



Exploring the Prospects for Tourism Development in China and Arab Countries under the Belt and Road Initiative: Taking Algeria as an Example

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DOI: 10.32629/memf.v5i2.1978

Abstract: With the in-depth development of the “Belt and Road” strategy, the tourism development of countries along the route is in full swing. This new strategic concept of travel culture not only covers hundreds of tourist routes in many regions of the country, but also has huge connections with the vast number of Arab countries. Nowadays, the “Belt and Road” national tour will be the development trend of the tourism industry. It is of great practical significance to study the development prospects of tourism in Arab countries under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Keywords: the Belt and Road, language, Algeria, Arabic, tourism

1. Introduction

In 2013, the Chinese government proposed the Belt and Road Initiative. In recent years, the countries along the Belt and Road, characterized by dialogue and consultation, joint construction and sharing, win-win cooperation and mutual learning[1], have close tourism exchanges, huge market scale and remarkable cooperation results. According to the “Tourism Green Book” released by the Tourism Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Arab countries have always been the tourist destinations that tourists from countries along the “Belt and Road” and Chinese tourists yearn for. Before the arrival of the epidemic in 2019, Chinese tourists to Arab countries along the Belt and Road had maintained a steady growth trend, and people from Dubai, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and other countries have become the main source markets for Chinese outbound tourism. From 2014 to 2019, the average annual growth rate of Chinese tourists to Arab countries along the “Belt and Road” was as high as 15.34%.

2. Research implications

Cultural tourism is an important feature of the Belt and Road Initiative[2] and one of the important ways to promote cultural exchanges and enhance mutual understanding between China and Arab countries. According to the data, among the countries along the “Belt and Road”, there are more than 60 countries with cultural tourism resources. According to incomplete statistics, countries along the Belt and Road received more than 100 million Chinese tourists in 2018, a year-on-year increase of more than 10%. The International Tourism Organization (ITTO) has predicted that tourism exchanges between China and the Arab countries of the “Belt and Road” will continue to develop for a long time in the future.

It can be seen that under “the Belt and Road” Initiative, the cultural tourism industry has broad market prospects, which requires the formulation of corresponding strategic plans in order to better promote the development of cultural tourism.

With the effective control of the new crown pneumonia epidemic, China has become more connected with the rest of the world. As an important part of people-to-people exchanges, tourism urgently needs to take advantage of the policy to develop better. Under the active initiative of “the Belt and Road” policy, the development prospects of tourism in China and the vast number of Arab countries are particularly broad. As an important tourism country with valuable tourism resources along “the Belt and Road”, Algeria has a bright development direction. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to explore the development prospects of tourism in China and Arab countries.

3. Problems with the development of tourism in Algeria in the Arab countries: Algeria

Algeria is the largest country in Africa and the Arab world by geographical area. The country is rich in domestic tourism, from cultural monuments from various historical periods to the mysterious natural beauty of the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean coast. Algeria is a giant hidden in plain sight in many ways. On the fertile land hugging the Mediterranean

coast, there are historic cities such as Constantine, Oran and the capital Algiers, ancient Roman outposts like Jamila and Timgard (both UNESCO World Heritage Sites), one of the best-preserved archaeological sites in North Africa, and to the south, in the interior of the Sahara, the sandstone massifs of Tasirien Ajer.

According to the National Geographic envoy, Algeria will be the next major tourist destination among the Arab countries along the Belt and Road in the post-pandemic era.

In terms of tourism, the territory of Algeria has great potential to become a giant for hegemony. Andrew Ferrand, a well-known journalist for the National Geographic channel, praised Algeria as a tourist destination: "No one can deny the tourist potential of Algeria, although its true value has not been estimated and it has not been used as it should be. However, all the tourism bases are there, such as Algeria, which is blessed with tourism and archaeological sites. Every category of tourists can find something of interest in Algeria. For example, in winter, the great desert of Algeria can become a refuge for people fleeing the harsh cold of Europe," said journalist Andrew Ferrand, "In summer, Algeria's beaches and long coastline may attract a different flow of tourists in the coming years." He added: "Its forests, its historical sites, are not to be outdone in terms of attractiveness." In his opinion, it would be enough to be more open to foreign tourists. To that end, he believes that Algeria must promote its tourist destinations and review the tourism infrastructure that fills the gaps.¹

4. Measures to address the problems existing in the development of tourism in Algeria

4.1 Algerian attempt

Algerian Youzu is an organization integrating Algerian cultural heritage excavation, tourism development, and tourism promotion. Its purpose is to provide visitors with an opportunity to seriously explore and feel the local culture in order to get a better understanding of Algeria in its entirety. At the same time, it also provides a better travel experience for Algerian tourists, making a significant contribution to the tourism industry. To date, the organization has provided a great deal of support for the development of the tourism industry. For example, Chinese travel companies promote tourism products on social networking sites and showcase travel itineraries at many international travel exhibitions, attracting a large number of travel enthusiasts. In addition, the organization has set up several tourism centers throughout Algeria to support and assist in the development of the local tourism industry. The organization provides substantial assistance to the tourism industry, which also includes the establishment and management of tourism programs, as well as the integration and management of tourist information.

The establishment of the Algerian nomadic community is of great significance to the development of Algeria's historical heritage and tourism. Its presence has played a key role in the contribution of the local community and the promotion of tourism, and has also opened a new chapter in the excavation of Algeria's cultural heritage, and the joint rescue and development of Algeria's ancient cities.

4.2 China's policy support

With the effective global control of the new crown pneumonia epidemic^[3] and the relaxation of visa policies for China in various countries in the Arab world, the development of tourism exchanges along "the Belt and Road" has been deepened. The Arab world is attracting more and more Chinese tourists, which is inseparable from the policy support of the Chinese government.

4.2.1 Uphold the concept of win-win cooperation

China has a close relationship with tourism in countries along the Belt and Road. So far, China has signed 76 bilateral cultural and tourism cooperation documents with countries along the Belt and Road. In addition, China has co-organized the Year of Tourism with many countries, established tourism cooperation mechanisms such as the Silk Road Tourism Marketing Alliance and the "Wanli Tea Ceremony" International Tourism Alliance,^[4] and reached 19 agreements or arrangements with 15 countries to simplify visa procedures.^[5]

4.2.2 Focus on promoting cultural exchanges

Tourism is a bridge for the spread of civilization and cultural exchanges. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, tourism has long become an important area of economic, political and cultural cooperation.

The role of tourism in the movement of people is also irreplaceable. Under the active initiative of the "the Belt and Road" policy, the tourism route products of Arab countries are particularly sought after. Xu Xiaolei, Chief Brand Officer of CYTS, said: "I hope that tourists can better understand the diversity of world civilizations while experiencing the magnificent natural scenery and profound civilization heritage."^[6-8]

5. Suggestions on the development direction of tourism in China and Arab countries

5.1 Relevant government departments of the state should give full play to their role in overall planning and guidance.

The National Administration of Culture and Tourism should play an active role in the recovery of global tourism. It is necessary to fully seize the opportunity of the past 2023 as the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, and promote the development of the tourism market for Chinese citizens to countries and regions related to the Belt and Road. At the same time, it should be known that tourism enterprises play a pivotal role in the recovery of the tourism market, and the national policy should provide all-round support and help for tourism enterprises.

5.2 Strengthen international cultural exchanges

The global economy is gradually recovering, but there is still a large gap in development between regions. To achieve better regional development and common prosperity, the “Belt and Road” policy is undoubtedly a key starting point. In this context, strengthening international cultural exchanges has become an urgent need. We need to be clear that actions are just as important as thoughts. In order to better realize the maximum value of the "Belt and Road" policy, it is necessary to strengthen the exchanges and cooperation between national and international cities in terms of culture and thought, so as to complement each other. The State has made great efforts in this regard. At present, China has signed cooperation and development agreements with many countries related to the construction of tourism culture along the "Belt and Road", and the development prospects of countries along the "Belt and Road" are good. China's high-speed rail is also taking advantage of the "One Belt, One Road" policy, and continues to go out of China and extend and expand to the world, so as to strengthen the international tourism cooperation relationship.[9]

5.3 Accelerate the implementation of the strategic plan of the National Tourism Administration

In 2015, the China National Tourism Administration planned the strategic development of the Silk Road and formulated the key implementation goals of the “Belt and Road”. The strategic plan reflects the Chinese government's “responsibility as a major country” and fully demonstrates the far-sightedness of the country's leaders. Tourism companies should seize the opportunity to speed up the implementation of this series of strategic plans of the National Tourism Administration, actively respond to the core cities and tourism areas of the “Belt and Road”, optimize tourism marketing methods, actively play the role of the ancient Silk Road, extend the tourism culture of the "Belt and Road" to the vast number of Arab countries, drive the development of Sino-Arab tourism, and truly benefit China and the Arab world.

5.4 Strengthen the innovation of cultural tourism products

As a form of cultural exchange, cultural tourism needs to be “unique” and “cultural”. Therefore, when formulating strategic plans, the innovation of cultural tourism products should be fully considered, and more unique and attractive cultural tourism products should be provided to meet the needs of tourists. For example, it can create the characteristics of tourism products by absorbing local folk cultural elements, and can also improve the quality and experience of tourism products through digitalization, high-tech and other means to meet the spiritual needs of tourists. In addition, it is also possible to get rid of the traditional “tourism” model and create more “connotation” cultural tourism products. At the same time, in the construction of cultural tourism products, we should pay attention to user experience, combine cultural tourism with modern technology, and provide tourists with a more convenient, efficient and comfortable tourism experience.[10]

6. Conclusion

The friendship between countries lies in the people-to-people relationship. The Belt and Road, tourism first. With the increase in the demand for tourism among Chinese around the world, driven by the “Belt and Road” initiative, the tourism industry in China and Arab countries has broad prospects, and the market prospects of outbound tourism will also be better and better. But at the same time, we need to be clear about the many challenges behind this prosperity, from the national level to the individual level, and actively look for ways to optimize it. This also requires industry stakeholders to actively respond to opportunities and challenges, and make every effort to promote the sustainable development of the entire industry with the support of scientific and technological innovation, so that this great policy can truly play its best role. Let us stick to the original intention of tourism and cultural exchanges, so as to promote the healthy development of the tourism industry, so that the cultures of various countries along the “Belt and Road” can bloom in the garden of world culture!

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