

"The role of traditional industries in the development of tourism in Algeria: An analytical study in Bordj Bou Arreridj"



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Abstract

This paper explores the role of traditional industries and handicrafts in supporting tourism development in Algeria, with a specific focus on the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj. Through a conceptual and analytical approach, the study examines how artisanal practices contribute to enriching the cultural tourism experience and strengthening regional identity. Drawing on official reports and sectoral analysis, the research highlights the strategic importance of crafts in shaping sustainable tourism models. The findings suggest that integrating traditional industries into tourism development plans can boost local economies, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance destination appeal. Key recommendations include improving institutional support, investing in artisanal infrastructure, and promoting collaboration between public and private stakeholders to ensure long-term impact and national visibility for the sector.

Keywords

Traditional industries;
Handicrafts;
Tourism development;
Cultural heritage;
Tourist attraction;
Bordj Bou Arreridj;
Algeria.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الصناعات التقليدية؛
الحرف اليدوية؛
تنمية السياحة؛
التراث الثقافي؛
الجذب السياحي؛
برج بوعريريج؛
الجزائر.

"دور الصناعات التقليدية في تنمية السياحة في الجزائر: دراسة تحليلية في ولاية برج بوعريريج"

ملخص

تناولت هذه الدراسة دور الصناعات التقليدية والحرف اليدوية في دعم تنمية السياحة في الجزائر، مع التركيز على ولاية برج بوعريريج كنموذج تحليلي. ومن خلال مقاربة مفاهيمية تحليلية، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيفية مساهمة الممارسات الحرفية في إثراء تجربة السياحة الثقافية وتعزيز الهوية الإقليمية. وبالاعتماد على تقارير رسمية وتحليل قطاعي، تؤكد النتائج الأهمية الاستراتيجية للصناعات التقليدية في بناء نموذج سياحي مستدام. كما تشير الدراسة إلى أن إدماج هذه الصناعات ضمن مخططات تنمية السياحة من شأنه أن ينشئ الاقتصاد المحلي، من خلال محافظته على الموروث الثقافي، وتعزيز من جاذبية الوجهات السياحية. في الأخير توصي الدراسة بضرورة تحسين الدعم المؤسسي، والاستثمار في البنية التحتية الحرفية، وتشجيع الشراكة بين القطاعين العام والخاص لضمان استدامة التأثير وتعزيز الحضور الوطني لهذا القطاع الواعد.

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Doi:

I- Introduction:

Traditional industries and handicrafts are not merely economic activities, but essential carriers of cultural identity and historical continuity. In Algeria—and particularly in the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj—these crafts reflect a rich legacy rooted in regional diversity, ancestral knowledge, and local creativity. Artisans in the region play a key role in preserving these practices, offering visitors authentic experiences that reflect the values, aesthetics, and traditions of Algerian society.

Despite this potential, the contribution of traditional crafts to tourism development remains underexplored and insufficiently integrated into national strategies. Many of these activities are practiced in isolation from tourism circuits, lacking the institutional and promotional support necessary to become true levers for economic and cultural revitalization.

This study adopts an analytical approach to examine the role that traditional industries and handicrafts can play in supporting tourism development in Bordj Bou Arreridj. Through the analysis of official reports, literature, and sectoral observations, the research explores how traditional crafts can be more effectively leveraged to enhance the appeal of the region, support local economies, and preserve cultural heritage.

a) Research Question:

To what extent can traditional industries and handicrafts contribute to tourism development in the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj?

b) Sub-questions:

- How are traditional industries, crafts, and tourism understood in the Algerian context?
- What are the dominant forms of traditional crafts in the region?
- In what ways can these crafts stimulate tourism and foster local development?

c) Importance of the Study:

This research is significant because it sheds light on the strategic role of traditional industries as an untapped resource in tourism planning. By examining how artisanal activities intersect with cultural tourism, the study aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders of the value of integrating heritage-based production into local development frameworks.

d) Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze the cultural and economic role of traditional industries in the context of tourism.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities facing the crafts sector in Bordj Bou Arreridj.
- To offer recommendations for enhancing the integration of traditional crafts into tourism strategies.

I.1. Definition of Traditional Industries and Handicrafts:

Traditional industries and handicrafts are deeply rooted in the cultural and economic structure of societies. These activities preserve national identity and reflect the historical and artistic legacy of nations, while also serving as a source of income and a driver of tourism development. In Algeria, where such crafts are diverse, they play a key role in strengthening the cultural appeal of various regions.¹

According to **UNESCO**, traditional industries include products made by artisans using manual techniques, simple tools, or basic machinery, as long as the artisan's input remains dominant. These products often reflect cultural or social meanings, combining utility and aesthetics, and are made from renewable natural materials.²

UNCTAD distinguishes traditional crafts from cottage industries, noting that handicrafts are usually produced with manual labor and basic tools, often at home, and possess artistic or cultural features linked to national traditions.³

In Algeria, **Ordinance 96-01** legally defines traditional industries as any activity involving manual work, whether related to production, creation, transformation, restoration, or service delivery. These activities may be carried out individually or through cooperatives and artisanal enterprises.⁴

Executive Decree No. 07/339 classifies traditional industries into three categories:⁵

- **Artistic crafts**, which involve manual and aesthetic production to preserve ancestral skills.
- **Material production crafts**: focusing on everyday goods for domestic, industrial, or agricultural use.
- **Service-based crafts**: including repair, restoration, and maintenance services.

Algerian legislation also categorizes artisans into three levels:⁶

- **Independent artisan:** A registered individual who performs and manages their activity with proven skills.
- **Master artisan:** An individual with advanced qualifications and technical expertise.
- **Skilled worker:** An employee with recognized vocational competence.

In addition, two organizational models support the traditional industry in Algeria:

- **Artisanal cooperatives:** which group artisans under a civil association for shared development.
- **Craft enterprises:** legally established under the Commercial Code, focus on material and service production.

I. 2. The role of traditional industry in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening national identity

Traditional industries and handicrafts serve as a vital bridge between generations, preserving the cultural essence of societies and strengthening national identity. In Algeria, where diverse civilizations have intersected over time, traditional crafts embody the continuity and innovation of the national heritage.⁷ These industries play several key roles:

- **Safeguarding Cultural Heritage:** Traditional crafts act as a medium through which values, rituals, and artistic knowledge are transmitted from one generation to the next. Their continued practice ensures that intangible aspects of identity, such as customs, folklore, and symbolism, are kept alive within communities.⁸
- **Enhancing Social Belonging:** The act of producing or engaging with handicrafts fosters a sense of pride and connection to one's roots. Artisanal workshops also promote interaction and solidarity among community members, contributing to social cohesion.⁹
- **Promoting Intergenerational Dialogue:** By encouraging exchanges between age groups and cultural communities, traditional industries contribute to mutual understanding, the transmission of values, and peaceful coexistence across generations and social groups.¹⁰
- **Fostering Creativity and Artistic Innovation:** Through continuous training and the sharing of experience among artisans, traditional industries stimulate creativity and enable product improvement. These collaborative efforts strengthen the competitiveness of handmade goods and support their sustainability in both local and global markets. (**Algerian News Agency, 2024**)

I 3. Algerian Tourism Development:

Tourism is widely recognized as a key sector for economic growth and social integration. In Algeria, despite its vast natural and cultural assets, the tourism industry remains underutilized due to structural, organizational, and policy-related barriers. However, promoting traditional industries and crafts can offer a pathway to sustainable tourism development by enriching the visitor experience with authentic, local products.

From a conceptual standpoint, tourism has been defined from various perspectives. Some scholars emphasize its economic nature, describing it as a series of activities involving the temporary movement of people for non-residential purposes, which contributes to local economies through spending and service consumption.¹¹

Others see tourism as a complex system involving leisure travel, service provision, and social interaction between hosts and visitors, thus qualifying it as both a cultural and economic industry.¹²

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism includes all activities undertaken by individuals traveling outside their usual environment for less than a year, for leisure, business, or other purposes, without engaging in permanent employment.¹³

According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism is structured around four essential components:¹⁴

- **The tourist:** the individual who engages in travel and leisure activities;
- **The destination:** the place offering attractions, services, and cultural experiences;
- **The transportation system:** the means that enable the tourist to reach and move within the destination;

- **The tourism services and infrastructure**, which include accommodations, catering, and other support systems.

Pillars of Tourism: Tourism as a system depends on three foundational pillars that sustain its function and growth:¹⁵

- **Tourist demand:** the motivations, expectations, and needs of travelers;
- **Tourism supply:** the products, services, and destinations made available to tourists;
- **Tourism management and organization:** the institutions, regulations, and policies that govern and coordinate the tourism industry.

II– Methods and Materials:

II. 1. Study area- Bordj Bou Arreridj:

- Astronomical location: Between 35°–37° N latitude and 4°–5° E longitude.
- Geographical region: Eastern High Plains of Algeria.
- Administrative structure: Established by Presidential Decree No. 84/09 of February 4, 1984, the Wilaya includes 34 municipalities.

Bordj Bou Arreridj, located in northeastern Algeria, is renowned for the richness and diversity of its traditional crafts and artisanal practices, which are deeply rooted in the region's cultural and historical legacy. The Wilaya's geographic setting in the Eastern High Plains contributes to its role as a hub of cultural exchange and artistic production. Traditional crafts such as embroidered garments, handmade textiles, and heritage clothing continue to flourish across its municipalities, reflecting each local community's social needs and identity.

These handicraft activities are not only a means of preserving cultural identity but also serve as a vehicle for regional development and tourism enhancement. The historical continuity of these crafts supports cultural tourism by offering visitors authentic, locally inspired experiences.

The name "**Bordj Bou Arreridj**" is believed to originate from the Ottoman period. The term "Bordj" refers to watchtowers used for military observation across the region. The component "Bou Arreridj" is linked to multiple theories, the most widely accepted of which associates it with "Baba Aruj," a prominent Turkish commander. Others suggest it stems from the Ottoman guards' feathered helmets, symbolically linked to the term "Aruj."

Additionally, the region is known for the Al-Biban mountain chain, a historical passage connecting Algeria's east, west, north, and south. The name "Al-Biban," meaning "the gates," originates from the Turkish phrase "Domir Rabu", meaning "Iron Gate," emphasizing the area's historical importance as a crossroads of trade and culture.¹⁶

Fig.1. Map of Bordj Bou Arreridj.



II. 2. Methodology of the study:

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach to examine the relationship between traditional industries and handicrafts and the development of tourism in Algeria, with a particular focus on the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj. Rather than relying on field data, the research is based on an in-depth review of relevant literature, national strategies, official reports, and case studies that explore the contribution of traditional crafts to cultural preservation and economic diversification.

The study draws on secondary data from government publications, academic research, and reports by tourism and cultural heritage institutions. The objective is to provide a conceptual and critical understanding of how traditional industries can serve as a lever for tourism enhancement in Algeria; this analytical framework is structured as follows:

- The first part addresses the conceptual foundations of traditional industries and tourism development;
- The second part explores the cultural and economic role of traditional crafts, particularly in the local context of Bordj Bou Arreridj;
- The third part discusses challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for integrating traditional crafts into national tourism strategies.

II 3. Traditional Industries and Crafts in Bordj Bou Arreridj:

The Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arreridj is distinguished by its rich diversity of traditional industries, shaped by its unique geographical location and the cultural mosaic of its population. These crafts trace back to ancient times and reflect the specific needs, environments, and identities of local communities. Despite modern pressures, these artisanal practices continue to evolve while preserving their cultural authenticity, and the most important traditional industrial activities known to the state include:

Table 1: Participation programs in local and international exhibitions and events.

traditional industries in Bordj Bou Arreridj	Outputs	Positioning areas
Traditional weaving	It is considered one of the oldest crafts practiced by the inhabitants of the state due to the availability of raw materials (wool), as the region is pastoral. It spread throughout the state, especially in rural areas, and its shapes, colors, techniques, and uses vary, including those who make clothes (Barnous, Qashabiya), bedding, and decoration (Zarabi, covers such as Hayek, Hanbal).	Bordj Zamoura; Tesmert. Ash; Hamadiya; Khalil; Burj al-Ghadir; Qusour; Mansoura, Bin Daoud; Harazah
Traditional dress	The state of Bordj Bou Arreridj is known for its traditional dress, known as the "benour", which is a dress worn by women at weddings and events. And the qashabia and burnous for men.	Bordj Zamora; Mansoura Bordj Bou Arreridj. Bordj El Ghadir.
basketry	Since ancient times, Salalah's industry has been linked to the needs of the inhabitants who used materials available in nature, such as alloys, reeds, and willow, to produce tools used in daily life.	Hamadiya. Ras al-Wad.
Traditional Jewelry	Traditional silver jewelry for daily adornment and occasions is known in the areas inhabited by the tribes. It represents one of the tributaries of originality and the Amazigh historical depth of the region.	Bordj Bou Arreridj. Yachir; Jaafra; Ras El Oued; Bir Kassid Ali.
Wood carving	Using simple tools, drawings and decorations are added to wooden products, including Botanical motifs and various geometric shapes that are very delicate and beautiful, and then varnished to give them a shine.	Bordj Bou Arreridj; Khalil.

Making furniture from palm fronds	Artisans in the state have mastered this craft to produce furniture and materials made of palm fronds, which are used to decorate homes, cafes, and shops.	Bordj Bou Arreridj
Artistic masterpieces	Making decorative tools and models of cultural and historical landmarks that perpetuate the history of the region and remain a witness to its civilization with multiple and simple materials, including copper, wood, stone, and recycled materials.	Bordj Bou Arreridj El Anasser; AL-Colla; Ras al-Wad.
Manufacture of sieves	The state is famous for the manufacture of sieves, the name of which varies according to the type of iron mesh: there is the sieve, the squat, and the sieyar. They are used in the manufacture of their most important food products, including couscous, masfout, bread, etc.	Majana; Al-Colla; Wlad Dahman.

Source: Prepared by researchers based on ¹⁷

Official data from the Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industry (2024) highlights that Bordj Bou Arreridj hosts more than 7,000 registered artisans, leading to the creation of over 16,000 jobs across three main sectors:

Table 2: Number of registrants in the traditional industries sector in Bordj Bou Arreridj.

The traditional industries sector in Bordj Bou Arreridj	Traditional Artistic Industry	Traditional Industry and Production	Traditional Service Industry
Number of registrations	833	2465	3419

Source: Prepared by researchers based on ¹⁸

In addition to its craftsmanship, Bordj Bou Arreridj is well known for its rich cultural events, fairs, and traditional festivals, which serve as a key attraction for tourists. These occasions offer visitors the opportunity to discover and purchase local handcrafted products, reinforcing the region's cultural identity and generating economic value. The wilaya also boasts a diverse and distinctive culinary heritage, featuring dishes such as shakhshoukha, makrout, ghrayef, rafis, chalita, and other traditional specialties.

Supporting the tourism potential of the region is a growing infrastructure that includes numerous hotels (e.g., Hotel Al-Tarqi, Al-Biban, Dar Al-Muallem), travel agencies (such as the Algerian Tourist Club, Tel Asfar, and Nouria Tours), as well as tourism-focused associations and restaurants. These facilities work together to create a welcoming environment for visitors and have contributed to an increase in tourist flows to the region.

III- Results and discussion:

Traditional industries and crafts are increasingly recognised as key contributors to sustainable tourism development, particularly in regions rich in cultural heritage such as Bordj Bou Arreridj. This section provides a reflective analysis of how these crafts contribute to tourism enhancement and local economic growth, while also addressing key challenges and potential policy directions.

III. 1. Traditional crafts as drivers of cultural tourism:

The unique value of traditional crafts lies in their ability to offer authentic experiences that differentiate one destination from another. In Bordj Bou Arreridj, products such as hand-woven textiles, traditional clothing, copperware, and palm-frond furniture not only embody the historical identity of the region but also serve as tangible expressions of local culture. These elements enrich the tourist experience by offering more than just sightseeing - visitors engage with living traditions, skilled craftsmanship, and the stories embedded in each product.

III. 2. Enhancing the image of the destination:

By showcasing traditional crafts in cultural events and festivals, the wilaya projects a unique and memorable image. Handicraft markets, exhibitions, and public celebrations create dynamic environments where tourism and heritage interact. These events help to build a distinctive brand for the region, rooted in authenticity, hospitality, and creativity - qualities highly valued by cultural tourists.

III. 3. Economic integration and job creation:

Traditional industries in Bordj Bou Arreridj have shown great potential for job creation, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. Many artisans operate in informal or semi-formal settings, but still contribute significantly to local livelihoods. The development of artisanal value chains - from sourcing raw materials to marketing finished products - offers inclusive economic opportunities that benefit women, youth, and marginalised groups.

III. 4. Challenges facing the sector:

Despite its importance, the traditional handicraft sector faces structural and institutional challenges. These include weak coordination between tourism and handicraft institutions, inadequate marketing and export channels, a lack of integration of modern design, and limited training opportunities for artisans. In addition, urbanisation and globalisation are exerting pressure on younger generations to abandon traditional occupations in favour of contemporary, often unstable, alternatives.

III. 5. Towards strategic integration:

Realising the full potential of traditional industries in tourism requires a comprehensive approach. This includes:

- Integrating traditional crafts into regional tourism development plans;
- Strengthening infrastructure and support services for artisans;
- Promoting handicrafts through digital platforms and tourism networks;
- Encouraging public-private partnerships to scale up production and distribution;
- Provide financial and technical support to preserve craft skills.

IV- Conclusion:

Traditional industries and handicrafts represent a valuable cultural and economic resource that remains underutilized in Algeria's tourism development strategies. In the case of Bordj Bou Arreridj, the richness of artisanal practices—ranging from weaving and jewelry making to culinary traditions—demonstrates the region's potential to become a unique destination for cultural tourism. This analytical study confirms that integrating traditional crafts into tourism planning can enhance visitor experiences, promote regional identity, and stimulate inclusive local development. The preservation and promotion of these crafts are therefore not only a matter of cultural continuity but also a strategic opportunity for economic revitalization and tourism diversification.

IV. 1. Recommendations:

To leverage the full potential of traditional industries in tourism development, the following actions are recommended:

- **Policy Integration:** Embed traditional crafts into local and national tourism development plans as strategic cultural assets.
- **Institutional Support:** Strengthen support mechanisms for artisans through capacity-building programs, legal recognition, and access to financing.
- **Infrastructure Improvement:** Invest in physical and digital infrastructure that facilitates the promotion and marketing of crafts to tourists.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage cooperation between tourism institutions, private investors, and artisanal cooperatives to scale production and expand visibility.
- **Cultural Promotion:** Develop cultural events, fairs, and thematic routes that place traditional industries at the heart of the tourist experience.
- **Youth Engagement:** Foster youth interest in traditional crafts through educational initiatives and innovation hubs that connect heritage with modern design.

By applying these recommendations, Bordj Bou Arreridj—and similar regions in Algeria—can transform traditional crafts into dynamic drivers of sustainable tourism and inclusive local development.

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