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# SHOPPING TOURISM IS A MANIFESTATION OF THE COMMERCIAL DYNAMICS IN THE ALGERIAN CITY – A CASE STUDY: SOUK AHRAS CITY

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to study the reality of shopping tourism and its impact on the growth, organization, and dynamics in an Algerian city: Souk Ahras city as a case study. It highlights the various forms and aspects of shopping tourism and its influence on the commercial, economic, social, and cultural sectors. The research also examines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras, and formulates the general strategy for the city using SWOT analysis. The results derived from the strategy and field investigation indicate that shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras is influenced by several factors. These factors include the commercial weight of the city, its strategic geographic location, its openness to the border area, and the significant influx of tourists, especially from Tunisia. The city has experienced substantial commercial development through markets and shopping centers, contributing to increased inputs and resources. The availability of goods and products at competitive prices can be attributed to the social support policy on raw materials in Algeria. Additionally, the growth of the informal sector has provided a wide variety of products. All of these factors have positioned the city of Souk Ahras as an attraction for tourist flows, making shopping tourism a significant urban phenomenon that influences the organization and economy of the city.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

Of the most important issues that have resulted in recent development and growth of small and big cities is the urban development. Cities with services and facilities that provide have always embraced people, entering them. City with providing appropriate and favorable services creates a ground for social, cultural and economic activities of humans. City also with providing services like hospitality and leisure facilities prepares a ground for commercial tourism development and

advancement (Dallen J, 2005).

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism and shopping are closely related as stated (Egresi, 2017), and the influence of shopping has always been a major component on a tourist's motivation to travel and cannot be excluded from a travel experience. Previous research has indicated that shopping could make up for a significant part of the tourist experience and could provide significant benefits to destinations by contributing to local retail revenue and by generating many jobs. However, in the case of shopping when traveling, pleasure is not the only primary reason especially when the destination is regulated as a low-priced destination. The misleading concept of low-priced destinations should not be a hindrance to attract other visitors aside from bargain hunters (V, Darly. Ace et al., 2022).

Shopping Tourism is a recent concept that is defined as a contemporary form of tourism carried out by individuals for whom the acquisition of goods, outside their place of residence, is a determining factor in their decision to travel (World Trade Organization, 2014).

The impact that this commercial tourism has on employment and economic growth in the countries is considerable, making it a key strategic industry (Isabal Anna et al., 2020).

The shopping tourism can be considered as a phenomenon that is commercial, touristic, cultural, and economic in nature. It has become a prominent component and landmark element, which distinguishes urban and economic life in Algerian cities. This is a result of the impact and dynamics of commerce in achieving economic growth and social welfare, as well as promoting tourism in the city, whose contributes to increased flows and improved urban quality of life within the city.

The city of Souk Ahras is one of the most important and prominent cities in eastern Algeria. It is considered a decision-making center for a border region. Recently, it has become a destination for shopping tourism by the city's residents, residents of neighboring areas, and tourists coming from the Tunisian borders. This popularity can be attributed to the city's components and capabilities, such as the widespread availability of commercial services, including shops, markets, and shopping centers, as well as significant infrastructure and facilities, represented for example by the commercial activities zone and the industrial zone. This has created a high level of activity and significant inflows in the city.



*Figure 1. Aspects of Shopping Tourism in the City of Souk Ahras.*

Based on this, we will try to pose the following main question:

Can shopping tourism be considered an urban phenomenon that affects the organization of the city of Souk Ahras? Moreover, from the main question, several sub-questions arise as follows:

- Does urban commerce help attract tourists?
- Does the border area have an impact on urban commerce in the city of Souk Ahras?
- Is shopping tourism, closely related to the formal sector or the informal sector?

### **1.1. Research objectives.**

The objectives of this research are manifested in shedding light on the phenomenon of shopping tourism in the Algerian city. It can be considered as a new structured trend in the urban field that should be subjected to study. Therefore, the study aims to:

- Investigate the impact of shopping tourism on the organization and development of Souk Ahras city.
- Highlight the role of urban commerce in attracting tourists to Souk Ahras.
- Analyze the influence of the border area on urban commerce and shopping tourism in Souk Ahras.
- Explore the relationship between shopping tourism and the formal and informal sectors in the city.
- Evaluate the social and economic effects of shopping tourism in Souk Ahras.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS.**

In order to address and study this topic, we utilized a descriptive approach in addition to an analytical approach. The descriptive approach was employed by delving into shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras and its various aspects. On the other hand, the analytical method was used to analyze the results of the applied study through SWOT analysis, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges associated with shopping tourism. Additionally, we formulated the internal and external factors matrix related to shopping tourism.

### **2.1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis.**

SWOT analysis is the identification of the various factors systematically to formulate business strategy. This analysis is based on the logic that can maximize the strength and opportunities. But at the same time can minimize the weaknesses and threats (Rangkuti, 2001), There are four types of strategies that can be developed with a SWOT analysis (Noor, 2014), as follows:

**1. Strategy S-O (Strength-Opportunities)**, is a strategy that uses the power of internal efforts to get the opportunities that exist outside the business.

**2. Strategy W-O (Weaknesses-Opportunities)**, is a strategy that aims to minimize the weakness of the internal business by taking advantage of opportunities external.

**3. Strategy S-T (Strength-Threat)**, that this strategy the business seeks to avoid or reduce the impact of threats external.

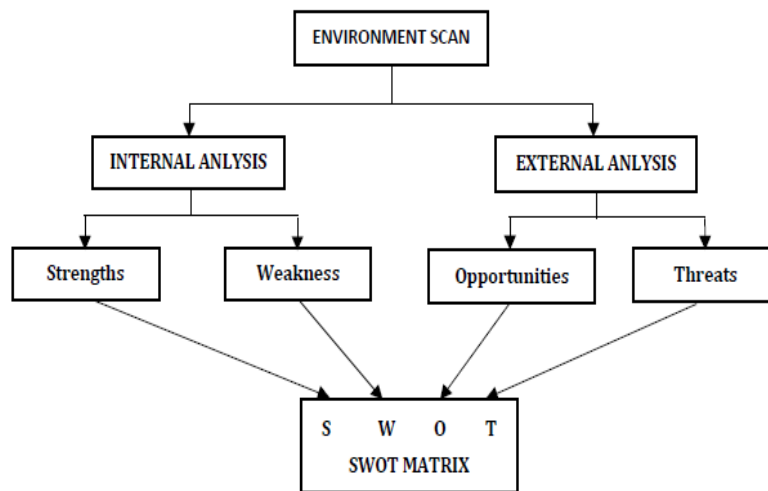
**4. Strategy W-T (Weaknesses-Threat)**, namely a strategy to survive by reducing internal weaknesses and avoid threats.

### **2.2. IFE Matrix.**

Matrix Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) is a tool of strategy formulation are used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses. In addition it has also become a platform to identify the relationship between the two. Intuitive judgments used in the development of IFE matrix. So the results of the analysis should not be value as evidence that without the gap.

### **2.3. EFE Matrix.**

Matrix External Factor Evaluation (EFE) is a tool of strategy formulation are used to evaluate the opportunities and threats. In addition, strategies for evaluating information. Information regarding the economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, government, legal, technology and competition, So that each study is not in its value as evidence that without the gap (Fatiha Z et al., 2021).



*Figure 2. SWOT Analysis Framework (Kahraman Cengiz et al., 2008).*

### **3. RESULTS.**

#### **3.1. Urban Tourism.**

Urban tourism means travel to another place with different motivations of seeing various attractions, urban facilities and sites that create motivation, interest and inclination in people. City is interesting for all ages. People are inclined to spend some off days in the city and have fun on vacations. Today, urban tourism has become an important activity that has resulted in extended spatial changes in big cities (Ali Movahed, 2007), urban regions because of myriad cultural and historic attractions are oftentimes considered main tourism destinations. Cities have usually various and large attractions like museums, memorable cities, theatres, sports clubs, parks, funfairs, shopping centers, places with historic sites and districts related with main events with famous people that all in all attract people. Along with tourism expansion in urban regions, more supportive services are built to meet the needs of tourists like restaurants and accommodation centers. Tourism infrastructure expansion contributes highly to the urban formation changes and the image of the city is overshadowed by these secondary services. Several characteristics of then cities are: 1. physical density, 2. playing different socio-cultural roles, 3. playing different economic roles, 4. Objective centralization in intra city and regional networks. Activities of tourist in urban spaces, concerning attraction's, city structure, shopping, accommodation and secondary activities that are embodied in relation with recreational, cultural historic centers (Abdolreza, farajiras.& Seyedeh Jaleh Seyed Nassiri, 2010).

#### **3.2. Commercial structure in the city of Souk ahras.**

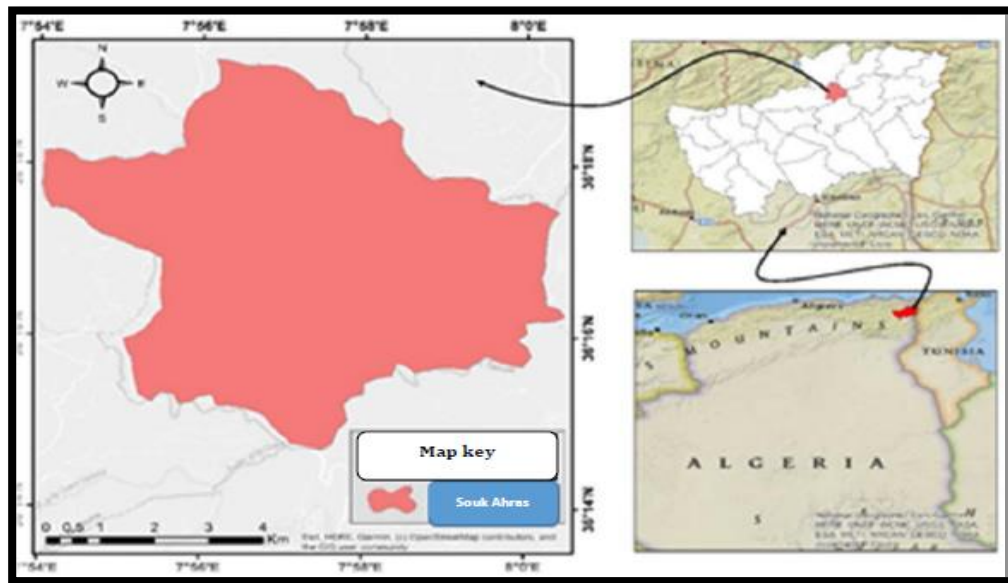
##### **3.2.1. The importance of the city of Souk ahras.**

The city of Souk ahras is located in the east of Algeria, in the middle of the state of Souk ahras, and is administratively its headquarters, where the latter is located in the upper plateau region and about 700km away from the capital, it shares with the Republic of Tunisia a border strip called the Eastern Hill. The city has benefited from several important development projects as a decision Center for the state, the most important of these projects that are directed to the housing sector in various formats as one of the most important directions taken care of by the state (Hani ,Tourghi et al., 2020).

It is located in the east of the country between 36°00' and 36°30' north and between 7°30' and 8°00' east. Its population in 2008 (last general population census) was 155259 inhabitants and its housing stock amounted to approximately 27118 dwellings (National Statistics Office, 2008), and its area was about 4510 hectares (Plan master urban developmen, 2019).

Souk Ahras is a historic city located in eastern Algeria. It is considered one of the oldest cities in Algeria, with a history dating back to ancient times. The city is renowned for its rich heritage and important historical landmarks.





*Figure 3. Geographical location of Souk Ahras.*

### 3.2.2. Commercial heaviness in the city of Souk Ahras.

According to the statistics and official data from the Trade Directorate in the province of Souk Ahras and the National Center for Commercial Registration, the municipality has around 7,875 of registered businesses distributed across various sectors as defined in the classification of the Economic Activities Code. The distribution is shown in the following table 1.

Table 1. The commercial registries attribution within the city of Souk Ahras.

The Commercial Sector	Number of Commercial Records	Percentage
The Industrial Sector	1178	14,96%
The Artisan Sector	07	0,08%
Retail Trade	3738	47,47%
Wholesale Trade	101	1,28%
Service Trade	2785	35,37%
Imports	52	0,66%
Exports	14	0,18%
Total	7875	100%

Source: Commerce Directorate (2022).

According to statistics from the relevant trade authorities, the city of Souk Ahras occupies the first position in Souk Ahras province in terms of the number of commercial registrations, with a total of 7,875 registered businesses. This highlights the dominance of urban trade as an active and dynamic sector in the city. By considering the population size, the per capita number of commercial establishments is approximately 1 registered business for every 23 residents. This is roughly equivalent to the national indicator of 1 registered business for every 23 residents. This indicates the importance of commercial activity as a structuring and regulating factor in the urban and economic life of Souk Ahras city.

In terms of classification the commercial registrations according to the Economic Activities

Code, the dominant sectors are retail trade (3,738 registered businesses) and services (2,785 registered businesses), accounting for 82.84% from the total. The industrial sector follows with 1,178 registered businesses, representing 14.96%. Wholesale trade, import-export, and crafts sectors come after, with lower proportions due to the lack of investment in these areas. Overall, we can conclude that retail trade (food, clothing, etc.) and service-related businesses (doctors, cafes, lawyers, restaurants, etc.)

Dominate urban trade in Souk Ahras. Commercial activity is a significant component of the city and one of its essential economic inputs. It covers the boundaries of the region and serves as a future pillar for attracting external flows. Therefore, the urban trade sector is the sector of the future in creating wealth and development in the city of Souk Ahras.

### 3.3. The Dynamics of the Border Area on the City of Souk Ahras.

Souk Ahras is considered a decision-making hub for the region and a border area, capable of significantly and effectively contributing to the development of commercial and economic activities at the city level. Among these urban activities, which are experiencing substantial growth and are linked to tourist flows, is shopping tourism. Table 2 highlights the impact of the border area on shopping tourism and dynamics of the city.

Table 2. Passengers' movement and transportation across the border area.

Year 2022	Year 2021	Year 2020	Year 2019	Year 2018	Travelers' Movement and Transportation	
386.890	2340	198.158	1.163810	1.254.325	Total number of travelers across the border region	Travelers
1060	06	542	3188	3436	Average number of travelers per day	
161.105	1494	87.919	502.737	409.737	Total number of transportation means across the border region	Transportation
441	04	240	1377	1121	Average number of transportation per day	

Source: Customs Directorate ( 2022).

Based on the table illustrating the significance of the border region for the Souk Ahras city region from the year 2018 to the end of the year 2022, we can deduce and extract the following points:

The significant mobility is a result of flows coming from the border region with Tunisia. This indicates the extent of urban and daily economic dynamism, emphasizing the role of Souk Ahras as a border city.

The considerable number of tourists and travelers across the region, especially in the years 2018 and 2019, with 1.254 million travelers and 1.163 million travelers respectively. However, the number of travelers started to decline significantly between the years 2020 and 2022 due to the closure of the border region during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had an impact on the movement and dynamism of the city.

The table highlights the significant impact of this movement on the economic trade sector. There is a notable growth in the phenomenon of shopping tourism in Souk Ahras city, driven by both local residents and tourists, particularly those coming from Tunisia. This is due to the disparity in the Algerian currency value compared to other currencies, as well as the availability of essential goods at reasonable prices, attributed to Algeria's social and economic support policies. This acts as a factor attracting various flows and becomes a source of shopping tourism promotion within the city.

### **3.4. Measuring weak and strength points, opportunities and threats.**

In this section, we will utilize a SWOT analysis to conduct a precise diagnosis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras, along with the influencing factors.

#### **3.4.1. Internal factors influencing shopping tourism:**

The aim of this stage is to measure the internal environment of the region under investigation from identifying weak and strong points i.e. aspects that are assisting or deterring in wake of accessing the objectives of planning and implementation of its assignments.

#### **3.4.2. External factors influencing shopping tourism:**

The aim of this stage is to delve into the external environment of the range under investigation for identifying opportunities and threats where the region and organizations in relation with shopping tourism expansion are facing. (Ayoub, Zoghi, Bakhtyar Khosravi, 2014).

Table 3. Internal factors affecting the shopping tourism.

<b>Strong points</b>	<b>S</b>
Social support policy adopted by the Algerian government for basic products and goods.	S1
Extensive commercial diversity that provides commercial services to shoppers.	S2
Availability of a main commercial area in the city center that includes shopping centers, markets, and diverse commercial streets.	S3
The shopping experience for tourists or foreign visitors is a strong and unique experience that allows them to learn about the culture and identity of the local market in Souk Ahras.	S4
Significant commercial updates with the spread of fashion trade manifestations in the alleys of Souk Ahras.	S5
The border area is an attractive factor for commercial competition, marketing, and promotion, as well as for economic, tourism, and cultural activities in the city.	S6
<b>Weak points</b>	<b>W</b>
High congestion and traffic disruptions experienced in the city and city center, especially during peak hours.	W1
Widespread presence of informal trade in various forms and manifestations.	W2
Significant shortage of hotels and accommodation centers in the city.	W3
High pollution affecting the urban environment of the city.	W4
Lack of nocturnal urban life in the city due to the closure of shops along the city's streets.	W5
Entry of various goods and products through unofficial exchanges.	W6
Informal and unregulated conversion and disposal of foreign currencies	W7



Table 4. External factors affecting shopping tourism.

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>O</b>
Strong support from local authorities for commercial investment projects throughout the city and the province.	O1
Strategic location of the city with neighboring regions and the border region.	O2
The Maghreb railway line, in addition to the dual railway line, which is currently under construction.	O3
Local trade exhibitions and conferences that showcase the city and regional resources and potential in the economic, commercial, and tourism sectors	O4
Hotel structures and facilities under construction.	O5
<b>Threats</b>	<b>T</b>
Informal currency exchange points and their negative impact.	T1
The strategic location and its influence on the flow of trade from Algiers	T2
Lack of a culture of promoting trade and the various achievements of the city	T3
Lengthy duration of investment projects.	T4
Smuggling of local products and its relation to cross-border trade	T5
The significant growth of the informal sector in its various forms and manifestations.	T6

Through analyzing weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities, it can be considered that the level of weakness and threat is low. By capitalizing on existing opportunities, it is possible to enhance and strengthen the achievements and influencing factors, while eliminating threats and forms of weakness.

Table 5. IFE Matrix (An assessment by the internal organization with emphasis on existing weak and strong points).

<b>SWOT Analytic</b>	<b>Weigth</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Final coefficient</b>
<b>Strong Points</b>			
S1	12%	4	0.48
S2	7%	4	0.28
S3	9%	4	0.36
S4	5%	4	0.2
S5	4%	3	0.12
S6	15%	4	0.6

Table 5. Continuation.

SWOT Analytic	Weigth	Ranking	Final coefficient
<b>Weak Points</b>			
W1	08%	2	0.16
W2	6%	2	0.12
W3	10%	4	0.4
W4	5%	2	0.1
W5	4%	3	0.12
W6	3%	2	0.06
W7	12%	3	0.36
<b>Total</b>	100%	/	3.36

Table 6. EFE, matrix (An assessment by the external organizational sources based one existing opportunities and threats).

SWOT Analytic	Weigth	Ranking	Final coefficient
<b>Opportunities points</b>			
O1	15%	4	0.6
O2	12%	3	0.36
O3	7%	4	0.28
O4	8%	4	0.32
O5	7%	2	0.14
SWOT Analytic	Weigth	Ranking	Final coefficient
<b>Threats</b>			
T1	12%	2	0.24
T2	8%	2	0.16
T3	10%	3	0.3
T4	5%	2	0.1
T5	9%	3	0.27
T6	7%	3	0.21
<b>Total</b>	100%	/	2.98

The extracted results indicate the significance of the border area as an attraction for tourists and flows, thereby contributing to enhancing commercial, economic, tourism, and cultural activities in the city with an impact coefficient of 0.6 . Additionally., the presence of a key commercial zone in the city

and the socio-economic support policy for essential primary materials in Algeria, have allowed the emergence of shopping tourism as a distinctive phenomenon in Souk Ahras city and have aided in the city's economic growth.

It is also important to mention some of the threats and weaknesses that impact the city and its dynamics, especially represented by the growth of the informal sector and a significant shortage of hotels, which affects the commercial and economic life in the city.

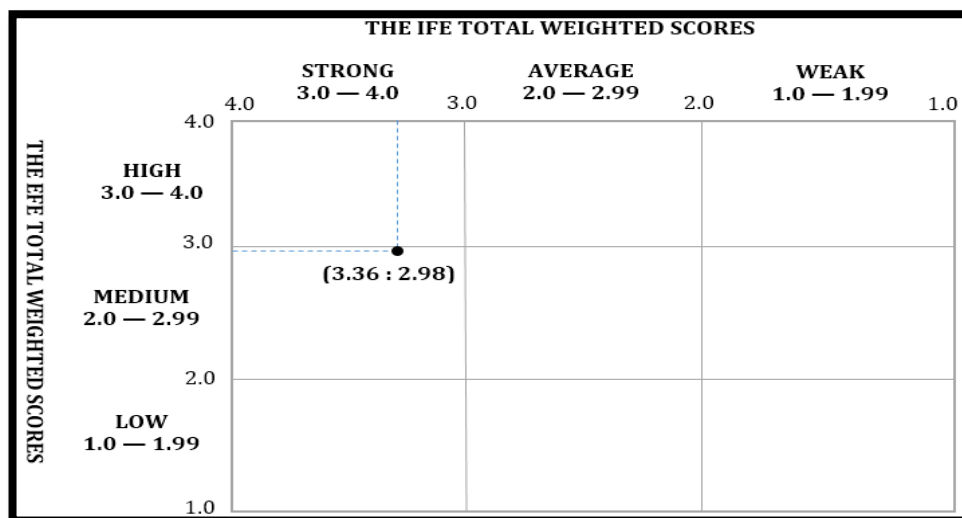


Figure 4. The IE MATRIX Results.

### 3.5. Comparative matrix formation and preparation of strategies.

SWOT matrix is one of the most important devices with which policy makers compare information related with internal and external factors and could via that design types of strategies necessary for their operations. These strategies are listed in a two dimensional SWOT table and each of the four parts of it signifies a type of strategy. These strategies are (Ayoub Zoghi, Bakhtyar Khosravi 2014):

**Aggressive strategies:** Through this strategy, the strategist using the internal strong points tries to utilize external opportunities and to maximize opportunities by using strong points.

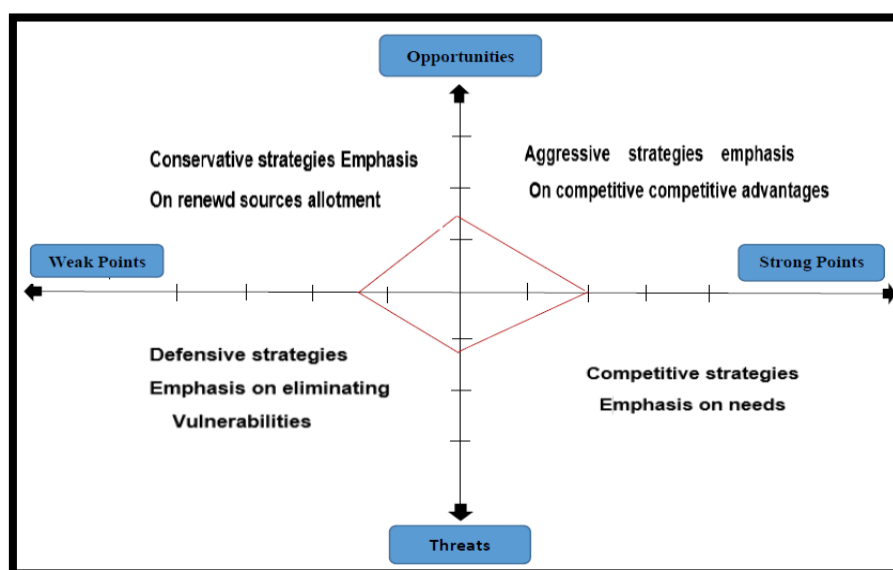
**Revision or conservative strategy:** The goal of this strategy is to use the existing opportunities in internal environment so that weak internal points are improved and promoted.

**Defensive strategy:** Organizations that apply this strategy are on the defense side and the aim of using this strategy is minimizing weak internal points and preventing threats resulting the external environments. In fact, such organizations attempt to reduce their activities to maintain their survival (Ceding or reduction strategy). They merge in other companies, file for bankruptcy and finally get dissolved.

**Interactive or variety strategy:** Strategists, implementing this guideline strive to reduce threats using the strong points.

### 4. DUSCUSION.

Based on Figure 4, which clearly illustrates the internal and external factor matrix for SWOT analysis, the calculated EFE (External Factor Evaluation) score is 3.36 compared to an IFE (Internal Factor Evaluation) score of 2.98. Consequently, the internal and external situation of the phenomenon of shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras is very favorable, this indicates that it is in a growth and build stage. From this situation, we can infer that shopping tourism at the city level is in a prominent and effective growth phase, significantly impacting urban and economic life for residents and the community, especially at present. It can also be considered a source of wealth, employment, and the provision of essential services, if strengths and opportunities specific to shopping tourism are reinforced and enhanced. This includes economic and social support policies, the effectiveness of the border area, and the city's commercial dynamics. Moreover, necessary measures and precautions should be taken to address weaknesses and threats that could hinder the development and growth of this urban phenomenon at the city level.



*Figure 5. The Final Strategy for Shopping Tourism in the City of Souk Ahras.*

To study the reality of shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras using the SWOT analysis strategy outlined in Figure 5, and based on the previous data and field investigations, the final strategy for shopping tourism in the city is in the form of subsidiary strategies, which are as follows:

- Enhancing the significant commercial structure in the city, which has led to the emergence and growth of shopping tourism in the city.
- Valuing the main commercial area as a hub for economic, commercial, social, and cultural activities in the city.
- Promoting the border area as a future component that contributes to wealth creation and development in the city: The social support policy for primary materials pursued in Algeria has contributed to the interest in shopping tourism, especially by tourists from Tunisia.
- Focusing on commercial investment represented by shopping malls and markets, as it is one of the leading current trends in the modern city.

Upgrading modern fashion trade by emphasizing the aesthetic architectural and urban aspects, especially through the display windows of shops and commercial centers, which enhances the aesthetic identity and their appeal.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS.

In this research, the status and characteristics of shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras were examined. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, facing the growth of this urban phenomenon in the city identified and explained, a general strategy was formulated using SWOT strategic analysis. Through the findings, it can be highlighted that shopping tourism has become a prominent element and landmark in the city, occupying an important position in the city's economy. It contributes to increasing the dynamics and resources of the city by enhancing its commercial centers, services, markets, and modern fashion trade, leading to significant inflows of local residents and tourists. This has resulted in the creation of wealth and increased inputs to the city in the context of development challenges and globalization aspirations pursued by cities. Therefore, shopping tourism in the city of Souk Ahras can be considered a significant and transformative factor in the organization and economy of the city.

Overall, shopping tourism can be considered an urban phenomenon and a distinctive feature that affects the growth and organization of the urban space, particularly in the city of Souk Ahras, which is a decision-making center for the border region with Tunisia. Consequently, shopping tourism has become an expressive representation and form of commercial dynamism that contributes to economic, social, spatial, and cultural activities at the regional level. It can also be a key driver in creating wealth and employment opportunities, particularly at the local level.

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