

The Reality of Domestic Ecotourism in Algeria under the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030 for Enhancing Sustainable Development – An Analytical Study of Sétif Province, Algeria

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Abstract. This study examines ecotourism in Sétif Province, Algeria, within the framework of the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030, with a focus on the role of ecotourism as an internal economic and development driver. Ecotourism has gained increasing significance as one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism sector, contributing to sustainable development by supporting local economies, generating employment opportunities, and preserving natural environments as well as cultural heritage. The study aims to analyse the current status of domestic ecotourism in Sétif Province, evaluate the effectiveness of national policies, identify the main challenges hindering tourism development, and propose practical recommendations for enhancing the sector. The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted, based on official and field sources. The study assessed tourism investment projects, development programmes, and the legal framework regulating tourism activities in the province. The findings indicate that ecotourism in Sétif Province constitutes an important component for achieving sustainable economic and social development; however, the sector continues to face several challenges, including weak institutional coordination, insufficient awareness campaigns, and shortcomings in certain tourism infrastructures.

Keywords: Domestic tourism, ecotourism, tourism diagnosis, sustainable development.

Introduction:

The tourism sector has received considerable attention, as it is considered one of the most significant sectors and fundamental pillars contributing to the development of national economies worldwide. It plays an important role in generating gross domestic product, providing foreign currency revenues, and creating employment opportunities and job positions. Consequently, tourism represents one of the major supporting sectors for achieving sustainable development objectives, particularly in numerous developing countries. Furthermore, tourism promotes cultural exchange and strengthens relations among societies due to its distinctive feature of mobility, which constitutes a fundamental element in the formation and development of the tourism phenomenon. Ecotourism is considered a specific form of travel centred on the appreciation and enjoyment of natural environments. This type of tourism is regarded as one of the fastest-growing segments

within the global travel and tourism industry, with an annual growth rate estimated at 25–30% according to some tourism industry experts. According to estimates by the World Tourism Organization, ecotourism represented between 15% and 20% of the global tourism industry in 2018. Other estimates suggest that nearly one-third of international travellers can be classified as ecotourists or adventure tourists seeking experiences in natural areas.

1.1. Research Problem:

To address this topic, the following research question is formulated:

Has the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030 contributed to strengthening the role of ecotourism as an internal economic and development driver in Sétif Province?

1.2. Research Hypotheses:

To examine the proposed research problem, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

- Strengthening investments and developing environmentally sustainable tourism infrastructures contribute to achieving sustainable development in the region.
- Weak institutional coordination and limited awareness campaigns reduce the effectiveness of domestic ecotourism development.
- Algeria is working towards promoting domestic ecotourism through the development of a national ecotourism strategy that serves as an operational framework for action in the coming years.

1.3. Research Significance:

The importance of this study lies in the following aspects:

- It highlights a strategic sector that represents a potential future economic alternative to reduce dependence on oil revenues.
- The study provides a realistic diagnosis of the environmental tourism resources and constraints in Sétif Province.
- It contributes to assessing the effectiveness of national policies (SDAT 2030) and provides practical recommendations for decision-makers.

1.4. Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study are summarised in the following points:

- Analysing the current state of domestic ecotourism in Sétif Province within the framework of the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030.
- Identifying the challenges and constraints and proposing practical solutions and recommendations to support the advancement of the sector.

5.1. Methodology and Tools:

The study adopted the descriptive-analytical approach, in which data were collected from official sources (books, articles, etc.) and field sources (the Directorate of Tourism of Sétif Province). The collected data were subsequently analysed to diagnose the current situation and derive conclusions with practical implications. The study relied on a case study approach, considering Sétif Province as an applied model due to its distinctive environmental resources and tourism characteristics.

2. Concept of Tourism

The term tourism, from a linguistic perspective, refers to travelling and wandering. The expression “sāḥa fī al-ard” denotes moving across and exploring the earth. In English, the term “to tour” refers to travelling around or moving from one place to another, whereas the term “tourisme” is a modern expression that was initially used to describe the travel of English students across Europe for educational purposes (Kouach, 2011, p. 8).

The concepts of tourism have become numerous and diverse due to the variety of its forms and the different scientific disciplines that examine this phenomenon through analysis and study. Tourism, as a phenomenon, is defined as a temporary movement undertaken by a considerable number of individuals from different countries, whereby they leave their permanent places of residence and travel to other destinations, either within the borders of their own country (domestic/local tourism) or to other countries (international/foreign tourism). Generally, tourism represents an activity practised by an individual or a group of individuals involving movement from one location to another or from one country to another for the purpose of fulfilling a specific objective, visiting a particular site or several destinations, or engaging in leisure and recreational activities. This activity leads to exposure to other civilizations and cultures, the acquisition of diverse knowledge and experiences, and interaction with different peoples and nationalities (Ghrabia, 2012, pp. 102–103).

2.1. Concept of Domestic Tourism:

Domestic tourism is defined as the tourism activity practised by citizens of a country within its various regions and cities that contain tourist attractions or sites of interest. In other words, domestic tourism is an activity that takes place within the geographical boundaries of a country and does not extend beyond its territory. It is also defined as tourism movement occurring within the borders of the same country, carried out by its residents and citizens, where individuals travel from their place of residence to another location within the same country for purposes of leisure, recreation, and tourism. This movement involves travelling a distance of at least 80 kilometres from their homes or places of residence within the same country, for a period ranging from no less than 24 hours to no more than one year, before returning to their original place of residence (Hairash & Masmous, 2021, p. 62).

Domestic tourism contributes to the urban and economic development of countries and enhances their tourism potential by promoting archaeological sites, tourist attractions, and cultural, religious, and recreational destinations. It also supports regional development by strengthening natural, economic, social, and human resources, including infrastructure (roads and various essential facilities), economic sectors, traditional occupations and industries, agricultural and food products, trade, transportation services, and other fields, in addition to cultural, religious, and artistic heritage. Furthermore, domestic tourism contributes to attracting investments in various tourism facilities and related sectors, as well as generating foreign currency revenues that enable countries

to better satisfy their external purchasing requirements (Ben Dridi, Mansour, Abdelkader, & Nasser, 2021, p. 48).

2.2. Concept of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is defined as the optimal long-term management of natural resources in a manner that meets economic and social requirements while preserving cultural integrity and environmental diversity. Accordingly, the benefits of sustainable tourism are utilised at the local level in harmony with the surrounding social and cultural environment. Sustainable tourism also seeks to satisfy the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. During the Global Conference on Sustainable Tourism organised by the World Tourism Organization and held in Spain in 1995, the Charter for Sustainable Tourism was launched, which included the following principles:

- Encouraging economic and social development and contributing to improving the living conditions of local communities;
- Directing tourism development revenues towards local communities through their associations;
- Supporting the management of natural and cultural heritage resources, which fundamentally involves preserving heritage for future generations.

3. Concept of Ecotourism:

Several definitions have been proposed for ecotourism, including:

- **Ceballos-Lascuráin's Definition (1985):** Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving travel to pristine and unpolluted natural areas with the objective of studying, appreciating, and enjoying these environments, while also benefiting from the cultural heritage of the regions in which these sites are located (Mohamed Abdelbaki, 2015, p. 7).
- **Definition of the World Wide Fund for Nature:** Ecotourism refers to travel to natural areas that have remained unaffected by pollution and whose ecological balance has not been disturbed, with the aim of enjoying landscapes, vegetation, wildlife, and the manifestations of past and present civilizations. This type of tourism is of particular importance for developing countries, as it constitutes a source of income while contributing to environmental conservation and promoting a culture and practices of sustainable development (Hanafi & El-Sharqawi, 2008, p. 37).
- **Definition of the World Tourism Organization:** Ecotourism encompasses all forms of tourism that ensure the preservation and continuity of natural, built, and cultural resources from environmental, social, and economic perspectives (Dabour, 2004, p. 16).

3.1. Types of Ecotourism:

Ecotourism has been classified into several types based on different criteria, factors, needs, and motivations that tourists seek to fulfil. Accordingly, ecotourism is practised in various forms, among the most important of which are the following (Berkoun & Kassimia, 2010, pp. 12–14):

- **Exploration Tourism:** This is considered one of the most significant and challenging forms of ecotourism, as it involves searching for the unknown and visiting unexplored or uninhabited areas to acquire new knowledge, verify uncertain information, or complete incomplete information. The natural environment represents a rich field for explorers seeking to conduct research, discover facts, and understand the various components of ecosystems, including living organisms, ecological systems, natural laws, and the customs and traditions of local communities within tourist destinations.
- **Recreational and Leisure Tourism:** This type of tourism aims to provide the relaxation necessary for restoring individuals' psychological and physical energy. Human beings require diversity and change in their lifestyles and activities to overcome daily routines and work-related pressures. This is achieved through visiting natural tourist sites and destinations located away from the noise and challenges of urban areas, enabling individuals to relax, rest, and enjoy recreational experiences.
- **Therapeutic Ecotourism:** This type of tourism involves travelling for physical or psychological treatment purposes or spending a period dedicated to recovery and rehabilitation. It includes visiting areas characterised by natural therapeutic resources used in the treatment of various diseases, such as mineral waters, hot springs, therapeutic mud, sunlight, seawater, and medicinal sands.
- **Wildlife Observation Tourism:** This form of tourism involves observing activities within natural wildlife environments, monitoring, tracking, and studying the lives of birds, wild animals, and reptiles in their natural habitats. It also aims to discover their characteristics, understand their behaviours, and examine how these organisms adapt to environmental changes. This activity is often motivated by curiosity, enjoyment, or the desire to develop and acquire knowledge.
- **Sports Tourism:** This type of tourism is associated with participation in sporting activities and takes various forms, including water sports practised along safe sandy coastlines, such as swimming, diving, boating, and other activities. It also includes ice skating and mountain climbing. This type of tourism attracts a significant number of tourists, both participants and spectators interested in attending and supporting sporting events.
- **Hunting Tourism:** This type of tourism is based on organised hunting activities conducted under the supervision of relevant authorities. It is regulated by measures aimed at protecting the environment and biodiversity through the conservation of endangered species, prohibiting hunting in restricted areas such as natural reserves, preventing hunting during breeding periods, and restricting the use of harmful hunting methods.
- **Seasonal Tourism:** This refers to tourism activities conducted during specific periods of the year in tourist areas characterised by favourable climatic conditions that distinguish them from other destinations. This type of tourism differs according to the season in which it occurs, such as summer tourism, which generally takes place in cold regions or coastal

areas, and winter tourism, which occurs either in warm regions for enjoying sunlight or in cold regions for participating in snow-related activities.

- **Ecotourism According to the Tourist Region:** This type of tourism is associated with the geographical location, natural features, landmarks, and topographical characteristics of tourist destinations. It varies from one region to another and includes coastal areas, deserts, oases, mountains, rural areas, villages, and other natural environments.
- **Domestic or Local Tourism:** This refers to tourism activities in which tourists travel within the geographical boundaries of their own country, with expenditures made using the national currency.
- **External or International Tourism:** This represents the movement of tourists across the borders of different countries and their temporary residence within those countries.
- **Ecotourism According to Accommodation and Residence Location:** In this type of tourism, accommodation facilities and residential locations play a significant role in attracting tourists. The more environmentally sustainable and healthy the accommodation environment is, the more attractive and effective the tourist destination becomes. This form of ecotourism includes several types, such as resort tourism, which is based on rural, mountain, or coastal resorts situated in quiet and attractive environments. It also includes motel and camping tourism, which represents an economical form of tourism targeting young people and individuals with moderate income levels, allowing them to spend summer and winter holidays according to appropriate tourism standards. Additionally, it includes fixed or floating hotel tourism, which is generally preferred by wealthy tourists seeking high-quality and costly services, where environmentally friendly hotels are typically small in size and accommodate a limited number of guests.
- **Cultural Ecotourism:** This is considered one of the most important traditional forms of ecotourism, where tourists seek to discover new aspects that enhance their knowledge and expand their intellectual perspectives through visiting different regions and examining the living conditions and characteristics of their populations. It also includes visiting cultural, historical, and archaeological sites and participating in cultural events. This contributes to interaction between tourists and diverse cultures, increasing awareness of cultural differences and promoting respect for cultural diversity.

3.2. Elements and Principles of Ecotourism:

The main elements of ecotourism can be presented as follows (Houidi, 2014, p. 217):

- Avoiding any disturbance to ecological balance resulting from human activities, particularly those generated by tourists and the pollution they may cause. This has contributed to establishing a new relationship between tourism and the environment as a whole, as well as between tourism and the concept of sustainable development. Although development is considered a means of improving human well-being, it has, in many cases,

become a factor contributing to the depletion of environmental resources, causing ecological damage, and generating pollution.

- Tourism contributes to highlighting the aesthetic values and characteristics of diverse environments worldwide. The cleaner and healthier the environment, the greater the potential for tourism growth and prosperity, making tourism an important means of environmental preservation.
- Achieving a balance between tourism and environmental considerations on the one hand, and economic and social interests on the other hand, as these constitute the fundamental foundations upon which tourism development is based.
- Biodiversity, environmental quality, and the conservation of rare and endangered species represent essential factors in promoting ecotourism. Therefore, environmental degradation must be considered a major limitation to tourism development opportunities.

3.3. Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development:

This section of the study addresses the concept of sustainable development. Although various definitions of sustainable development have been proposed, they generally revolve around similar principles and meanings, including the following:

- Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Media Production Center, 1428 AH, p. 40).
- According to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and based on Principle Three, sustainable development refers to: “Carrying out the development process in such a way that there is equitable growth in the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.” Principle Four, adopted by the conference, further emphasised that achieving sustainable development requires environmental protection to be an integral component of the development process and not a separate consideration (Sabri, 2006, p. 40).
- The Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines sustainable development as the management and conservation of the natural resource base, along with directing technological and institutional changes in a manner that ensures the fulfilment of present human needs (Moshist, translated by Bahaa Shaheen, 2000, p. 17).
- Some scholars consider that sustainable development is characterised by the following features:
 - The intended development does not aim to achieve continuous human progress only in specific locations and for a limited period; rather, it seeks to ensure progress for all humanity over the long term.
 - This development fulfils present needs without undermining the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.

- _ Living standards that exceed the basic level of human needs cannot be maintained when consumption patterns worldwide fail to consider the requirements of long-term sustainability.
- _ Needs, as understood by individuals, are shaped by social and cultural factors; therefore, sustainable development requires the adoption of values that promote consumption levels within environmentally sustainable limits (Nouzad, 2006, p. 103).

3.4. Objectives of Domestic Ecotourism:

The objectives of domestic ecotourism are diverse and include the following (Belbali, Belama, & Ben Alaria, 2018, p. 338):

- _ Increasing domestic tourism expenditure (revenues);
- _ Increasing the volume of domestic tourism activities;
- _ Enhancing the level of tourism awareness and culture within the country;
- _ Reducing dependence on outbound tourism and providing an alternative domestic tourism option;
- _ Strengthening measures and initiatives aimed at addressing tourism seasonality and achieving a more balanced distribution of attention among tourism areas within the country;
- _ Stimulating economic activity at the national level and enhancing integration among various economic sectors.

3.5. Components of Domestic Ecotourism in Algeria

The tourism potential of Algeria is characterised by significant diversity, which has contributed to the expansion and diversification of tourism activities. The most important components include:

- **Mountainous Landscapes:** Algeria is characterised by diverse geographical features and climatic conditions. The natural beauty of its mountain ranges, covered with various plant species and forests, provides attractive landscapes that constitute an exceptional tourism asset, particularly during the winter season when they offer opportunities for skiing activities. Mountainous areas also contain valuable tourism resources, in addition to remarkable natural formations, such as caves and caverns, which were naturally formed over ancient geological periods (Ben Noui & Ben Ziane, 2020, pp. 224–225).
- **The Desert:** The Algerian desert is considered the second-largest desert in the world due to its extensive area, covering nearly 2 million square kilometres. It contains a rich and diverse natural, cultural, and historical heritage, in addition to numerous oases that host various cultural and artistic celebrations and events annually.

Desert tourism represents a central component of the Algerian tourism product, as the Algerian Sahara includes five classified cultural parks: the Tassili Cultural Park in Illizi Province, the Ahaggar Cultural Park in Tamanrasset Province, the M'Zab Valley Cultural Park in Ghardaïa Province, as well as the cultural parks of the Saharan Atlas, Touat, Gourara, and Tidikelt. Each year, many Algerian visitors travel to Ahaggar and Tassili to experience the exceptional landscapes of Assekrem, renowned for its unique views and some of the most remarkable sunrises and sunsets

worldwide. Moreover, the Ahaggar region contains the highest mountain peak in Algeria, Mount Tahat of Atakor, which reaches an altitude of 3,003 metres above sea level.

- **Thermal Springs Resources:** Algeria possesses considerable potential in thermal tourism, with more than 282 thermal springs identified across the country, many of which have recognised therapeutic properties. In addition, 30 thermal stations have been established to accommodate thousands of visitors from different regions, including those seeking relaxation, leisure, and wellness experiences, as well as visitors pursuing specific therapeutic treatments.

Most of these stations are located in the northern regions of the country, while others are situated in desert areas. The state is currently working to modernise existing thermal facilities and encourage investment in the development of new stations to meet the growing demand from visitors and tourists seeking wellness and rehabilitation experiences.

- **Civilisational and Cultural Heritage:** The succession of different civilisations throughout Algeria's history has enabled the country to possess a rich cultural legacy and an extensive heritage inventory encompassing both tangible and intangible heritage. This heritage extends from prehistoric rock engravings found in Ahaggar and Tassili, dating back thousands of years, to the remains of ancient civilisations that have disappeared, as well as traditional crafts varying from one region to another and the narratives, legends, and poems that preserve the achievements and memories of previous generations (Ben Noui & Ben Ziane, 2020, p. 225).

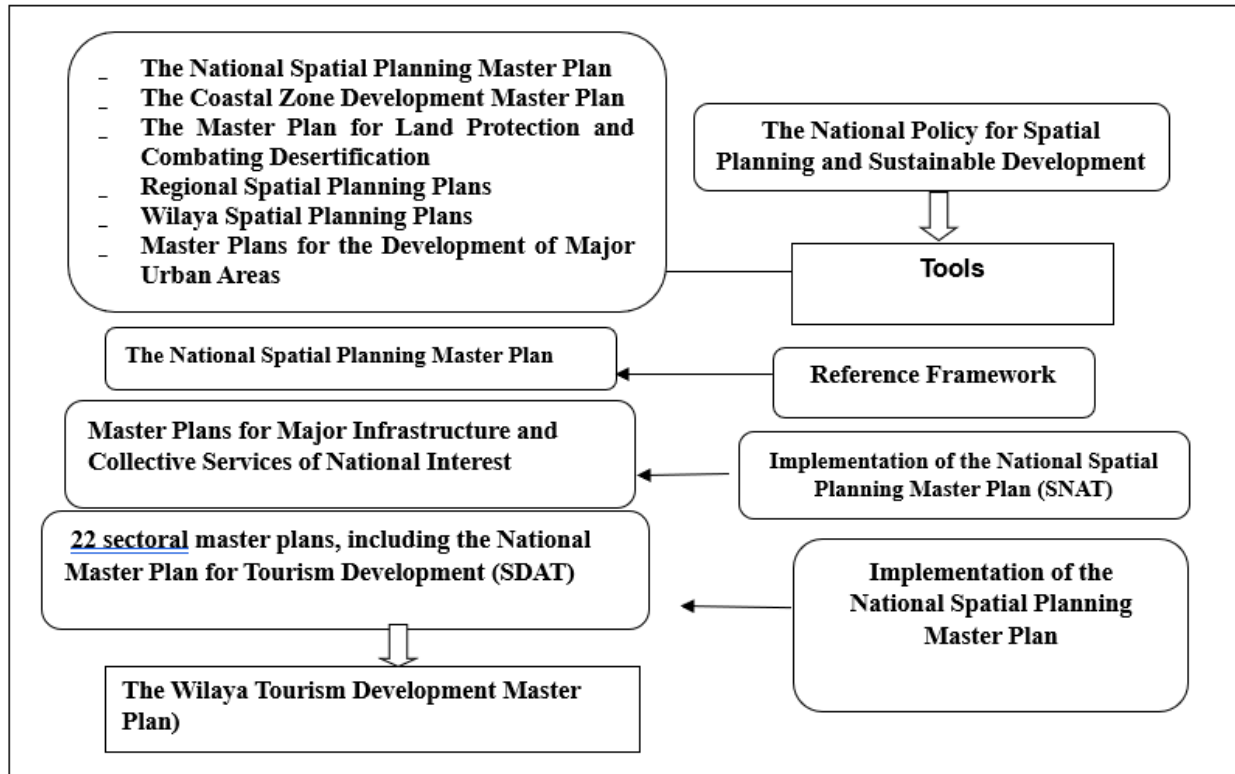
In addition to its intangible heritage, Algeria contains seven cultural sites classified by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites: the Al-Qal'a of Beni Hammad (1980), M'Zab Valley (1982), Djémila (1982), Timgad (1982), Tipasa (1982), Tassili n'Ajjer (1982), and the Casbah of Algiers (1992). Furthermore, the country includes approximately 1,000 classified cultural and historical sites and monuments recognised as part of the national heritage.

- **The Coastline:** The Algerian coastline extends over 1,600 kilometres along the Mediterranean Sea and includes numerous beaches that represent important tourism attractions for visitors, swimmers, fishermen, and practitioners of various water sports (Tourism Product, 2021).

4. Study Project of the Tourism Development Master Plan for Sétif Province for the Horizon 2030:

The legal and legislative framework governing tourism in Algeria, according to the Tourism Development Master Plan, can be illustrated through the following diagram:

Figure No. 01: Legal and Legislative Framework of Tourism in Algeria



Source: Directorate of Tourism of Sétif Province

The Tourism Development Master Plan for Sétif 2030 established ten objectives aimed at integrating the province into the national tourism development dynamic, transforming it into a distinctive tourism destination, and developing new dimensions of tourism supply (thermal tourism, business tourism, sports tourism, and event tourism), mainly through the following:

- Increasing tourist flows to reach 917,747 tourists (734,198 national tourists and 183,549 foreign tourists);
- Increasing accommodation capacity by developing a diversified accommodation supply reaching 20,115 beds, including 17,386 additional beds in terms of both quantity and quality by 2030, of which 12,513 beds are financed;
- Maximising local tourist arrivals by achieving approximately 3,670,988 annual overnight stays (covering all types of hotel accommodation), through attaining an annual growth rate of 83% in local tourism activity and improving the average duration of stay to reach four days;

- Expanding into new markets by introducing new tourism offers through the intensification of investment activities;
- Identifying areas of complementarity and synergy among various sectoral policies and promoting effective partnerships;
- Enhancing the Sétif tourism destination to increase its attractiveness and reinforce its regional, national, and international position;
- Strengthening marketing efforts and attracting the largest possible number of domestic tourists (future domestic tourism);
- Giving priority to quality standards in approved projects through supporting investors and providing technical and financial assistance;
- Preserving fragile cultural and natural heritage through the adoption of a sustainable tourism development approach;
- Developing a diversified tourism supply (low, medium, and high categories) to provide appropriate tourism products adapted to different tourism sectors and customer segments.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the implementation process of the study can be presented through four main stages (tasks):

- **Task One:** Assessment of the current conditions of tourist locations and sites;
- **Task Two:** Related to development perspectives and tourism planning strategies;
- **Task Three:** The adopted strategy represented by the establishment of the operational plan (action plan and project sheets);
- **Task Four:** The tourism development strategy of the province and its implementation programmes.

It should be noted that the Tourism Development Master Plan aims to guide all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector, whether public or private actors, in selecting investment options and orientations to be pursued, while promoting a balanced and sustainable dynamic for tourism development. In this regard, the present study focuses only on the main aspects related to the first and third tasks.

4.1. Strategic Diagnosis:

This involves diagnosing tourism activity across all its components (tourism diagnosis in Sétif Province). Within this framework, the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can be identified as follows:

• Strengths:

- The East–West motorway, the project for duplicating and modernising the national railway line crossing the province (through electric power and tramway infrastructure), three municipalities classified as mixed tourist municipalities (Sétif, Djémila, and Béni Fouda), and five other municipalities classified as thermal tourism municipalities (Hammam Guergour, Hammam Sokhna, Mezloug, and Ouled Tebben);

- Significant cultural heritage resources;
- Traditions and customs, including El Fantazia and equestrian performances;
- The province possesses nine thermal baths and an international airport;
- 1,882 hotel accommodation units;
- 40 hotels, including nine classified hotels;
- 146,000 tourists visited the province in 2010, including 6,000 foreign tourists.

• **Weaknesses:**

- The province has only one area available for tourism expansion, namely Hammam Guergour;
- The current image of the province does not support the desired development of this sector due to the presence of waste and garbage in tourist areas, including Roman archaeological sites and historical monuments;
- The absence of a well-established tourism image for the province, in addition to the limited capacity of rural areas to attract tourists;
- The hotel accommodation capacity remains insufficient in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Non-compliance with environmental guidelines at tourist sites by visiting groups;
- The concentration of most hotels in the city centre rather than in other areas, along with limited tourism awareness among several administrative institutions and broad segments of the population.

• **Possible Opportunities:**

These can be summarised as follows:

- The province's proximity to the sea (less than 40 km from its boundaries), as well as to the coastal cities of Béjaïa and Jijel, which represent among the most important seaside tourism destinations in Algeria and attract large numbers of tourists, particularly during the summer season. Consequently, the province and local residents can benefit from tourism revenues through renting houses or apartments to visitors from inland regions and provinces, especially in municipalities located in the northern part of the province;
- The ports of Béjaïa and Jijel represent significant opportunities for the economic development of the province due to their commercial and economic importance and their proximity to Sétif. They also provide additional opportunities for improving accessibility to the province at both national and international levels.

• **Threats:**

These can be summarised as follows:

- Strong competition in thermal tourism due to the presence of two major thermal tourism centres, one located in Guelma Province and the other in Biskra Province. Both centres are situated in eastern Algeria and have achieved national and international recognition. Competition also exists in the field of cultural heritage and tourism resources, particularly

from the archaeological site of Timgad, located in a neighbouring province of Sétif, which competes with the Djémila archaeological site;

- The construction of two motorway projects: the first linking the port of Djen Djen (Jijel) with El Eulma and subsequently with the East–West motorway, and the second connecting Sétif with Barika and then Batna. These projects may generate negative impacts on ecotourism activities and natural sites crossed by these infrastructures.

4.2. Adopted Strategy

Within the framework of implementing the tourism development project of the province under the National Spatial Planning Master Plan, five strategies were formulated to achieve the targeted objectives. These strategies include enhancing the value of the destination to improve its attractiveness and competitiveness, rationalising investment through the establishment of new tourism poles, developing partnerships among all stakeholders and concerned actors, supporting financing mechanisms, and improving the quality of environmental tourism services through the implementation of a tourism quality plan.

In this context, the stakeholders responsible for implementing the tourism project focused on 15 strategic axes and 31 operational measures aimed at addressing the challenges related to the integration of Sétif Province into the national tourism framework through the following fourteen poles:

- The structuring pole of Sétif (business tourism and urban tourism);
- The structuring pole of Hammam Guergour (thermal tourism);
- The structuring pole of Hammam Sokhna (thermal tourism);
- The structuring pole of Djémila (cultural tourism).

The complementary poles include:

- Two complementary poles (El Hamma and Ouled Tebben) dedicated to thermal tourism;
- Seven complementary poles (Béni Ourtilane, Bouandas, Aïn Abessa, Aïn Oulmane, Aïn Sebt, Babour, and Boutaleb) dedicated to green tourism and mountain tourism;
- One complementary pole (El Eulma) dedicated to trade and business tourism.

The First Strategy: Enhancing the value of Sétif Province's destination to increase its attractiveness. The main axes associated with this strategy include:

- Establishing and consolidating the foundations of the Sétif destination around the fourteen proposed tourism poles;
- Enhancing the destination by developing a distinctive identity and character through the implementation of a marketing plan focused on creating marketable tourism products, as well as adopting communication and promotion strategies;
- Improving accessibility routes leading to tourism areas;

- Updating tourism information and guidance systems and ensuring greater coherence among them;
- Protecting and developing the province's cultural heritage by promoting the integration of Sétif's natural and cultural heritage;
- Developing year-round tourist flows through the adoption of a modern policy for continuous territorial animation and promotion.

The Second Strategy: Tourism development through investment rationalisation. The main axes related to implementing this strategy include:

- Developing tourism activities around tourism poles;
- Developing and promoting tourism sectors and products by focusing on cultural tourism, thermal tourism, urban tourism, and city/business tourism; considering different tourism routes and products; introducing new specialised offers, such as children's tourism; and developing tourism-related basic infrastructures through the preparation of tourism expansion areas and tourist sites to improve accommodation capacity and enhance regional attractiveness;
- Protecting and developing accommodation and catering infrastructures, while improving nearby recreational and leisure facilities.

The Third Strategy: Implementing a tourism quality plan. The main axes associated with this strategy include:

- Strengthening the overall attractiveness of the region through the adoption of a quality management plan;
- Supporting the upgrading of accommodation facilities by ensuring compliance with standards, modernising existing structures, and expanding their capacities;
- Creating a new major tourism offer through the development of targeted tourism project portfolios, while establishing a strategy for stakeholder training and enhancing professional capacities.

The Fourth Strategy: Establishing a tourism financing plan and mobilising financial resources, whether through private investment or public funding (the State). In this regard, the State introduced the need to unify standards in order to encourage investment through:

- Reducing loan interest rates for investors through banking institutions;
- Providing substantial tax and para-tax incentives;
- Leasing real estate properties and land without requiring open tenders;
- Reducing rental and exploitation costs related to properties and assets;
- Providing partial or full compensation for expenses;
- Reducing employers' social security burdens to facilitate youth employment.

It can be observed that this tourism financing strategy is based on financing three major projects:

- **The First Project:** Consists of restoring value, renovating, and adapting all existing completed facilities and structures;
- **The Second Project:** Consists of financing various required developments, including road networks and other infrastructure networks, green spaces, water reservoirs, dams, and lakes;
- **The Third Project:** Consists of financing new constructions and facilities, including cultural, commercial, service, health, and tourism facilities, accommodation structures, and recreational areas.
- **The Fifth Strategy: Implementation plan.** Five main tasks can be identified for managing the Tourism Development Master Plan of Sétif 2030:
 - Ensuring the initiation, planning, and monitoring of the Tourism Development Master Plan of Sétif 2030;
 - Continuously enriching and updating the plan throughout its implementation process;
 - Ensuring that projects remain aligned with the objectives of the master plan and evaluating their effectiveness in relation to market opportunities and the territorial potential of the province;
 - Defining the main responsibilities and operational guidelines of the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industry;
 - Developing communication networks among tourism directorates throughout the country.

The coordination and guidance mission for implementing the plan is centred around two main entities. The first is the Tourism Development Council (CDT), which represents an effective mechanism for facilitating tourism activities. The advisory committee supports the executive committee and provides consultations regarding all measures implemented under the chairmanship of the Governor of Sétif Province. It includes officials from outside the Directorate of Tourism who represent other directorates (environment, transport, public works, culture, water resources, forestry, etc.). Representatives from various sectors participate in meetings and provide support to the SDAT body, which represents the actual implementation authority responsible for supervising its application.

The importance of the facilitation committee, which is essentially the Tourism Development Council, lies in promoting shared and coordinated visions regarding the implementation and completion of tourism projects. The second entity is the implementation body, which consists of officials from the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industry. Its responsibilities include:

- Supporting tourism projects and ensuring their compliance with SDAT guidelines;
- Organising working meetings (at least four meetings annually);
- Making final decisions regarding the projects to be implemented.

4.3. Assessment of Completed and Remaining Tourism Investments under the Tourism Development Master Plan of Sétif 2030:

The evolution of tourism investments can be presented in the following table:

Table No. 01: Development of Tourism Investments (2013–2021)

2013	Total number of investment projects: 37 projects. •Number of beds: 4,404 beds. •Planned employment opportunities: 1,471 jobs. •Investment amount: 12,918,109,455.34 DZD. The projects were distributed as follows: Projects under implementation: 21 projects; Suspended projects: 7 projects; Projects not launched pending construction permits: 8 projects; Completed projects: 1 project.
2014	➤ Total number of projects: 45 projects, with a capacity of 4,871 beds, the creation of 1,778 jobs, and a projected total cost of approximately 14,682,792,760.30 billion DZD, distributed as follows: ➤ Projects under implementation: 27 projects; ➤ Suspended projects: 6 projects; ➤ Projects not launched pending construction permits: 8 projects; ➤ Projects not launched (due to financing, administrative, and other problems): 2 projects; ➤ Completed projects: 2 projects.
2015	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 57 projects, with a capacity of 5,808 beds, 1,981 employment opportunities, and a total cost of 23,849,544,296.24 DZD, distributed as follows: – 32 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 3,470 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,113 jobs, and a financial cost of 11,402,216,160.34 DZD – 20tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 1,502 beds, potential employment opportunities of 619 jobs, and a financial cost of 9,453,732,649.00 DZD; – 2suspended projects, with a capacity of 92 beds, potential employment opportunities of 89 jobs, and a financial cost of 288,581,486.00 DZD; – 3completed projects, with a capacity of 744 beds, potential employment opportunities of 160 jobs, and a financial cost of 2,705,014,000.00 DZD.
2016	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 66 projects, with a capacity of 5,989 beds, 2,139 employment opportunities, and a total cost of DZD, distributed as follows:

	- 41 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 4,195 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,389 jobs, and a financial cost of 16,412,928,889.20 DZD; - 20 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 1,537 beds, potential employment opportunities of 576 jobs, and a financial cost of 3,236,134,911.11 DZD; - 3 suspended projects, with a capacity of 175 beds, 144 employment opportunities, and a financial cost of 533,374,190.00 DZD; - 2 completed projects, with a capacity of 82 beds, potential employment opportunities of 30 jobs, and a financial cost of 12,070,445.00 DZD.
2017	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 79 projects, with a capacity of 7,273 beds, 2,694 employment opportunities, and a total cost of DZD, distributed as follows: - 42 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 4,067 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,552 jobs, and a financial cost of 21,277,300,322.20 DZD; - 22 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 1,749 beds, potential employment opportunities of 698 jobs, and a financial cost of 4,021,106,568.60 DZD; - 7 suspended projects, with a capacity of 737 beds, potential employment opportunities of 243 jobs, and a financial cost of 1,220,489,723.00 DZD - 8 completed projects, with a capacity of 720 beds, potential employment opportunities of 210 jobs, and a financial cost of 5,563,638,640.00 DZD.
2018	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 84 projects, with a capacity of 7,890 beds, 3,258 employment opportunities, and a total cost of 31,692,317,074.50 DZD, distributed as follows: • 48 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 4,538 beds, potential employment opportunities of 2,019 jobs, and a financial cost of 23,976,843,137.50 DZD; • 22 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 2,086 beds, potential employment opportunities of 760 jobs, and a financial cost of 5,635,499,274.00 DZD; • 7 suspended projects, with a capacity of 768 beds, potential employment opportunities of 277 jobs, and a financial cost of 1,059,587,013.00 DZD; • 7 completed projects, with a capacity of 498 beds, potential employment opportunities of 202 jobs, and a financial cost of 1,020,387,650.00 DZD.

2019	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 101 projects, with a capacity of 8,908 beds, 3,735 employment opportunities, and a total cost of 35,058,833,177.90 DZD, distributed as follows: - 48 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 3,989 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,804 jobs, and a financial cost of 15,890,618,506.50 DZD; 36 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 3,118 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,287 jobs, and a financial cost of 9,273,148,445.40 DZD; - 11 suspended projects, with a capacity of 1,473 beds, potential employment opportunities of 552 jobs, and a financial cost of 9,630,894,123.00 DZD; - 6 completed projects, with a capacity of 328 beds, potential employment opportunities of 92 jobs, and a financial cost of 264,172,103.00 DZD.
2020	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 108 projects, with a capacity of 9,538 beds, 3,861 employment opportunities, and a total cost of 36,478,268,491.90 DZD, distributed as follows: - 46 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 3,983 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,879 jobs, and a financial cost of 16,322,718,936.00 DZD; - 44 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 3,830 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,367 jobs, and a financial cost of 9,875,822,166.00 DZD; - 8 suspended projects, with a capacity of 1,211 beds, potential employment opportunities of 428 jobs, and a financial cost of 9,251,624,166.00 DZD; - 10 completed projects, with a capacity of 514 beds, potential employment opportunities of 187 jobs, and a financial cost of 36,478,268,491.90 DZD.
2021	The number of tourism investment projects in Sétif Province reached 108 projects, with a capacity of 9,724 beds, 3,952 employment opportunities, and a total cost of 39,156,753,444.84 DZD, distributed as follows: - 54 projects under implementation, with a capacity of 4,732 beds, potential employment opportunities of 2,058 jobs, and a financial cost of 19,341,895,898.84 DZD; - 36 tourism projects not yet launched, with a capacity of 3,169 beds, potential employment opportunities of 1,195 jobs, and a financial cost of 8,716,201,823.00 DZD; - 11 suspended projects, with a capacity of 1,413 beds, potential employment opportunities of 558 jobs, and a financial cost of 10,311,572,223.00 DZD;

	- 7 completed projects, with a capacity of 410 beds, potential employment opportunities of 141 jobs, and a financial cost of 787,083,500.00 DZD.
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Source: Directorate of Tourism of Sétif Province

5. Conclusion:

Through this study, which aimed to investigate the current reality of domestic ecotourism within the framework of the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030 and its contribution to supporting sustainable development in Algeria, and by analysing various statistical data and information related to the tourism sector in Sétif Province as a case study, a number of findings have been established. These findings highlight that tourism development in Sétif Province, and consequently at the national level, should be guided towards sustainable development strategies that ensure an appropriate balance between the utilisation of natural and environmental resources and the protection of cultural heritage. Such an approach would contribute to achieving inclusive development while generating sustainable economic and social benefits for both present and future generations.

5.1.Results:

The study reached a set of findings, which can be presented as follows:

- The results demonstrate that ecotourism represents a sector with considerable development potential due to the richness and diversity of available natural and cultural resources. However, the effective utilisation of this potential remains dependent on overcoming several structural challenges, particularly weak institutional coordination among relevant stakeholders, insufficient tourism infrastructure, and the limited implementation of awareness campaigns aimed at promoting environmental responsibility and tourism culture among local communities and visitors. Moreover, certain tourist sites continue to face environmental and administrative constraints that reduce their attractiveness and negatively influence the quality of tourism experiences.
- The National Tourism Development Master Plan 2030 constitutes an integrated strategic framework for strengthening ecotourism development through a set of complementary measures, including improving tourism infrastructure, enhancing service quality, diversifying tourism products through the promotion of thermal, cultural, and sports tourism, and reinforcing the attractiveness of destinations at both domestic and international levels.

- The study confirms that achieving sustainable tourism development requires continuous efforts to enhance the legal and institutional framework, in addition to establishing effective governance mechanisms that promote coordination between public and private sector stakeholders and ensure the active involvement of local communities in tourism planning, decision-making, and implementation processes.
- Developing continuous awareness and educational programmes is essential for strengthening environmental consciousness and encouraging responsible tourism practices, while highlighting the importance of preserving natural and cultural resources as strategic assets for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector.
- Establishing regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for tourism projects is necessary to assess the extent to which planned objectives are achieved, while maintaining the capacity to adapt strategies and programmes according to evolving conditions, emerging challenges, and available information.

5.2. Recommendations:

- Increasing investment in environmentally sustainable tourism infrastructure, particularly through the development of accommodation facilities, transportation networks, and related services in accordance with recognised environmental sustainability requirements.
- Establishing effective governance frameworks that facilitate coordination among different stakeholders in the tourism sector and strengthen cooperation between public institutions, private investors, and local communities.
- Implementing continuous awareness programmes targeting tourists and local populations to promote environmental awareness, encourage sustainable tourism behaviours, and ensure compliance with environmental protection standards.
- Developing periodic assessment indicators to evaluate the impact of implementing the Tourism Development Master Plan on tourism performance and identify existing strengths and weaknesses in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Supporting initiatives dedicated to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and promoting thermal, cultural, and sports tourism as complementary tourism products capable of enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of Sétif Province.
- Simplifying administrative and financial procedures for tourism investors and encouraging investment through appropriate fiscal incentives and reduced operational burdens in order to accelerate the implementation of tourism development projects.

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