

Promoting cultural tourism through heritage preservation: Guesthouses as catalysts in the Casbah of Algiers.

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Abstract

This study is based on comparative analytical approach that uses the Casbah of Algiers as a case study to assess the potential of heritage guesthouse in fostering cultural tourism. Combining documentary analysis; a survey of 68 visitors, and a SWOT framework; it examines the contribution of guesthouses to cultural tourism development in Algeria within broader macroeconomic dynamics, while drawing comparison with France and Tunisia. The survey findings indicate a strong interest among visitors in staying in heritage guesthouse, highlighting their potential to enhance authentic cultural experiences while supporting local economic development and heritage preservation. The results also reveal that, despite Algeria's rich cultural heritage and several UNESCO World Heritage sites, cultural tourism remains weakly integrated into national economic strategy. Unlike France and Tunisia, where institutional support, fiscal incentives and governance structures have strengthened the sector, Algeria continues to face constraints related to informal operations, limited infrastructure, and legal uncertainty. The study therefore recommends the establishment of an integrated national strategy linking tourism, culture, and economic policy, emphasizing improved governance, better infrastructure, and the formalization of guesthouse activities to transform cultural tourism into a genuine catalyst for economic diversification and sustainable development.

Keywords: cultural tourism, Casbah of Algiers, guesthouse, SWOT analysis.



Introduction:

Algeria holds a vast cultural and architectural heritage that represents a major yet underexploited economic potential. Despite possessing seven UNESCO World Heritage sites, including the Casbah of Algiers, the country's cultural tourism sector remains weakly integrated into national economic planning. This study seeks to examine the extent to which guesthouses can contribute to the development of cultural tourism in Algeria, focusing on the Casbah as a heritage-based case within broader macroeconomic dynamics. The main objective is to understand how local hospitality initiatives can support sustainable tourism and territorial cohesion while promoting cultural preservation and community participation.

The research problem arises from the persistent gap between Algeria's rich heritage resources and their limited contribution to economic diversification. It is hypothesized that H1: the lack of institutional coordination, fiscal incentives, and clear legal frameworks has hindered the growth of guesthouses as drivers of cultural tourism. H2: The development of traditional heritage guesthouses in the Casbah of Algiers contributes significantly to the promotion of cultural tourism.

To verify these hypotheses, the study employs a comparative and analytical methodology combining documentary analysis, a SWOT framework, and an empirical survey of 68 visitors to the Casbah of Algiers. The survey provides quantitative evidence on visitors' motivations, perceptions, and willingness to stay in heritage guesthouses, thereby complementing the qualitative analysis.

I. Cultural Tourisme : Theoretical framework

According to the World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism is defined as tourism centered on cultural attractions and products. On a global scale, it has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry, accounting for an estimated 40% of all tourists worldwide and in Europe (Richards.G, 2021, p1) The global cultural tourism market was valued at USD 6.97 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 7.97 billion in 2025, before steadily expanding to USD 20.39 billion by 2033 (Grand View Research, 2026).

I.1. Types of Cultural Tourisme

Cultural tourism is not a monolithic category but rather a broad concept encompassing various forms of travel driven by cultural interests. The typology of cultural tourism is often examined through the motivations of travelers and the nature of the experiences they seek. While these categories often overlap in practice, we can broadly distinguish five main types of cultural tourism:

I.1.1. Heritage Tourism (Tangible and intangible)

This type of tourism focuses on the discovery of historical sites, monuments, and museums. It includes visits to sites of memory, such as those related to wars, revolutions, and commemorations. A key motivation for heritage tourists is to immerse themselves in the past

by visiting historical, architectural, and archaeological sites, including UNESCO World Heritage locations.

I.1.2. Art and Museum Tourism

Driven by an appreciation for the arts, this category involves visiting art museums and galleries and attending events like festivals, carnivals, or concerts. This also extends to exploring places linked to writers, novels, films, and television series.

I.1.3. Religious and Spiritual Tourism

This form of tourism is motivated by spiritual needs, manifesting as pilgrimages or visits to places of worship such as mosques, churches, shrines, and mausoleums, as well as participation in associated rituals.

I.1.4. Gastronomic Tourism

As defined by scholars like (Dordai, 2026) this type of travel is driven by a passion to experience genuine culinary traditions, authentic local food and drink, and immersive food-centric activities.

I.1.5. Creative Tourism

This form of tourism emphasizes active learning and participation by the visitor. Creative tourists seek immersive experiences by engaging in local workshops, such as handicrafts, cooking classes, dance lessons, or artistic courses. This hands-on approach allows for a deeper connection with the local culture.

I.2. Cultural Tourism in Algeria: Potential, Challenges, and Perspectives

Algeria possesses an exceptional cultural heritage, the result of a rich and ancient history shaped by a diversity of civilizations, including Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Ottoman, and colonial influences. With over seven sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, such as the Casbah of Algiers, Djemila, Timgad, Tipasa, and the M'Zab Valley, along with a wealth of intangible heritage (e.g., Andalusian music, Diwan, traditional festivals, and handicrafts), Algeria offers considerable potential for the development of cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2025).

Despite this substantial potential, cultural tourism in Algeria remains largely underexploited and faces numerous challenges related to infrastructure, governance, and international promotion

I.3. The Casbah of Algiers: A tangible and intangible cultural heritage site

The Casbah is built on a steep terrain with a 118-meter elevation difference, giving it the appearance of a "colossal pyramid" or "amphitheater" when viewed from the sea. This unique topography dictated the neighborhood's urban layout, creating a maze of narrow, winding alleys

that make it an exclusively pedestrian zone. Deliveries and waste collection are still carried out in a traditional manner, using donkeys. (Boukhari.B, Redjal.Z, 2025)

The spatial organization of the Casbah is a direct reflection of the vibrant social life and traditions it nurtures. The renowned architect Le Corbusier recognized the brilliance of its urban planning, stating that "the site creates the city" and considering the urban layout "perfect." The tiered arrangement of houses ensures that every terrace has a view of the sea. Spaces are designed to distinguish between private and public: terraces, for example, are semi-private areas mainly reserved for women, allowing neighbors to communicate without using the public streets. This introverted architecture fosters a strong sense of community and a traditional way of life that has harmonized with Muslim customs and other traditions. . (Rezzoug & Boussora, 2021)

The Casbah of Algiers is a historic district in the old city of Algiers. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1992 for its outstanding universal value, recognized for its unique Islamic and Ottoman architecture and its traditional way of life.

The term "Casbah," or "al Kasaba" in Arabic, means "the citadel" and originally referred to the highest point of a medina (UNESCO, 2025).

The Casbah of Algiers stands as a significant example of a historic Maghrebi city that had a major influence on urban planning in the western Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. The Casbah will forever remain an emblematic district of the Algerian Revolution and the scene of the painful "Battle of Algiers."

The residents of the Casbah of Algiers are nicknamed "the Casbadjis," and its national day is celebrated annually on February 23rd.

II. The Casbah Through the Centuries

Spanning 105 hectares, the Casbah is home to nearly 1,700 houses and 80,000 residents. This labyrinth of alleys and stairs contains over 1,816 historical buildings, including 70 classified monuments that tell the story of the city (CNERU, 2012).

From its earliest Phoenician settlements in the 4th century B.C. to the founding of the medieval city of Djezaïr Beni Mezghanna in 944, the Casbah has continuously reinvented itself. The year 1516 marked the beginning of the Ottoman period and the construction of the citadel, ushering in a golden age that saw the rise of magnificent palaces and mosques between the 16th and 18th centuries. This era culminated in 1792 with the completion of the Dey's Palace (ANSS, 2012).

Despite being a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Casbah has faced threats due to a lack of maintenance and interest from both residents and administrative authorities. Nevertheless, local actors continue to fight to preserve its tangible and intangible heritage .

Today, the Casbah is the subject of an ambitious restoration program orchestrated by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. Six major monuments are currently being revitalized: the

Ottoman Citadel of Dar Es'Soltane, the palaces of Hassen Pacha and Ahmed Pacha, and the houses of Dar El Kadi, Kh'daouedj El Amia, and Dar El Hamra are all regaining their former glory through meticulous rehabilitation.

II.1. The heritage of the Casbah and its role in cultural tourism

The Casbah of Algiers is an exceptional historical, architectural, and cultural heritage site. Developing it is a major asset for fostering sustainable cultural tourism in Algeria, provided the challenges related to its conservation and governance are addressed. The Casbah's heritage is divided into two types: tangible and intangible:

II.1.1. Tangible heritage

It refers to everything that is concrete and visible, related to urban planning, architecture, and objects.

a. Architecture and urban planning

The Casbah of Algiers represents a rare example of an Islamic medina on the Mediterranean coast, with a dense urban fabric, narrow streets, covered passageways (*sabat*), and houses organized around a central courtyard (*west eddar*) (UNESCO, 1992)

- *Traditional Casbah houses:* They reflect an architecture adapted to family and religious life, with a clear articulation between private and public spaces. Characteristic features include patios (*wast ed-dar*), *skifa* (entrance vestibules), terraces, woodwork, and *zellige* tilework.
- *Ramparts and gates:* (Bab Azzoun, Bab El Oued, Bab Jedid) still delineate the historical boundaries of the medina. (Ben chekroun, 2018)
- *Defensive structures and narrow streets:* Walls, gates, and narrow lanes adapted to the topography.

b. Religious and civil buildings

- *Historic Mosques:* The mosques constitute essential landmarks within the urban landscape. The Great Mosque (*Djamaâ El Kebir*), built in 1097 by Youcef Ibn Tachfin, reflects Almoravid and Andalusian influence, with its seventy-two pillars connected by arches. The history of *Ketchaoua Mosque* serves as a case study in the political dimension of architecture. Founded in 1436 and rebuilt in 1794, it was forcibly converted into a Catholic cathedral by the colonial authorities in 1832. This act of symbolic domination was reversed after Algeria's independence in 1962, when the building was reconverted into a mosque—marking a powerful gesture of national identity reclamation. Its recent restoration, funded by the Turkish government, illustrates a new dynamic of international cooperation in heritage preservation. (Rachid Mimouni, 2024) *Palaces:* Among the Ottoman palaces, *Palais des Raïs* (Bastion 23), *Dar Mustapha Pacha*, *Dar Hassan Pacha*, and the *Palace of the Dey*

illustrate the richness of Ottoman architecture (Oulebsir, 2004)., *Dar Aziza Palace*, a Moorish construction dating from the 17th century, is considered a “jewel of Oriental architecture.” It once served as a residence for foreign embassies and today houses the “National Agency for Archaeology and the Protection of Historic Sites and Monuments”. (Hocine.M, 2023)

c. Public facilities

hammams, fountains, traditional souks.

d. Sites of memory

The Casbah is also a major site of remembrance of the anti-colonial resistance, particularly during the Algerian War of Independence. (Stora, 1994).

II.1.2. Intangible cultural heritage

It refers to cultural practices, know-how, and living traditions. Balancing *know-how* and *ways of being*, the inhabitants of the Casbah still preserve their cultural heritage today: traditional crafts, attire, refined cuisine, *chaâbi* music, miniature art, calligraphy, and *buqala* poetry are all elements that testify to the diverse richness of the citadel’s cultural heritage (Fernandez, 2024)

Even today, one can still find *Zenkat Nedjârin* (the street of cabinetmakers), *Zenkat N’Hassin* (the street of brassworkers), *Zenkat Siyyaghin* (the street of goldsmiths), and *Zenkat Attârin* (the street of perfumers). As the essence of collective identity, traditional craftsmanship continues to uphold its prestige despite the dominance of modern industry and the scarcity of raw materials. Tulips, jasmine, arabesques, and geometric patterns remain the most significant decorative motifs. (Fernandez, 2024).

a. Traditional craftsmanship

- *Brassware*: Copper utensils carry memories in every household. Made of red or yellow copper, the kitchens and living rooms of the Casbah display various artifacts such as *al-mahbess* (bracelet mold), *al-mbakhra* (incense burner), *al-merhrez* (mortar), *al-sniwa* (serving dish), *al-tassa al-hammam* (bath bowl), and *tabsi lâchawat* (large serving tray)..
- *Cabinetmaking* : It is one of the pillars of *Casbadji* craftsmanship. The artisan performs meticulous wood carving in a neo-Moorish style. In the Casbah, cabinetmakers particularly produce *sendouk* (wooden chest), *eddouh*, *moucharabieh* (carved wooden balcony or lattice screen), and *essetra* (traditional partition screen) inspired by the neo-Moorish aesthetic.

- *Leatherwork*: The workshops of the Casbah handcraft various leather goods such as shoes, belts, bracelets, handbags, and satchels.
- *Traditional construction techniques*: These include carved plasterwork and vaulted structures, reflecting the architectural heritage of the Casbah.

b. Music and performing arts

- Algiers popular music: Chaâbi: Drawing its origins from Arab-Andalusian music, Chaâbi emerged in the mid-1920s in the heart of the medina, with the master M'Hamed El-Anka. The main instruments used are the *derbouka* and the *Algerian mandole*. Chaâbi places importance on both *qasîda* (poetry) and lyrical expression.
- Andalou (Algerian Andalusian Nuba).
- Oral storytelling (hikayat) and popular poetry.
- Moorish cafés served as spaces for musical and poetic transmission..

c. Social Life and Traditions

- Neighborhood solidarity (touiza) and hospitality.
- Religious and popular celebrations (Ashura, Mawlid, Ramadan with its rituals) and traditional weddings.
- Oral transmission of the history and legends of the Casbah..

d. Casbadji cuisine:

Casbadji cuisine is one of the pillars of Maghreb culinary heritage. Cereals, legumes, citrus fruits, olive oil, spices, and dried fruits are among the emblematic ingredients of the cuisine of the old medina. Typical dishes include al-hmisse, chorba, m'tewem, al-akda, al-darsa, and rechta.

During major ceremonies, to celebrate Eid, or even during Ramadan evenings, the Casbadji table is brightened by Algiers sweets, such as sfenj, makrout al-louz, dziriette, knidlette, m'khabez, qalb al-louz, and zlabiya.

It is also worth mentioning Maâ al-zahr (orange blossom water), a precious ingredient used to enhance Algiers cuisine. The distillation of orange blossom water, as well as coffee and mint tea, are also traditional elements.

e. Clothing heritage: An integral part of Algerian cultural heritage

- *The karakou*: For special occasions, traditional Algiers attire stands out for the elegance of its embroidery and the quality of its materials. The krakou is the prestigious Algiers outfit. It consists of a fitted velvet jacket fully decorated with gold thread embroidery and trousers with slits on both sides, or a *serouel medaour*.

Originally worn by the Algerian aristocracy, it later became popular across all social classes.

- *The Haïk*: The haïk is a rectangular white or off-white fabric made of wool or silk that covers the entire body. It is accompanied by the *adjar*, a type of white lace veil. This white veil was first worn around 1792. During the Algerian War, wearing the haïk became a form of resistance against the French occupation.
- *The Shanghai*: The Shanghai blue, although of Chinese origin, was introduced to the Casbah between the two World Wars. Men quickly adopted it for its practicality and comfort.
- *The Tarbouche*: The tarbouche (also called *chachiyat Istamboul* or *al-tarbouche*) has been worn by men for centuries throughout the Mediterranean region. The word literally means “to cover the head.” In recent years, Algerian designers have incorporated it as an accessory for the *karakou*, which women can wear instead of the *khit errouh* (Algiers diadem) or the *m’harma* (fringed silk or satin scarf)..

III. Case Study: Establishing a Guesthouse in the Casbah of Algiers

III.1. Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods exploratory case study design to investigate the operational and strategic potential of heritage guesthouses within the Casbah of Algiers. Given the scarcity of consolidated data on alternative accommodation in Algeria, an exploratory approach was considered appropriate. The qualitative component is based on documentary analysis of official and institutional sources, including executive decrees, interministerial circulars (e.g., Interministerial Circular No. 01 of June 16, 2012), policy documents issued by the Algerian Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, and international benchmark reports from France and Tunisia. The findings from this institutional review were synthesized into a SWOT framework to assess the internal and external factors influencing the development of guesthouses.

III.2. Defining the Concept of a Guesthouse

A guesthouse is a type of tourist accommodation that offers travelers a friendly and personalized alternative to traditional hotels. Often located within a private residence, it allows visitors to stay in an authentic setting while enjoying the services and comforts necessary for a pleasant stay. (Ftnassi.N, 2025)

Guesthouses can be known by different names in English, such as “*homestay*”, or “*bed and breakfast (B&B)*”, depending on the type of accommodation and the services offered.

The name of this type of accommodation can vary from one region to another: “*Gîte du passant*” in Quebec (Canada), “*maison d’hôtes*” in France, “*minshuku*” in Japan, etc. (DECHIR & Benbelil, 2021).

A guesthouse is a form of lodging that is less commercial, where the owner personally hosts tourists in a family-like setting, while respecting local traditions. Guesthouses are often established in former residences, riads, palaces, kasbahs, or villas, and are located either in the medina, along tourist routes, or in sites of high touristic value.

The first guesthouses are believed to have appeared in Anglo-Saxon countries: first in the British Isles, following the closure of monasteries in the 16th century, and in the United States as early as the 17th century, where they served as safe havens for travelers. In the U.S., after the 1929 economic crisis, some locals offered hospitality to homeless people as a way to earn extra income. As a result, guesthouses became associated with lodging for the poor (BARÈGES , 2010)

III.3. Distinctive Features of Guesthouses

Although guesthouses are primarily a form of tourist accommodation, they stand out due to their unique atmosphere and setting. They subtly combine culture, architectural heritage, local history, traditions, regional gastronomy, and lifestyle.

III.3.1. The Difference

Staying in a guesthouse is radically different from conventional accommodations such as hotels or tourist resorts. Sleeping in a private home, often filled with history, provides a unique experience specific to each location. Every room, every corner, and every welcome is different. It is even rare to find two guesthouses that are exactly alike, even within the same region.

III.3.2. Tradition

Guesthouses generally respect the traditional aspects of the region where they are located. They allow guests to immerse themselves in the local environment and become familiar with local traditions. Some guesthouses also offer regional activities in addition to accommodation, such as traditional cooking workshops, pottery, weaving, or guided village tours, providing a direct connection with the local population. (Dechire & Benbelil, 2021, p. 48)

III.3.3. Privilege

Staying in a guesthouse offers a privileged experience, markedly different from the impersonal service of large hotels. The limited number of rooms allows for individualized attention, warm welcomes, and attentive service. The availability, kindness, and closeness of the hosts enable them to respond flexibly to travelers' needs and expectations.

III.3.4. An authentic experience

A guesthouse offers not only warm accommodation but also seeks to create a genuine and immersive atmosphere that extends to culture, cuisine, landscapes, and local life. This is reflected through careful decoration, use of local materials, traditional furniture, and a family-like ambiance, among other elements.

III.4. Guesthouses in Algeria: Status and comparative study

Guesthouses in Algeria are a type of accommodation that remains relatively marginal, despite having considerable potential, particularly in rural and Saharan regions.

III.4.1. Comparative analysis with French and Tunisian experiences

This study provides an overview of the sector, along with an analysis and perspective based on the experiences of France and Tunisia, in order to identify concrete avenues for development. The choice of these countries is not arbitrary: France represents a mature and well-structured model, with over 60,000 guesthouse rooms, while Tunisia, culturally and geographically close to Algeria, offers a relevant example of a Maghreb country that has recently begun progressively structuring the sector.

Table (1): Comparative Overview of Guesthouses – Algeria, France, Tunisia

ASPECT	ALGERIA	FRANCE	TUNISIA
LEGAL FRAME WORK	Interministerial Circular No. 01 of June 16, 2012. (Cherif.B, 2014) Reforms in progress home-stay accommodation announced by the ministry of tourism in 2024(AIT, 2024)	Tourism Code when managed by the owner, and Hoguet Law when managed by professionals (Service, 2025)	In 2025, Tunisia published a simplified set of specifications to encourage the creation of guesthouses by easing administrative procedures(Maghraoui.S,2025)
STATISTICS	Local estimates: under than 30 guesthouses per wilaya (Dechire, 2022)	≈60,000 guesthouse rooms (France, 2025)	≈700–1,000 operating; 90 authorized (Webmanagercenter, 2022)
ENTREPRENEURIAL STATUS	Family projects, informal, limited access to financing (Belkadi,2025)	Professionalization through public schemes and labels (ANT, 2024)	Informality dominant, tax evasion, lack of organization
SUPPORT POLICIES	Local Initiatives (Kabylie, Ghardaïa), lack of national strategy (APS, 2024)	Rural tourism support schemes, regional aid, labeling, adapted taxation (DGE, 2025)	2025 strategy: specifications for guesthouses under discussion (TISS, 2025)

Source: prepared by the authors

The comparative analysis of Algeria’s experience in guesthouse tourism activity with those of the two countries has led to the following observations:

a. Regarding the legal framework

In Algeria, the “guesthouse” arrangement is regulated by Interministerial Circular No. 01 of June 16, 2012, jointly issued by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of the Interior (AIT, 2024). his arrangement is limited to five rooms and a maximum of fifteen tenants, and it must include a physical reception as well as a minimum level of services and facilities ensuring comfort (beds, linen, sanitary facilities, etc.). The owner may rent out their property partially or entirely, but must compulsorily obtain insurance covering risks related to the activity (fire, theft, civil liability).

According to a press release on October 10, 2024, the Minister of Tourism, Mokhtar Didouche, stated that his services have prepared a file to regulate the operation of private residences under the homestay arrangement, including guesthouses (Merzouka, 2024). The objective is to oversee the operation of private residences intended for tourist accommodation, notably through facilitating the granting of authorizations and taxation, and by requiring minimum safety and comfort standards for tourists. (Algerie, 2025). However, to date, these regulatory measures have not yet been implemented.

France strictly regulates this type of accommodation and has a well-established legal ecosystem.

Even Tunisia, traditionally lagging behind, published in 2025 a simplified set of specifications to encourage the creation of guesthouses without heavy administrative burdens.

b. Regarding data and visibility

Algeria: There is no official database on guesthouses. The figures available are informal local estimates and have not been consolidated at the national level. In comparison, France regularly publishes data through INSEE, reporting over 60,000 guesthouse rooms, while Tunisia has begun structuring its information as part of its post-2020 reform.

c. Regarding entrepreneurship

In Algeria, guesthouses are often individual or family initiatives, unregistered and lacking access to financing, training, or professional support. France, on the other hand, has mechanisms such as the LEADER program, Chambers of Agriculture, and professionalizing labels. Tunisia focuses on local development projects and integrates guesthouses into a social and solidarity-based economy.

d. Regarding public policies and tourism strategies

Algeria does not have a coherent national strategy for the development of alternative tourism, nor a targeted vision for guesthouses. France fully integrates them into rural revitalization and ecological transition policies. Tunisia is beginning to incorporate alternative tourism into its post-Covid strategy, particularly in inland regions.

III.4.2. Conclusion of the comparative analysis:

In light of the comparative analysis, it appears that Algeria lags significantly in promoting guesthouses as a lever for tourism and local development. These shortcomings hinder the valorization of a considerable potential in terms of heritage, hospitality, and territorial diversity. To bridge this gap, it is urgent for Algeria to adopt a specific law on guesthouses, establish a national registry, create entrepreneurial support mechanisms, and integrate this sector into a national strategy for sustainable and inclusive tourism.

III.4.3. Importance of a Guesthouse project in the Casbah of Algiers for cultural tourism

Guesthouses play a decisive role in the development of cultural tourism by offering an immersive experience that goes beyond simple accommodation. Unlike standardized hotel

structures, guesthouses highlight tangible and intangible heritage and contribute to the preservation and transmission of local know-how

The establishment of a guesthouse in the Casbah of Algiers could play a key role in promoting the cultural heritage of the area. Located in traditional dwellings, it would offer visitors an immersion into local architecture, gastronomy, arts, artisanal traditions, and the lifestyle of residents. It would contribute to the preservation of historic buildings threatened by deterioration. By involving local artisans and cultural guides, it would stimulate the local economy. In this way, it would serve as a model of sustainable and identity-based cultural tourism.

III.4.4. Strategic diagnosis and analysis of a Guesthouse project in the Casbah of Algiers: Application of SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a strategic tool that combines, internally, the strengths and weaknesses of an organization, territory, sector, or project with the opportunities and threats present in its external environment, in order to assist in defining a development strategy. The objective of the analysis is to incorporate both internal and external factors into the strategy, maximizing the potential of strengths and opportunities while minimizing the effects of weaknesses and threats. (Ould Taleb: & Tessa, 2020)

The following table presents a detailed SWOT analysis of the proposed guesthouse project in the Casbah of Algiers. It aims to illustrate how such an initiative can contribute to heritage preservation and the development of sustainable cultural tourism by identifying internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats.

Table (2): Strategic SWOT Matrix for Guesthouse Integration in the Casbah.

Strengths « S » - Internal Factors	Weaknesses «W » - Internal Factors
S1. UNESCO World Heritage Listing: The Casbah spans 105 hectares of dense urban fabric, containing a unique concentration of historical strata that serves as a high-value asset for cultural tourism. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992 under Criteria (ii), (iv), and (v). (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1992). S2. Traditional Patio Architecture: The traditional houses (<i>douéرات</i>) feature central open-air patios (<i>wast ad-dar</i>) that naturally optimize passive cooling, reducing summer indoor temperatures by 4°C to 6°C compared to modern concrete buildings. (Benouamar, A., & Chergui, S; 2015). S3. Strategic Core Location: Located at the	W1. Advanced Structural Decay: Civil protection and engineering audits estimate that over 40% of the historic buildings in the Casbah are structurally compromised, shored up by wooden beams, or in a state of partial ruin. W2. High Physical Inaccessibility: The street network consists of steep stairways, dead ends, and lanes frequently narrowing to less than 1.2 to 1.5 meters, completely prohibiting motorized vehicles and heavily restricting luggage transport or Persons with Reduced Mobility access. Tourism Infrastructure Deficit: The area suffers from a severe commercial vacuum; there are fewer than 5 high-standard traditional restaurants or certified boutique commercial outlets across the entire 105-hectare perimeter. .

historic heart of Algiers, situated within 1.5 km of major transport hubs (Algiers Port, Metro stations like <i>Place des Martyrs</i>, and train lines), making it an ideal urban exploration base. S4. Artisanal & Intangible Capital: The neighborhood preserves active pockets of multi-generational craftsmanship, including over 150 registered traditional workshops specializing in woodcarving, copperware, and traditional tilework. S5. (Algeria, 2002)	W4. Market Anonymity & Supply Lack: There is an acute lack of benchmark boutique accommodations, with formal commercial guesthouse beds in the lower Casbah accounting for less than 1% of the total hospitality capacity of the Algiers Wilaya.
Opportunities « O » - External Factors	Threats « T » - External Factors
O1. Institutional Safeguard Plans: The state-backed master plan allocates institutional frameworks, co-funding lines, and technical guidelines for private buyers committing to authentic historical restorations. O2. Rise of Experiential Tourism: Global trends show a sharp 30% year-on-year increase in consumer preference for authentic, culture-led boutique lodgings over traditional, generic corporate hotels. (UNWTO, 2022) O3. Public-Private-Community Ties: Leveraging Algeria's updated framework for civil society allows direct operational partnerships with local neighborhood committees for localized waste management, custom guiding, and security.(Algeria, 2012) O4. Digital Transformation and Niche Marketing: The expansion of specialized global booking platforms (e.g., Airbnb, Booking.com) and the rise of Algerian fintech/e-tourism startups facilitate direct-to-consumer reach for independent, non-traditional heritage accommodations.	T1. Fragmented Governance Overlaps: Administrative friction among the 3 primary institutional tiers (the Wilaya of Algiers, the Ministry of Culture, and the local APC municipal offices) introduces lengthy delays, sometimes extending building permit processing times to over 18 months . T2. Aggressive Modern Competitors: The local guesthouse faces commercial pressure from contemporary corporate hotels in Algiers' modern center and business districts. T3. Risk of Irreversible Delisting The use of improper modern materials (like Portland cement or concrete slabs instead of traditional lime mortars) during unmonitored private overhauls risks degrading the site's integrity, threatening a potential UNESCO "Heritage in Danger" listing. T4. Instability: The political and economic context may affect tourist attendance.(Alili, 2026) T5. Perceived Insecurity and Negative Image: Disproportionate media focus on urban blight and insecurity in ancient medinas creates a psychological barrier for potential tourists, reducing initial booking intentions by an estimated 25%. (Mayouf, F., & Bendebili, 2025)

Source: elaborated by the authors

Strategic summary

The establishment of a guesthouse in the Casbah of Algiers presents a strategic opportunity to promote cultural tourism in Algeria. Located in a UNESCO World Heritage site, it would

offer visitors an immersive experience in traditional architecture, popular arts, and daily Casbah life. Its strengths lie in the authenticity of its setting, its potential to showcase tangible and intangible heritage, and its role as an economic catalyst by involving local artisans, guides, and producers.

However, the project will face several challenges, including the costly restoration of buildings, the lack of modern infrastructure, and accessibility issues inherent to the medina. Success will therefore depend on a strategy combining heritage valorization with digital promotion efforts and institutional partnerships (heritage preservation programs, cooperation with UNESCO, support from the Ministry of Tourism).

By capitalizing on the growing demand for sustainable and cultural tourism, the guesthouse could become a pilot model of local development, balancing heritage preservation, job creation, and international appeal

III.4.5. Empirical Assessment of Visitors' Perceptions of Heritage Guesthouses.

To complement the SWOT analysis, a field survey was conducted among visitors to the Casbah of Algiers. The aim was to evaluate perceptions regarding the potential role of guesthouses in promoting cultural tourism and safeguarding the historical heritage of the Casbah.

A structured questionnaire comprising ten closed-ended questions (Single choice/ Multiple Choice) was administered to a convenience sample of 68 visitors. The instrument was divided into three sections: socio-demographic characteristics, travel motivations and cultural expectations, and perceptions of guesthouse development in the Casbah.

The survey data were processed using descriptive statistics techniques. Given that the study aims to evaluate the feasibility and attractiveness of guesthouses as a tool for promoting heritage tourism, the analysis emphasizes the responses most closely related to this objective. The general descriptive questions, are presented briefly to provide contextual information on the respondents' profile.

III.4.6. Survey results

a. General profile of respondents

The study sample comprised 68 visitors representing a variety of socio-demographic profiles, including both domestic and international tourists.

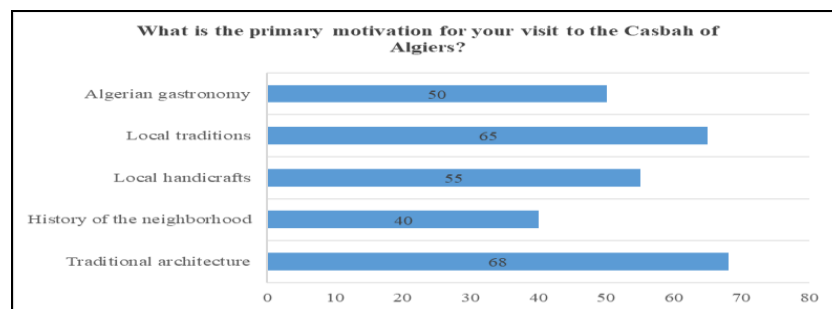
The sample consisted of 68 respondents including 24% from Algiers, 64% from other Algerian provinces. And 12% international visitors. Female respondent represented 32% of the sample. Most participants belonged to the 18-35 and 36-50 age groups, reflecting the predominance of young and middle-aged visitors. Concerning previous experience with the

destination, 30% were visiting the Casbah for the first time, whereas 70% has visited it one or more previous occasions.

Building on this socio-demographic profile, the following sections examines visitors' motivations perceptions, and expectations, providing deeper insights into how guesthouses could enhance the cultural tourism experience and contribute to the sustainable development of the Casbah of Algiers.

b. Motivations for Visiting the Casbah of Algiers

Figure 1. Primary motivation for visiting the Casbah of Algiers

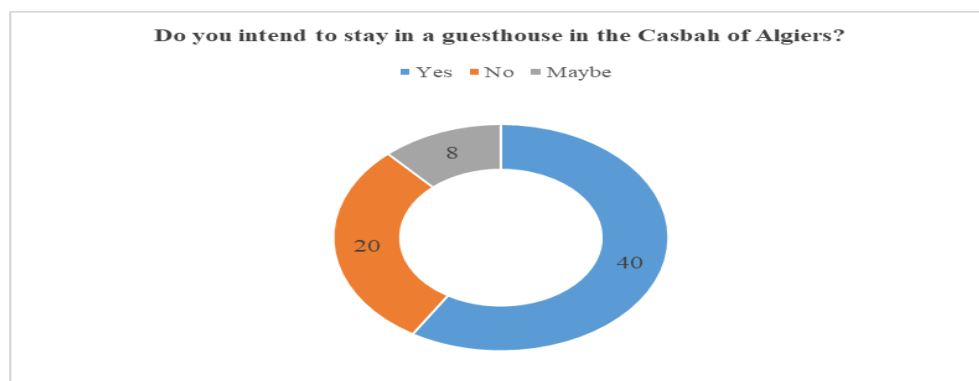


Source: prepared by authors

Figure 1 highlights that visitors are primarily attracted to the Casbah because of its traditional architecture, its local traditions and local handicrafts, local history and cultural traditions emerge as the main motivation for the visit. While gastronomy and the history also attract a considerable proportion of the respondents, the findings confirm that the Casbah is perceived primarily as a culture heritage destination emphasizing the need to design and promote tourism product that can enrich and diversify the cultural experience offered to visitors.

c. Visitors' interest in staying in a guesthouse

Figure 2. Visitors' interest in staying in a guesthouse

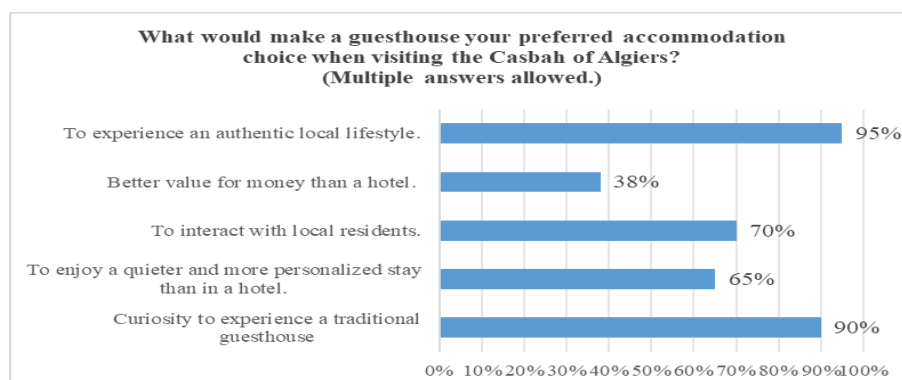


Source: prepared by authors

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of respondents expressed an interest in staying in a guesthouse in the Casbah, whereas only a small proportion answered negatively or remained undecided. This result indicates a favorable perception of heritage guesthouses and suggests the existence of a potential market for this type of accommodation. The findings support the idea that guesthouses could diversify the tourism offer while providing visitors with a more authentic and immersive cultural experience.

d. Factors Influencing Visitors' Preference for Guesthouses

Figure 3. Visitors' interest in staying in a guesthouse

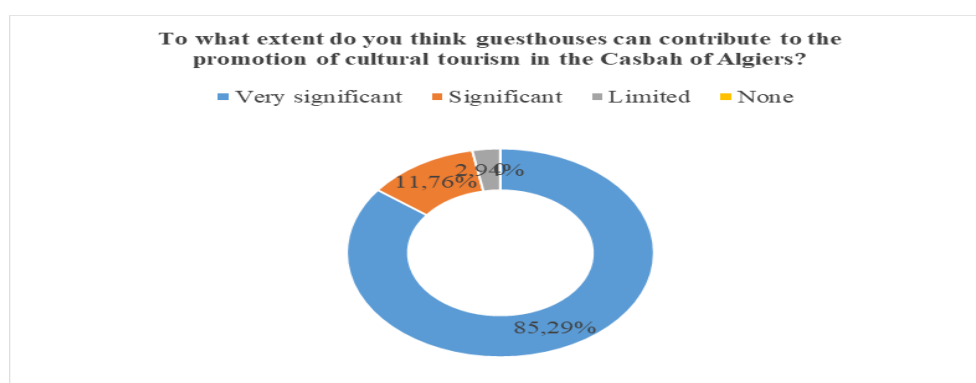


Source: prepared by authors

The results indicate that visitors' preference for guesthouses is mainly driven by the search for authentic and immersive cultural experiences. Experiencing the local lifestyle (95%) and the curiosity to stay in a traditional guesthouse (90%) emerge as the strongest motivations, followed by interaction with local residents (70%). In contrast, economic considerations such as better value for money (38%) appear to play a secondary role. These findings highlight the potential of guesthouses as an effective tool for promoting cultural tourism and enhancing the heritage value of the Casbah of Algiers.

e. Contribution of guesthouses to promoting cultural tourism

Figure 4. Contribution of guesthouses to promoting cultural tourism

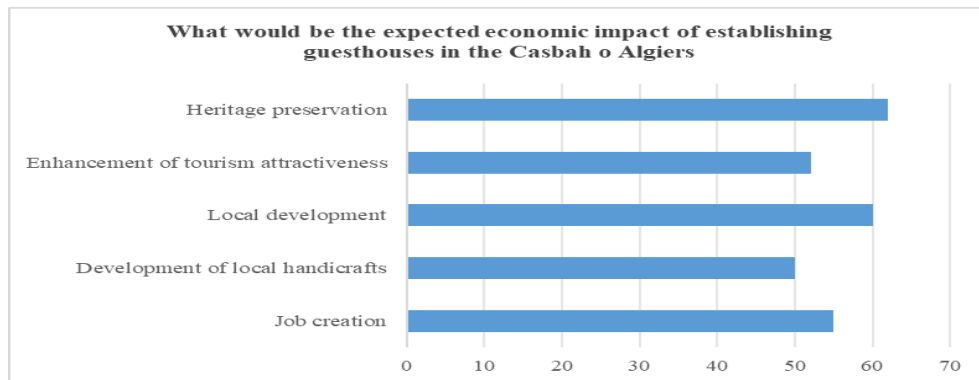


Source: prepared by authors

According to Figure 4, most respondents believe that guesthouses can make a significant contribution to the promotion of cultural tourism. This positive perception reflects the potential of guesthouses to preserve local heritage, strengthen cultural identity, and enhance the attractiveness of the Casbah as a heritage tourism destination. Consequently, guesthouses can be regarded as an effective tool for supporting sustainable cultural tourism development.

f. Expected economic impacts of developing heritage guesthouses in the Casbah of Algiers

Figure 5. Expected economic impact of developing guesthouses in the Casbah of Algiers



Source: prepared by authors

Figure 5 shows that respondents expect the development of heritage guesthouses to generate significant economic and cultural benefits. The most frequently cited impacts include heritage preservation, local economic development, job creation, support for local handicrafts, and enhanced tourism attractiveness. These findings indicate that visitors perceive guesthouses not only as accommodation facilities, but as strategic instruments capable of preserving cultural heritage while fostering sustainable local development.

III.4.7. Discussion

The survey findings demonstrate a generally positive perception of guesthouses among visitors to the Casbah of Algiers. The high level of interest expressed by respondents suggests that this form of accommodation responds to the growing demand for authentic cultural experiences and experiential tourism.

Overall, the survey findings support the SWOT analysis presented in the previous section by confirming the existence of significant strengths and opportunities for developing heritage guesthouses in the Casbah of Algiers.

Conclusion

This study confirms that guesthouses can play a meaningful role in promoting sustainable cultural tourism in Algeria, particularly within heritage sites such as the Casbah of Algiers. The findings validate the initial hypotheses formulated in the introduction, showing that the limited development of cultural tourism is largely due to institutional fragmentation,

insufficient fiscal incentives, and the absence of a clear legal framework regulating guesthouse operations. These structural weaknesses have constrained the potential of guesthouses to serve as drivers of cultural and economic revitalization. Conversely, the comparative analysis with France and Tunisia demonstrates that coherent governance mechanisms, financial incentives, and integrated heritage policies significantly enhance the contribution of guesthouses to local development and tourism diversification.

The quantitative survey conducted among **68 visitors** further strengthens these conclusions. The results reveal a strong interest in heritage guesthouses, with respondents expressing a clear preference for authentic cultural experiences over conventional accommodation. Most participants indicated that they would be willing to stay in a guesthouse in the Casbah, primarily to experience the local way of life, discover traditional architecture, interact with residents, and immerse themselves in the site's historical atmosphere. Furthermore, the majority perceived guesthouses as an effective means of preserving cultural heritage while generating local economic benefits through employment creation, handicraft promotion, and increased tourism attractiveness.

By combining documentary analysis, comparative assessment, SWOT analysis, and empirical evidence from visitors, this research contributes to the growing body of literature linking tourism, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. It demonstrates that heritage-based entrepreneurship can serve as a catalyst for inclusive urban regeneration and confirms the strategic potential of the Casbah of Algiers to become a model of community-based cultural tourism. Nevertheless, the study also highlights several constraints, including limited institutional support, the absence of a dedicated regulatory framework, and the persistence of informal practices affecting the development of guesthouses.

Future research should expand this work through larger-scale empirical investigations involving visitors, local residents, entrepreneurs, and public authorities, while adopting longitudinal approaches to assess the long-term socio-economic impacts of heritage guesthouses. Overall, the study concludes that strengthening governance, clarifying the legal framework, encouraging public-private collaboration, and supporting local entrepreneurship are essential conditions for positioning guesthouses as genuine catalysts of sustainable and inclusive cultural tourism in Algeria.

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