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Contribution of social media influencers to the local sustainable tourism development: Case study of the Algerian influencer Mohamed Djamel Taleb

مساهمة مؤثري شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في التنمية السياحية المحلية المستدامة: دراسة حالة المؤثر الجزائري محمد جمال طالب

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore social media influencers contribution to the local sustainable tourism development. A content analysis was conducted on some Youtube videos of Mohamed Djamel Taleb, an Algerian influencer who introduced his followers to a set of social, tourism and ecological actions under several types of tourism such as: ecotourism, adventure and sport tourism. The main findings of this study were that this influencer succeeded at transmitting a positive image about the potential of Algerian youth and their important role in contributing to the local sustainable tourism development such as raising awareness about environment protection and sites preservation, inciting people to become more active in the society by getting involved into different activities, improving a destination country image, generating positive word of mouth and encouraging locals to turn into domestic tourism instead of choosing foreign destinations.

Keywords : Social media influencers; local sustainable tourism development; Mohamed Djamel Taleb.

JEL Classification Codes: L83, Q56.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مساهمة مؤثري شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي في التنمية السياحية المحلية المستدامة، حيث تم إجراء تحليل محتوى على بعض مقاطع فيديو يوتيوب لمحمد جمال طالب، أحد المؤثرين الجزائريين الذي عرّف متابعيه بمجموعة من الأنشطة الاجتماعية، السياحية والبيئية في إطار ممارسة عدة أنواع من السياحة مثل: السياحة البيئية والمغامرة والسياحة الرياضية. وتمثلت أبرز نتائج هذه الدراسة في أن هذا المؤثر قد نجح في نقل صورة إيجابية عن إمكانات الشباب الجزائري ودوره المهم في المساهمة في التنمية السياحية المستدامة مثل زيادة الوعي حول حماية البيئة والحفاظ على المواقع، تحفيز الأفراد على أن يصبحوا أكثر مشاركة في المجتمع من خلال الانخراط في أنشطة مختلفة، تحسين صورة بلد الوجهة، توليد كلمة منطوقة إيجابية، وتشجيع المواطنين على التوجه نحو السياحة الداخلية بدلا من اختيار الوجهات الأجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مؤثرو شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي؛ التنمية السياحية المحلية المستدامة؛ محمد جمال طالب.

ترميز L83, Q56 : **JEL** ترميز

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1. Introduction:

Internet users nowadays use social media content or as it is also called user-generated content in order to search for any type of information, compare products and services prices, search for new tourism destinations...etc. The prevalence of social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, has led to the emergence of social media influencers, or so-called Internet celebrities. (Xu (Rinka) & Pratt, 2018, p. 1). They share different types of content with their followers and subscribers.

Social media influencers can be seen as active actors in the society. The scope of their influence is not limited in the local level but also in the international one which is interesting for those who focus on sharing tourism and destination content, because they can target international potential tourists and even investors. Social media influencers are the best example of social capital, which is the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic, or economic well-being of a community- of-common-purpose. It is produced and used in everyday interactions and these interactions only make sense in the framework of a set of purposeful community activities (Jamieson, 2014, p. 59).

Sustainable tourism development focuses on the viability of tourism and balancing industry and environmental impacts (Liburd & Edwards, 2010, p. 6). This means that to achieve it many aspects should be considered such as preserving biodiversity and natural resources, the ability of local residents to benefit from tourism by improved living standards and finally sustainability for tourism business which means heading for long-term profitability through tempered price policies (customer and investment) as well as attractive and diverse products (UNESCO, 2009).

1.1. Study problematic:

The research problematic revolves around the following main question:

How can social media influencers contribute to the local sustainable tourism development -by focusing on the case of the Algerian influencer Mohamed Djamel Taleb-?

1.1.1. Sub-questions:

- What actions can social media influencers such as Mohamed Djamel Taleb contribute to or initiate in the Algerian tourism sector?
- To what extent can social media influencers such as Mohamed Djamel Taleb contribute to the local sustainable tourism development?

1.2. Study hypothesis

Based on the above sub-questions, two hypotheses were developed as below:

- Social Media influencers such as Mohamed Djamel Taleb can take advantage of the Algerian tourism potential to practice different forms of tourism.
- The undertaken actions shared by social media influencers such as Mohamed Djamel Taleb have a scope that can reach different levels.

1.3. Study objectives

In this research we aim to explore the role played by social media influencers on the local sustainable tourism development by focusing on the case study of the Algerian influencer Mohamed

Djamel Taleb and to reveal how their actions might have an impact on personal, group and social level locally and internationally.

1.4. Research methodology

We opted for an analysis of the content of twenty videos shared by the social media influencer Mohamed Djamel Taleb, and tried to extract the key ideas and conveyed messages from his sport activities and tourism trips around Algeria, while linking them at the same time to local sustainable development of tourism. All the information about this social media influencer were retrieved from the date of the creation of his channels in 2009 - mainly Youtube - until half of September 2020.

2. Sustainable tourism development:

Conceptual definitions and practical concerns of sustainable tourism development and sustainable tourism have received considerable academic and government attention. Sustainable tourism development is centered on the viability of tourism and balancing industry and environmental impacts (Liburd & Edwards, 2010, p. 6).

In practice, the sustainable development of tourism is the result of a management of resources that fulfills economic, social, and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Budeanu, 2013, p. 89).

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments (Niedziółka, 2012, p. 160).

Thus, implementation of sustainable tourism principles requires (Niedziółka, 2012, p. 160):

- Making optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity;
- Respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance;
- Ensuring viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation

3. Social Media Influencers:

Social media can be defined as internet based applications that focus on the consumergenerated content which encompasses "the media impressions created by the consumers, usually informed by relevant experience and shared or archived online for easy access by other impressionable consumers" (Hanan & Putit, 2014, p. 472)

The prevalence of social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, has led to the emergence of social media influencers, or so-called Internet celebrities (Xu (Rinka) & Pratt, 2018, p. 1). Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media (Freberg et al., 2011, p. 90). Recognized as opinion leaders, they are able to increase the influence of the information they receive and transmit to others (Magno & Cassia, 2018, p. 1).

Identifying influencers should be a key element of a well planned social media marketing strategy. Influencers and advocates can help to build positive e-word-of-mouth brand impact. (Sigala et al., 2012, p. 301).

4. social media influencers and local sustainable tourism development:

Social media influencers initiate a set of actions and activities in diverse domains, here we are interested in their contribution in the tourism field. We will try to explore how and to what extent can social media influencers contribute in the local sustainable tourism development.

To achieve that we have chosen one of the most active social media influencers in the last two years, his name is Mohamed Djamel Taleb. In the next section we are going to analyze the content of his trips in Algeria that he posted as videos in social media and mainly in Youtube. We will then show the impact of all the actions he contributed in or initiated into the local sustainable tourism development, and how he - as an individual - achieved all that, and thus we will draw attention on how will be the impact if a community of influencers worked together as one group to achieve in their own way the sustainable development of tourism in Algeria.

4.1. A brief introduction:

Mohamed Djamel Taleb is a 27 years old Algerian young man, passionate about sport, he graduated with a bachelor degree in sport education, he describes himself as a content creator, filmmaker and sport coach. Very active on social media mainly in Youtube with more than 565 thousand subscriber, and more than 29 million view of his videos (114 shared videos until September 2020), in Instagram, where he shares photos with around 225 thousand follower. His activities turn around three main topics: sport, adventure and tourism. The motivation that pushed us to choose this specific influencer is that all his actions have meaningful goals that go in one direction: working to improve the image of his country. We will discover these goals during the exploration of his shared videos content.

In the following table a summary of his followers' number in social media until September 2020:

Table 1. Number of Taleb's subscribers/followers in social media (until 18/09/2020)

Social media/ Channel	Number of subscribers/ followers
Youtube	565000
Facebook	95229
Instagram	225000

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel, Facebook page and Instagram account of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

He created his Youtube Channel in 2009 but only became active in 2016, the channel is divided into too playlists: discover the World, and discover Algeria. We are interested here in the content related to Algeria. His other pages in Facebook and Instagram are very active and have known a fast increase in terms of number of subscribers and followers. Mohamed Djamel Taleb gained notoriety in social media due to the quality of his content: his professional editing and sense of humor. He was selected by the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts to promote for the international tourism and travel fair in October 2018.

In what follows, we will go through the activities that Mohamed Djamel taleb initiated and/or contributed in, while in the same time linking them to their role in the local sustainable tourism development:

4.2. Running events and activities - Friday is not for sleeping -:

The passion of this social media influencer about sport made him organize a number of events around it, from boot camps that he holds almost every week with whoever is interested with sport activities, to marathons or semi marathons organized either by self initiative or with the help of local municipalities. Here are the main sport events and activities that Mohamed Djamel Taleb undertook:

Table 2.: Running events and activities (Until 09/2020)

Event / action	Social	Nbr of	Nbr of	Nbr of	Nbr of
	media	Views	likes	Comments	shares
30 km Sidi Fredj to Algiers run	Youtube	81614	6100	596	/
Posted on 04/19/2018	Facebook	/	300	17	8
Semi marathon in Bejaia	Youtube	66768	3600	449	/
(21 km)					
Posted on 05/10/2018	Facebook	27141	643	59	63

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel and Facebook page of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

These two activities held almost in the same period, respectively in April and May 2018 were about running marathon in Algiers and semi marathon in Bejaia, the videos have both generated more than 148 thousand view in Youtube. What draws the attention in these two sport events is that even if the marathon of Algiers was only run by five friends, and that the semi marathon - organized by the municipality- was a public event, they both share the same values and principles: encouraging team spirit and motivating people and especially youth to practice sport and to surpass their selves.

Even if the topic of this video was about sport, Mohamed Djamel Taleb didn't miss to show the beauty of the places they pass by. In the 30 km run from Sidi Fredj to the center of Algiers, the first minutes of the video showed the beach and the port of Sidi Fredj and their surroundings. Several minutes after starting the run, the influencer turns his camera to one of his friends who runs holding a cardboard box saying:" we run and we clean", pointing out to the importance of protecting environment even with simple and individual actions like what his friend did. Through the 15 minutes of the video, Taleb introduced the friends who run with him in this marathon, all have goals and passed messages through the video: A passionate of running who wants to gather the youth to practice activities like running, fitness or cross fit; A coach and co-founder of Spartdz - a sport club of personal and group training and coaching-, who wants to deliver the best experience in running and in sport in Algeria.

Regarding the international semi marathon of Bejaia held in May 2018, Mohamed Djamel Taleb participated with his team "Spartdz", several runners from different countries were also present in the event like Bahrain, Kenya, Morocco, Tunisia, Portugal ... etc ("les resultats provisoires de la 13éme edition," 2018); different age ranges were present also, from the youngest to the oldest , this event counted a total of 2915 runner who participated in the 7 / 21 km men/ women run.

What can be concluded from the running events this social media influencer and any other one can organize or contribute in is summarized in the following table:

Table 3: Consequences and impacts of running events shared by social media influencers

	Positive impacts at the short/long term
level	•
Personal :	-Improving physical and mental health;
-Run and get healthier	-Positive attitude, self satisfaction and optimism;
-Run and challenge one's limits	-Better productivity at work or studies;
	-Taking initiative.
Group:	-Cherishing values like solidarity and supporting each other in
-Run and encourage team spirit	crises and difficult times;
-Run and promote a community	-Creating new relationships between the groups who share the
of coaches locally and	same passion;
internationally	-Taking it to a superior level and becoming a real social
	capital.
Society:	-Spreading awareness about the importance of having a clean
-Run and protect nature	environment;
-Run and introduce places	-Promoting and organizing sport events to attract local and
-Run and promote for cultural	foreign potential tourists to practice sport and in the same
diversity	time other forms of tourism;
	-Having the opportunity to live a cultural exchange with the
	local and foreign athletes and visitors.

Source: Elaborated by the author.

4.3. Boardsport activities - you don't have to travel abroad to practice these sports -:

Boardsports are sports that are played with some sort of board as the primary equipment. These sports take place on a variety of terrain, from paved flat-ground and snow-covered hills to water and air. Most boardsports are considered action sports or extreme sports (*Boardsport*, n.d.).

The activities Mohamed Djamel Taleb practices and shares with his audience are:

- Water sport activities: stand up paddle surfing and kitesurfing;
- Paved surface sport activities: longboarding;
- Off-paved surface sport activities: snowboarding and sandboarding.

It is important to highlight that practicing all these activities require places with very different and specific characteristics. Algeria owns them all: the coast, the mountains and the dunes. It is this diversity that this influencer is trying to show and emphasize to the world. You don't have to travel abroad to get the chance to practice some extreme sports or sports that are not very well known to people because of the lack or the absence of information and promotion.

In the following table we mention these activities:

Activity	Video title, (nbr of views V)	Place	
	Water activities		
Paddle surfing	Discover el Kala (243.000 V) (posted in may 18, 2018)	Cap Rosa beach (El Kala)	
	Beni Belaid Beach (1 million V) (posted in August 1st, 2017)	Beni Belaid Beach (Jijel)	
	Paddle day in December- Ain Taya (231.000 V)	Ain Taya beach (Algiers)	

	(posted in December 8, 2017)	
	Paved surface activities	
Kitesurfing	Wenguezz ¹ are back (302.000 V)	Les Andalouses (Oran)
	(posted in may 6, 2018)	
	First kitesurfing session in 2018 (196.000 V)	Ain Taya beach (Algiers)
	(posted in January 30, 2018)	
Longboarding	Discover el Kala (195.985 V)	El Kala
	(posted in may 18, 2018)	
	Discover Biskra part 1+2 (673.000 V)	Biskra
	(posted in february 8 +13, 2018)	
	off-paved surface activities	
Snowboarding	Snowboarding with kachabiya in Tikjda (163.000 V)	Tikjda (Bouira)
	(posted in april 1st, 2017)	
	It's just in Algeria (119.000 V)	Tikjda (Bouira)
	(posted in february 2nd, 2018)	
Sandboarding	Algiers to Bechar (14.000 V)	Taghit (Bechar)
	(posted in may 21, 2018)	

Table 4: Boardsport activities

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

Paddle surfing and kitesurfing activities that Mohamed Djamel Taleb practiced took place in different places of the Algerian coast like El Kala, Jijel, Oran and Algiers. This shows that in a coastline that reaches 1600 km, all kinds of water sports can be practiced, at any time of the year.

In the video "Wenguezz are back", the influencer hit the road with his friends in direction to Tlemcen to practice some paddle surfing in a water dam, but weather conditions prevented them from practicing it, so they changed their destination to Oran where they went to "Cool park Oran" which is a complex that combines several entertainments in one place: a Castle-Park, a Trampoline Park and a Lazer-game. Then the group of friends went to "les Andalouses beach" to practice some kitesurfing. This description of the video reflects the improvisation spirit and the importance of taking advantage of any type of situation to have fun and move forward.

4.4 Visiting Algerian cities - Discover your Country - :

The remaining videos about Algeria that Taleb shared, consist on visiting some Algerian cities and introducing them to his audience, the multitude of places to visit offers the opportunity to live different experiences and forms of tourism, desert, ecologic, mountain.. ect. We summarize them in the following two tables:

Table 5: Visiting Algerian cities (East and north)

Place/ Video title	ace/ Video title		Conveyed message
East Algeria			

¹ Wengezz is an association created for the youth interested in extreme sports, they organize different events from water sport to motorcycle circuits and other activities related to sport.

El Kala (Taref) "Discover El Kala" (posted in may 18, 2018)	Skateboarding, visit of the port of Kala, visit of Tonga² lac, Oubeira lac, and El Melah lac, paddle surfing in Cap Rosa beach, watching sunrise in Messida beach	 Preservation of nature for those who fish in Oubeira lac and leave plastic bottles and trash behind them Combining tourism and sport activities Showing generosity of the local
Constantine	- Visiting the famous bridges, Amir	citizens - Emphasizing the specificity of this
"19H in Constantine"	Abdelkader Mosque, meeting people who work to ameliorate their city -	city with its unique bridges and architecture;
(August 27, 2017)	planting and maintaining trees and flowers, riding the cable car, visiting the monument.	- Showing the generosity of citizens and their openness
	North Algeria	
Botanical Garden Hamma (Algiers) "The most beautiful garden in Algeria" (posted in may 22, 2018)	Introduction and visit of the garden, collecting cultural information, introduction of his project for Ramadan (mercy restaurants)	- Introducing the "mercy restaurants"; - Talking about the importance of avoiding sedentary life during Ramadan (ramadan is not for sleeping); - Encouraging youth to practice sport even in ramadan and inviting them to train with spartdz team.
Jijel "Beni Belaid Beach" (posted in August 1st, 2017)	Paddle surf with Wenguezz team, visiting different beaches, watching sunset, barbecue and fire camp in the beach	 Insisting about the beauty of Jijel beaches and cornices A message to leave the beach as clean as it was before Visit your country.
Bejaia "Discover Bejaia" (posted in september 21st, 2017)	Camping in Tighremt beach, visiting Bejaia center and port, enjoying Cap Carbon view, Yema Gouraya, introducing an artist, visiting Kefrida waterfalls, fire camp and camping in Akfadou forrest	 Complaining about finding trash in such a beautiful beach and forrest; Inciting people to visit Algerian cities instead of going abroad (domestic tourism)

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

In his tourism trips Taleb tried to equilibrate and cover all the corners of Algeria, choosing each time a destination with specific characteristics and reminding his fans that these places are not abroad, but in Algeria, encouraging them to discover their country and indirectly boosting the domestic tourism development. Many other Algerian cities are waiting for the camera of this influencer to reveal them to his followers and subscribers.

Table 6: Visiting Algerian cities (Ouest and South)

	Ouest Algeria	
Tlemcen	Visiting Lala setti plateau, El Ourit	- Each visited place in Tlemcen has a
"Discover	mountain and waterfall, Beni Add	story behind it since it reflects
Tlemcen"	caves, El Mechouar Palace, barbecue	elements of Islamic, Arabic, Berber

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² It is a lac with a unique ecosystem located in El Kala National Park and Biosphere Reserve , it was recognized as a biosphere reserve by the UNESCO on December 1990.

(posted in	with friends, visiting the ruins of the	and Andalucían influences;	
December 1st,	ortified city Mansourah, visiting old - A city full of historic monuments		
2017)	city and city center, buying "kaak" a	and cultural heritage, a must-visit;	
	cake specific to Tlemcen, visiting		
	Beni Bahdel village		
	South Algeria		
Taghit (Bechar)	Visiting, Taghit city, dunes Oasis	- Showing the greatness and the	
"Discover Algerian	and Ksar, kitesurfing and paddle	beauty of the Algerian Desert, it's	
Sahara"	surfing in "Djorf Torba" dam,	in "Djorf Torba" dam, traditions and folklore.	
(posted in June 30,	assisting to traditional chant and		
2017)	folklore around a fire camp,		
	longboarding		
Biskra	Roman bridge in Kantara, eating	- Insisting about the preservation of	
"Discover Biskra	traditional plates, visiting Tolga, Sidi	nature because a lot of trash is left	
1+2"	Okba Mosque, Sidi Yahia tourism	behind in sites.	
(posted in february	complex, oasis forest in Ferdja,	- Discovering the rich history, local	
8+13, 2018)	learning some tips about palms and	gastronomy, spices and traditional	
	dates, visit to M'chounech gorges.	clothes (kachabia)	

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

4.5 Charity activities:

The following table summarizes four episodes of charity activities that Taleb participated in in Ramadan 2018 in the four corners of Algeria: Algiers representing the center, Annaba representing the east, Oran representing the west and finally Ouergla for the south. All these actions introduced different associations very active and known locally and nationally for their charity works. Taleb tried to show a part of it during the month of Ramadan and greeted them for their positive contribution in the society while at the same time introduced them in social media, to encourage people to participate morally and materially and why not become in the future active members within these associations.

Table 7: charity activities simultaneously with ramdan

City	Video	Main activities
North: Belouizded	Episode 1: "chabab rahma association"	Recording all the phases
(Algiers)	(posted in may 27, 2018)	of ramadan meal
West:	Episode 2: "Ness el Khir association"	preparation, from
Hamri (Oran)	(posted in june 1st, 2018)	shopping to preparing
South:	Episode 3: "Basma khayriya association"	and cooking the meals, to serving them until
(Ouergla)	(posted in june 7, 2018)	washing dishes, floor
East:	Episode 4: "Ibtassim charity group"	and organizing for the
(Annaba)	(posted in june 13, 2018)	next day.
Secondary	In Oran: A quick visit to some know places in Oran (Santa Cruise)	
activities	In Ouergla: A quick tour in Ouergla: city center, Oasis and dunes	
	In Annaba: This group " Ibtassim" doesn't serve meals in restaurants,	
	they do it outside : on the highway, hospitals and airports, along with	
	other activities like distribution of Aid clothes to families in need, and	
	sending basic medical aid conveys to families living in rural areas or in	
	need - Quick visit of Annaba port, beach and Saint Augustin Basilica,	
	fire camp in the beach.	
Conveyed message	- Providing the necessary information to contact this kind of associations	
	and asking anyone able to help morally or materially or on site;	

- Showing solidarity, generosity values and team spirit; - Showing the real image of humanitarian engaged Algerian youth;
- Introducing different dishes specific to each visited city.

Source: Elaborated by the author from the Youtube channel of Mohamed Djamel Taleb

5. Results:

The activities that the influencer Mohamed Djamel Taleb has conducted and shared as video content, contain important information on how one influencer can have a contribution into the local sustainable tourism development. These are the main findings we obtained from this content analysis study:

- Breaking stereotypes, showing and improving the image of Algeria as a tourism destination in terms of natural resources, security and openness of people either for locals or foreigners;
- Destination promotion of multiple Algerian cities and showing their diversity in terms of natural potential, traditions and habits;
- Raising awareness about environment protection and sites preservation;
- Motivating youth to practice sport activities and informing them about the possibility of practicing different types of sport such as extreme sports;
- Inciting people to become more active in society either by being involved in charity and humanitarian activities or any other positive and benefic action.
- Encouraging locals to turn into domestic tourism instead of choosing foreign destinations to finally live almost the same experiences once there.

All these actions can have an impact on:

- Encouraging potential investors to invest in Algeria;
- Increasing the revenues of tourism;
- Boosting the activity of hospitality structures and complexes;
- Improving Quality and competition in the sector;
- Generation of positive word of mouth and e-word of mouth.

6. Conclusion:

After analyzing the potential that underlies behind one social media influencer and his ability to contribute into the local sustainable development, we recommend the following:

- Consider the importance of these influencers as a "latent energy" to be exploited;
- Encouraging social media influencers materially (professional cameras, drones ...etc) and facilitating their accessibility to the local destinations (sponsoring, travel fees);
- Creating a unit in the tourism and handicrafts ministry dedicated to the active influencers in order to plan for a collaboration between them to work together to develop the tourism in Algeria; These tourism related relationships enable them to get together and cooperate at a community level, and therefore become the strength of local societies (Strzelecka, 2012)
- Taking advantage of the positive word of mouth that the content shared by social media influencers generate to ameliorate the visibility of Algeria as a tourism destination before DMO (destination marketing organization), especially that it has been ranked by the French Group "Voyageurs du Monde" among the top ten "must-see" destinations to visit in 2018.

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