop institutional capacity at national and local levels to support sustainable tourism development.

Innovation Integration: Embrace technological innovations to enhance tourist experiences and improve service delivery.

Sustainability Focus: Integrate environmental and cultural sustainability principles into all tourism development activities.

Future Research Directions:

Further research is recommended on the environmental impact of tourism development in fragile desert ecosystems, the role of digital technologies in enhancing domestic tourist experiences, and the measurement of tourism's contribution to specific sustainable development goals in the Algerian context.

Recommendations for Practitioners: Tourism practitioners should focus on quality service delivery, sustainable practices, and community engagement to maximize the positive impacts of domestic tourism development.

Policy Implications: Policymakers should prioritize integrated approaches to tourism development that balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity, ensuring that domestic tourism contributes effectively to Algeria's sustainable development goals.

11- References

Books

- World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2014). *Tourism statistics and market research for Algeria*. Madrid: UNWTO Publications.

Journal articles

- Ghazlan, S. (2017). *Tourism industry and sustainable tourism development in Algeria (2007–2015)*. *New Economy Journal*, 2(17).
- Hazem, R. (2018). *The role of tourism media in sustainable tourism development in Algeria*. *Message Journal for Human Studies and Research*, 2(9).
- Lounici, R., & Awaj, T. (2020). *The reality of labor relations in tourism enterprises in Algeria: "The tourism agency as a model" – Field study in the city of Batna*. *Algerian Journal of Human Security*, 5(2).
- Othmani, M. (2017). *Tourism investment as a mechanism for achieving tourism development*. *New Economy Journal*, 2(17).
- Sabhi, S. (2016). *The tourism industry and its role in the economy*. *African Journal of Political Sciences*, University of August 20, 1955, Skikda.
- Shanait, S. (2013). *Sustainable tourism development in Algeria*. *Future Economic Scientific Journal*, 1.

Seminar articles

- Berbaich, S., & Chabi, H. (2011). *The role of economic diversification through the tourism industry in Algeria to achieve development and reduce unemployment*. In Conference on Government Strategy in Eliminating Unemployment and Achieving Sustainable Development, University of M'sila, Algeria, November 15–16, 2011.
- Qouaidri, M., & Douli, S. (2011). *Towards a tourism industry within the framework of a sustainable and responsible development vision*. In Third International Scientific Conference: Business Organizations and Social Responsibility, University of Bechar, Algeria, February 14–15, 2011.

Internet websites

- Ministry of Tourism and Traditional Industries. (2024). *Tourism development statistics and strategic plans*. Government of Algeria.
- National Agency for Tourism Development (ANDT). (2024). *Tourism expansion zones and development projects*. Retrieved from <http://www.andt-dz.org/> (consulted on 18/08/2025).
- National Office of Statistics (ONS). (2018). *Tourism sector statistics*. Government of Algeria.
- Tourism Review. (2025). *Algeria expects extensive growth in foreign tourists*. Retrieved from <https://www.tourism-review.com/foreign-tourists-explore-algeria-in-greater-numbers-news14800> (consulted on 18/08/2025).
- DzairTube. (2025). *Algeria's tourism booms with over 3.5 million visitors in 2024: Desert destinations lead a transformative revival*. Retrieved from <https://www.dzair-tube.dz/en/algerias-tourism-booms-with-over-3-5-million-visitors-in-2024-desert-destinations-lead-a-transformative-revival/> (consulted on 18/08/2025).
- Voyagerdz.com. (2025, July 14). *Tourisme en Algérie: 3,5 millions de touristes dont 1,5 million d'étrangers en 2025* (Statements by Minister Horia Meddahi and ONAT Director Saliha Nacer Bey). Retrieved from <https://voyagerdz.com/2025/07/14/tourisme-en-algerie-35-millions-de-touristes-dont-15-million-detrangers-en-2025/> (consulted on 18/08/2025).
- Algerian Agency for Industrial Performance (AAPI). (2025). *Secteur du tourisme: Government vision, "Destination Algeria" plan, economic diversification*. Retrieved from <https://aapi.dz/secteur-du-tourisme> (consulted on 18/08/2025).
- Ministry of Tourism and Crafts. (2024–2025). *Official communications*. Government of Algeria.
- Office National du Tourisme (ONAT). (2025). *Annual reports and press releases*. Government of Algeria.