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# TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN SKIKDA: BETWEEN RHETORIC AND PRACTICE

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## ABSTRACT

Presently, tourism is recognized as a crucial driver for generating added value and a viable option for global economic revitalization and development, particularly in developing nations. Our selection of this topic emerged from an examination of the tourism sector in Algeria, with a specific focus on the Skikda Department. This examination revealed certain deficiencies associated with this destination. Consequently, we contend that the tourism sector in Algeria confronts a myriad of challenges and threats, resulting in a continual decline in its share of the global tourism market in recent times.

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## Introduction.

Tourism plays a vital role in fostering the economic, cultural, and social advancement of nations and regions, offering numerous advantages. However, it is imperative to practice sustainable management to mitigate adverse effects on the environment and local communities.

Skikda, situated along the coast, possesses significant untapped potential that could potentially transform it into a tourist destination. However, it's crucial to recognize that factors such as its geographical location, cultural heritage, inquisitiveness, as well as its pristine environment, safety measures, and hospitality infrastructure alone are insufficient to grant any city or region the designation of a tourist destination.

Transforming Skikda into a tourist hub necessitates a comprehensive strategy and policy overhaul. This entails harnessing and optimizing the city's tourism potential to shape its distinct tourist identity. As a coastal and port city, Skikda boasts substantial assets that should be considered within the context of a broader, more strategic, and globally relevant project.

This city project should be an integral part of a national economic policy, aligning with the broader goal of diversifying the country's revenue streams. This approach is essential for reimagining our future and, above all, ensuring its stability and prosperity.

Hence, this paper seeks to investigate the alignment between the theoretical aspects of tourism planning and the practical implementation of tourism planning tools. In doing so, we aim to provide insights into the underlying causes of this disparity. We believe that this concise scientific paper serves as both an initial endeavor and a catalyst for future research. It holds significant value, particularly for researchers and policymakers, in guiding the formulation of effective measures for fostering tourism development.

### **Methods.**

This document serves the dual purpose of showcasing the existing tourism landscape in Algeria, specifically in Skikda, as a potential blueprint for harnessing the tourism sector's transformative capabilities for economic advancement. It encompasses comprehensive economic and urban evaluations, an exploration of potential opportunities and limitations, and an insightful interpretation of the findings. These insights are intended to guide decision-makers and local communities in fostering sustainable tourism and enhancing overall quality of life.

### **Discussion and Interpretation.**

Therefore, this paper delves into the intricate nature of tourism, shedding light on the multitude of challenges it presents through its direct and indirect impacts on the social, economic, and spatial facets of regions. While it is often approached through socioeconomic lenses, the spatial dimension plays a paramount role in driving tourist activities (KERDOUN, 1995). The "physical" space, endowed with natural, cultural, or recreational attributes, transforms into a potential tourist haven. It becomes an arena for exploration and discovery, but also a realm to promote and safeguard. Consequently, it is imperative for tourism development efforts to carefully consider the synergy between induced activities and the geographical realities of the Departement.

In a broader context (Collombon, 2002), tourism development tends to homogenize spaces that once boasted distinct attractions and unique characteristics, setting them apart from other destinations. Hence, the primary objective of any tourism development initiative should be to create an environment conducive to tourist activities and to optimize the prospects for future evolution in forms and tourist activities. In light of this, effective tourism development must adhere to the following conditions:

- Offer optimal recreational opportunities for tourists and transient visitors.

- Safeguard the existing tourism potential, both in physical and socio-cultural aspects.

- Enhance the overall quality of life for local communities.

- Definition of tourism:

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism is described as a multifaceted phenomenon with social, cultural, and economic dimensions that involve the movement of individuals to destinations beyond their habitual environments, whether for personal, professional, or business purposes. These individuals are referred to as visitors and may encompass tourists, day trippers, residents, or non-residents. Tourism pertains to their activities, which sometimes entail tourism-related expenditures (Organization, 2007). INSEE's definition of tourism includes the activities undertaken by individuals during their journeys and stays in places outside their usual environment, for a consecutive period of time not exceeding one year, for leisure, business, or other non-remunerative purposes in the visited locale. It is defined as "all relationships and phenomena stemming from the movement and residence of people not native to the area" (Rachid, 2008). Tourism, in general, serves as a conduit for mobility, encompassing people, currency, and consumption patterns. Regarding the mobility of people, tourism stands out as a unique migratory phenomenon, characterized by its motivations, distribution, and frequency, often regular and voluntary.

- The Various Forms of Tourist Activity.

In recent years, we have witnessed a fragmentation of the tourism industry, adapting not only to the needs of travelers but also to the preferences of local populations. This has led to a more intricate classification compared to the traditional distinctions such as seaside, seasonal, religious, urban, and rural tourism, which were prominent in the past. This complexity has given rise to new forms of tourism, including solidarity tourism, sustainable tourism, gastronomic tourism, and social tourism.

- The Tourist Development Master Plan (SDAT).

The SDAT, an integral part of the National Spatial Planning Scheme as per Law 02-01 of December 12, 2001, defines the modalities for the development of tourist activities and infrastructure, taking into account:

- The unique features and potentials of the Departements.

- Economic and socio-cultural requirements.

- Rational and coherent obligations of tourist areas and spaces.

In this context, it sets the rules and conditions for preserving sites and areas of tourist expansion. The SDAT also outlines the prerequisites and modalities for executing tourism projects, as well as the

typology and characteristics of facilities (Law01-02, 2001), including the operational framework for sites through specification definitions.

Therefore, the SDAT serves as a strategic framework that warrants frequent consultation. It enables an assessment of accomplishments to date and an evaluation of what remains to be achieved, with a view to making necessary adjustments. In this regard, the SDAT plays a pivotal role in rejuvenating the tourism policy. The ultimate goal is to position Algeria as a prominent tourist destination by reinvigorating the tourism sector in alignment with the core objectives of the SDAT, which include:

Developing a sustainable tourism development strategy capable of serving as an alternative to hydrocarbons for the economy.

Stimulating various economic and financial sectors such as services, agriculture, industry, and taxation.

Enforcing a tourism policy within the framework of sustainable development.

Preserving tangible and intangible heritage.

Enhancing Algeria's international appeal as a tourism destination.

• Tourism Development Plans.

Article 02 of Executive Decree No. 07-86 dated March 11, 2007, which outlines the procedures for establishing tourism development plans for expansion zones and tourist sites, defines it as a comprehensive set of general and specific regulations governing the development and utilization of a tourist expansion zone. This includes specific urban planning and construction requirements, as well as easements related to the use and protection of properties and structures constructed with a tourism focus (Decree66-75, 1966).

The tourism development plan comprises two main components: technical plans for essential facilities and infrastructure, and regulations concerning building rights and easements. Only expansion areas and tourist sites that have been formally delimited, declared, and classified are equipped with a tourism development plan (Law03-02, 2003).

### **Context analysis.**

The completion of this work has necessitated the integration of three crucial methodological approaches, namely.

It is noteworthy that we have employed the documentary research method, as it serves as a systematic and standardized analytical tool. This approach facilitates the treatment of documentary data to unveil recommendations effectively.

The research methodology employed is qualitative, relying on survey techniques conducted in the field through the creation of questionnaires. This methodological approach aims to engage various stakeholders involved in the development of tourism in the Skikda Department, encompassing both social and economic actors.

Diverse interview processes are to be distinguished, including organized and unorganized interviews. In the case of organized interviews, a predetermined set of questions is consistently posed in a specific sequence, while allowing respondents the freedom to express their thoughts extensively (CNES, Novembre 2000).

Additionally, interviewers may modify question wording to facilitate the interview process.

The primary outcomes of the field inventory encompass the resources available to investors, the encountered obstacles, proposed solutions, and necessary actions to be taken.

Our objective is to underscore the pivotal roles that economic and social actors can assume to elevate the Skikda Department into a premier tourist destination. Moreover, we seek to gain insights into the existing obstacles and the requisite measures for achieving sustainable tourism development.

### **3.2 Study area.**

The Skikda Department is situated along the eastern coast of Algeria. It boasts a population of 804,697 residents and encompasses an expansive territory spanning 4,137.68 square kilometers, which includes 130 square kilometers of picturesque coastline (RAMDANE, 2008). To the north, it is gracefully bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, while it shares its land boundaries with the neighboring Departments of Annaba, Constantine, Guelma, and Jijel.

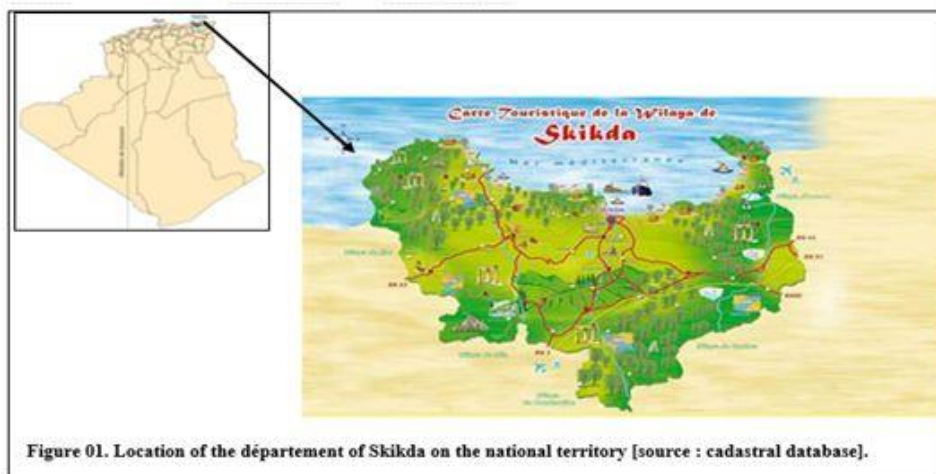


Figure 01. Location of the département of Skikda on the national territory [source : cadastral database].

The Department of Skikda holds a pivotal position in trade and economic dynamics due to its strategic geographical location at the heart of the North-East Department of the country. This prominence is largely attributed to the significance of its essential technical infrastructure, encompassing national roads, ports, and railways.

The Skikda Department, situated along the Mediterranean Sea, serves a multifaceted role with its three-fold port functions, encompassing fishing, tourism, and hydrocarbons. This strategic positioning fosters privileged connections not only with the neighboring Departments in Eastern Algeria but also with foreign countries.

The climate in the region exhibits a Mediterranean pattern characterized by two distinct seasons.

A mild and rainy winter.

A hot and dry summer.

The rainy season spans from October to March, while the dry season extends from April to September. Along the coastline of the Department, especially in the western Collo Massif, there is significant rainfall, ranging between 700mm and 1200mm annually (SAADI, 2008).

### **Historical background.**

The origins of Skikda date back to the Phoenician period between the 12th and 18th centuries BC. In 439 AD, it suffered destruction at the hands of King GENSERIC's Vandals. The Arabization of the Skikda Department began during the early stages of Muslim penetration (Direction, 2016). In 1838, the site of ancient Rusicade was occupied by colonial troops at the Eddis camp (KENDEDIS).

Initially named "Port de France," the colonial city later became known as Philippeville in honor of the French King Louis Philippe during the liberation war (1954-1962). Skikda has also witnessed significant historical events, such as the military operations carried out by the Mujahideen on 20/08/55, known as the night of the seven bombs. The Department also bears the memory of events like the Municipal Stadium massacre.

In terms of potentials and constraints.

The Skikda Department possesses substantial assets, including:

- Natural potential : Offering panoramic views, exceptional landscapes, thermal and mineral springs, as well as valuable geological resources like marble, which can support various craft activities.
- A 250.19 km long coastline, with 212.2 km remaining in a natural state, boasting rare beaches and scenic landscapes (Skikda, 2020), including collo, ben m'hidi, stora, and more.
- Historical and cultural potential: Abundant archaeological and architectural treasures tied to the rich history of the Department, featuring three ancient towns: Collo, Skikda, and Stora. Presently, there are 14 Phoenician and Roman civilization remnants, with notable sites like the Roman Theatre and the Great Mosque of Collo. Regrettably, several historical remains have been lost over time.
- Diversity in natural attractions: From stunning beaches to mountain foothills, Skikda offers a diverse range of experiences. For instance, the peninsula of Collo, the golf course of Stora, and various creeks and golden sandy beaches cater to beach lovers. There are also picturesque hiking trails like the



"Ravine of the Lions" and "Ben M'hidi," with historic sites along the way, such as Miramar and a swimming pool regarded as a historical masterpiece.

- Cultural heritage: Skikda boasts cultural landmarks like the Roman theatre, the municipal theatre resembling La Scala, and the town hall, adorned with magnificent frescoes and paintings by renowned artists.

- Thermal springs: The Azzaba area is home to thermal springs, including Salihine Hammam and Hammam el Hama, offering therapeutic benefits.

Despite its substantial tourism and craft potential, the Department faces a significant deficit in terms of tourist infrastructure development.

### **Hotel Facilities.**

In the Skikda Department, there are 31 hotels offering a combined capacity of 2,027 beds. Among these, 18 are located seaside, providing 1,409 beds, while 13 are situated in urban areas and offer 618 beds. Additionally, the Department boasts 9 family-oriented holiday campsites and 2 summer complexes, accommodating a total of 6,079 individuals.



**Figure 2. Hotel royal tulip skikda** (source : <https://www.cortizo.com/en/obras/ver/224/hotel-royal-tulip-skida.html>)

- Urban Water Pollution: In the Skikda region, urban wastewater is discharged directly or indirectly into the sea, which serves as the sole outlet. This discharge occurs through the three primary wadis in the study area, acting as open collectors that ultimately transport a significant load of mixed water pollution, comprising both urban and industrial pollutants.

There are over 28 identified discharge points, excluding those in mountainous municipalities. In fact, the municipality of Skikda alone accounts for more than 19 urban discharge points that release untreated wastewater directly into the sea (URBAN, 2018).

Impacts of Urban Effluents: All wastewater from the study area is released into the sea without undergoing any treatment, and it's important to note that this wastewater isn't solely of urban origin. This is due to the presence of certain activities integrated into the residential areas, and their effluent disposal systems (sewers) are interconnected with those of the households.

- Industrial Pollution: The municipality of Skikda has witnessed a significant prevalence of industrial pollution, especially with the establishment of the hydrocarbon hub covering approximately 1,200 hectares. This hub features a coastline spanning 4.44 kilometers and houses industrial units of national significance.



**Figure 3. The city of Skikda : the industrial area - refinery - (taken by the author, 2019)**

**Oil-Related Pollution:** This type of pollution is associated with oil traffic and comprises two distinct categories:

- ✓ Operational Discharges
- ✓ Accidental Releases

**Cautious" Mindset:** The local population's perception and acceptance of tourism are not very favorable. To comprehend this attitude, one must delve into the historical experiences of Algerians marked by suffering, contempt, resistance, and heroism. Changing this mindset will require time and concerted efforts in education and awareness.

#### **Implication of The Study.**

Global changes and updated legislations in the tourism sector over recent years have aimed at enhancing the quality of tourist products and offerings. In Algeria, the trend still leans towards standardizing tourism. However, both in Skikda and Algeria at large, the hotel infrastructure falls short of expectations. The national strategy for tourism development is seen as a crucial means to bridge this gap, with 17 tourist projects registered in Skikda for the year 2018.

Like Algeria, Skikda is a Department with vast potential for the emergence of a thriving tourist product, owing to its diverse resources, including pristine beaches, thermal springs, and scenic sites (URBAN, Skikda intermunicipal master plan and urban planning. PDAU., 2018). Nonetheless, these resources face constant threats of degradation or misuse for other purposes. Integrating tourism into a national development strategy places these resources at the forefront, emphasizing the protection and enhancement of national wealth. In essence, tourism serves as both a means and an objective for the responsible stewardship of natural, architectural, and cultural heritage.

#### **Protection and Enhancement.**

This entails reinforcing actions to safeguard and elevate the tourist value of natural areas and landscapes. Key priorities include preserving fragile ecosystems, alleviating pressure on heavily visited sites, emphasizing environmental policies, and reducing energy consumption. The promotion of renewable energy usage, the provision of alternative options for recreation and leisure areas, and improvements in internal transportation systems are also essential components.

Contemplation of the challenges in developing tourist activities presents an opportunity to design organizational and legal measures aimed at preserving the available tourist potential in the town and Department of Skikda.

At present, Skikda boasts nine tourist expansion areas classified as protected tourist zones, subject to specific protective measures:

Adherence to development and urban planning regulations when using and occupying land within these zones.

Safeguarding these zones against all forms of environmental pollution and degradation of natural and cultural resources.

Involvement of citizens in preserving heritage and tourist potential.

Prohibition of activities conflicting with tourist operations.

The protection and management of these areas are entrusted to the Department's Tourism Directorate and the central administration of the Ministry of Tourism. Their development involves the establishment of essential tourist infrastructure, including:

- Establishing access roads.
- Providing access to drinking water, gas, and electricity networks.
- Erecting fencing and security measures for these sites.

Table 1. The Departement of skikda: Detailed situation of the tourist expansion areas.

Name of the zone	Total area Hectares	Developed Area Hectares
Ben M'hidi	206	57,019
Large beach	140	14
Wadi Bibi	788	42
Paratians deGuebés	180	20
La Marsa	112	83,35
Collo Bay	400	40
Tamanart	81	22
Marset Zitoun	65	/
Sidi Akacha	110	17
Total	2082	295.369

Source: Skikda Tourist Office, 2020.

• Tourism development serves as a means to inventory and showcase the cultural treasures of both the city and the Skikda Department, including folklore, gastronomy, and craftsmanship, on national and international stages. This endeavor involves various initiatives:

- The establishment of an annex to the national library in Skikda.
- The planning, construction, and outfitting of an Islamic cultural center in Skikda.
- The revitalization, preservation, and safeguarding of significant cultural sites.
- The creation of visitor facilities adhering to international standards, tailored to the desired clientele.
- The establishment of tourism entities, particularly agency networks and tour operators.
- The restoration, refurbishment, and revitalization of existing hotels.
- The promotion and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage to stimulate economic growth through tourism.
- The advancement of tourism and leisure activities, thriving and burgeoning sectors that encompass nature tourism and cultural tourism, often catering to upscale travelers.
- The cultivation of an environmental economic sector closely linked to the enhancement of natural heritage.
- The development of a cultural economic sector closely associated with the preservation of cultural heritage.
- The reinforcement of the appeal and prestige of the Skikda Department.

The promotion of artisanal activities represents a promising avenue for employment and local economic development, requiring relatively modest financial resources and benefiting from the availability of labor, training structures, and local traditions. As a starting point, the following activities can be targeted:

- Revitalization of Artisanal Activities:

These activities draw inspiration from local potential and resources, embodying a distinct character specific to the Skikda Department. They are regularly organized and have a significant direct and indirect impact on the local economy and activities. Notable examples include:

The annual Strawberry Festival (May) in Skikda.



Skikda Departmental Craft Fair (June) and Sardine Festival (July).

Efforts should be made to enhance the recognition of these events at the Departmental and national levels, further contributing to job creation and economic growth.

- Enhancement of the Urban Environment and Green Spaces:

Skikda must establish an extensive network of landscapes and elevate its natural sites. The beauty of a city, while challenging to define precisely, is undeniably felt and contributes to its national and international image.

Architectural design, urban vistas, and landscapes must match the scale of a national city and become elements of attraction. They serve to showcase the heritage, emphasize entry points to the city, reveal its green fabric, and exemplify the quality of urban planning. These efforts also foster a balance between urban and natural spaces, built and green areas.

Monumental boulevards, alignments, and vistas should be developed, contemporary architecture should be judiciously integrated, heritage should be celebrated, and symbolic places with a strong or "magical" character should be cultivated.

The waterfront, a treasure of Skikda's landscape, should significantly contribute to the city's image and influence. Likewise, the everyday environment, the care given to residential areas, gardens, plantations, facility surroundings, public space treatment, neighborhood enhancements, and maintenance, all contribute to the well-being of residents and enhance the city's image and appeal.

### **Conclusion.**

Skikda harbors a treasure trove of natural beauty, untapped tourist potential, and a culturally rich heritage that pays homage to its illustrious history, environment, and coastline. Whether one is a newcomer or a seasoned traveler, the city invites all to delve into its narrative.

However, it's essential to acknowledge that this wealth alone cannot propel the city to become a premier tourist destination in the near future. Furthermore, it may not transform into a top-tier seaside resort capable of competing with Mediterranean counterparts, where an extensive network of tourist destinations and cities has flourished since the era of mass tourism.

To secure its place within this densely woven network, tourism must be regarded and planned not as a peripheral endeavor but as a pivotal sector of the national and local economy. It should serve as a means of income generation while concurrently safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes.

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