

# The Recreational Spaces and their Role in Consolidating the Tourism Culture: Model of the Mediterranean Garden in Oran (Algeria)

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## Abstract

Tourism is not only a means of relaxation for individuals; it's more and more a real economic and social alternative for states. So as to manage tourism in its two forms, local and international, it is necessary to establish and consolidate its culture between citizens and in the community, which necessitates their contribution to promote and develop tourism as well as the preservation of its heritage. And for the Algerian society, where youth represents 75% of the population, and whose country possesses considerable tourism assets and potentials, the consolidation of the tourism culture is imperative to develop its internal facet. We have chosen the Mediterranean garden in the city of Oran, in the west of Algeria, for two main reasons. Because it reflects a distinguished tourism investment experience in Algeria, and it is located in a large urban area allowing leisure tourism.

Our contribution is based on a field survey that studied the socio-professional nature of visitors in order to know the impact of the leisure tourism and the tourism in general in Algerian society.

**Key words:** Consolidation, tourism- culture, society, Recreational spaces, Oran.

## INTRODUCTION

The recreational tourism has become an alternative to the traditional tourism in many countries all over the world because of its environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts. Algeria is one of those countries with a considerable natural and historical heritage that has drawn a lot of attention to this sector as part of its national plans to support tourism. The relaxation and leisure tourism is defined as "any relaxing activity practiced by tourists during their stay in tourist sites or tourist establishments such as leisure and amusement parks, mountainous sites and cultural and sporting buildings" (Official Journal of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, 2003).

In 2019, the number of foreign tourists having visited the country for relaxation and leisure reasons was 702,226 tourists, that is to say 71.51% of foreign tourists; with an increase of 11.48 % compared to 2018 (Ministry of Tourism and Crafts, 2012) business tourism and the mission motive share together less than 29% of foreigners' tourist flows. These figures show clearly the growing interest in leisure and relaxation. Despite the major infrastructure shortcomings and deficiencies, such as recreation, games and amusement parks, the spending on leisure and relaxation travel (receiver and internal) generated 79% of GDP of the tourism and travel industry in 2011, that is to say 594.1 billion dinars, while business tourism generated 21%, meaning 157.8 billion dinars, according to the World Travel-Tourism Council report (WTTC: Algeria, 2012)

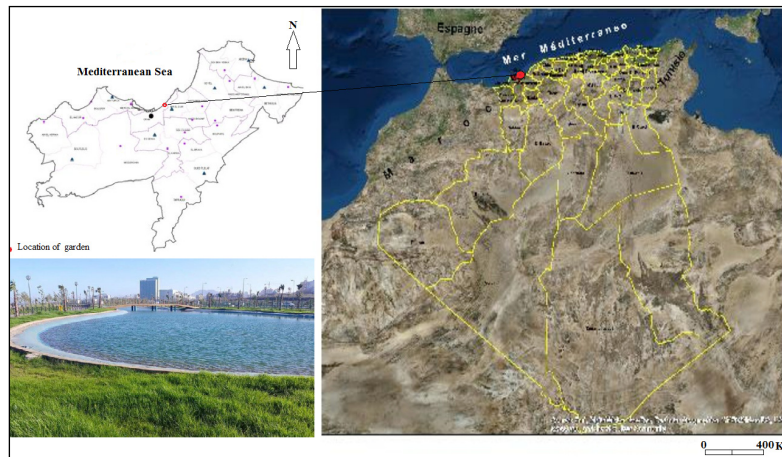
Oran is a city located in the north-west of Algeria, it is bordered to the east by the wilaya of Mostaganem, to the south-east by Mascara, to the south-west of Sidi Bel Abbès and to the west of Aïn Témouchent, has an attractive natural and cultural tourism potential. It holds architectural heritage, in addition to its natural tourist assets (120 km coastline; forests; caves, etc.), giving the area an important national and international influence. In recent years, the city of Oran has strengthened its tourism facilities. Just as the arrival of the Oran event, the capital Mediterranean Games in 2022 accelerated the implementation of the organizational chart of the city, particularly in especially in front of the sea part where the Mediterranean garden is located; an environmental pillar landscaped as a leisure park. The site represents a strong attractive potential. (Sekkoum & Maachou, 2022)

Our study addresses the issue of the role of the recreational spaces and their role in consolidating the tourism culture in the Algerian society through the creation of structures close to the citizen and respecting his moderate income.

The importance of this topic is to develop the urban functions of the Algerian cities, namely the function of leisure and relaxation for the local population and the tourist attraction, through the creation of leisure resorts, which has become, in some countries, a beneficial touristy approach for the sustainable local development, but encountering a great challenge which is the preservation of the natural and historical heritage of these cities.

### THE CASE STUDY: MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN IN ORAN

The Mediterranean garden in Oran, It is located in the north of the city of Oran and overlooks the Mediterranean Sea, in a picturesque tourist with an area of 13 hectares. It contains important has a play area, relaxation and leisure for children, especially in summer when families spend hours in front of the sea. To enjoy different games, rides and film screenings and even musical evenings. The designer of the garden thought of hikers and sports enthusiasts on pedestrian paths and also a large artificial lake which delights visitors. (Sekkoum & Maachou, 2022).



**Figure1.** Location of The Mediterranean garden in Oran. Source: Satellite images of Oran + S. Sekkoum 2022

The economic impact of the development of the garden is quite significant for the region. The new infrastructures have created jobs and wealth; 150 posts have been created at the garden , a dozen restaurants have been opened employing cooks and waiters, and new professions have set up shop on the park: photographers, ice cream parlours, souvenir or confectionery sellers, horse renters, etc. Nevertheless, tourism is a sector that remains seasonal in the region and is mainly limited to the summer period, to holidays and to weekends, with an average of 1000 customers per day and an occupancy rate of 90% during the summer period.

This park is considered as a mixed-use park: leisure-tourism as the majority of suburban parks that are recreational areas without a real tourist activity. These parks are popular with walkers and excursionists. The challenge is to make of the park a periurban recreational space and a tourist space at the same time, especially that it presents one of the important Algerian experiences for this type of tourist investment.

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In order to analyze the park potential and its contribution to the local development, a field survey of random samples of park visitors was used. The survey covered 460 tourists and visitors between March and July 2022. This period corresponds to the largest flow of visitors and tourists to the park.. Especially it coincided with The 19th Mediterranean Games in Oran, played from June 25 to July 06. The survey concerned the visitors' attendance and their characteristics.

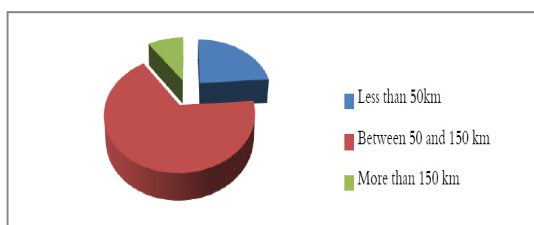
**Table 1.** The geographical origins of visitors and tourists

Origins	Number of Visitors	%
Oran town	121	26.30
Wilaya Relizane	58	12.60
Wilaya Mascara	43	9.34
Wilaya Sidi Bel Abbé	41	8.91

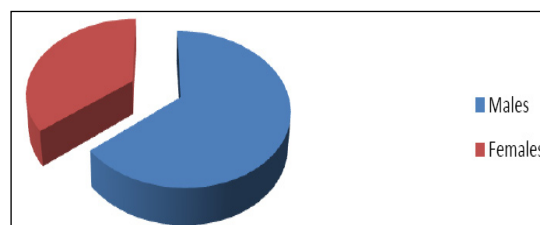
Wilaya Ain Timouchent	34	7.39
Wilaya Mostaganem	32	6.95
Wilaya Tlemcen	22	4.78
Gdyel town	21	4.56
Wilaya Oran	20	4.34
Wilaya Saida	17	3.69
Wilaya Namaa	15	3.26
Wilaya Béchar	14	3.04
Others wilayas	11	2.39
Other country	11	2.39
<b>Garden</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022.

The park attracts a significant number of visitors and tourists from different regions. Most visitors are residents of the municipality of Oran, 121 of the 460 visitors surveyed, that is to say 26.30%. The rest of the park's visitors come from neighboring towns such as Relizane, Mascara, Sidi Bel Abbés, Ain Temouchent, Mostaganem and Tlemcen; others are from the east of the country, such as Constantine, Souk Ahras, or from the south like Bechar and Adrar. This reflects some of the park's attractiveness at the regional and national level. In general, the distance covered by most visitors varies from a few kilometers to 300 kilometers, with an outreach that can reach more than 1,000 km. It is also noted that foreign visitors represents only 2.39% of the sample surveyed.



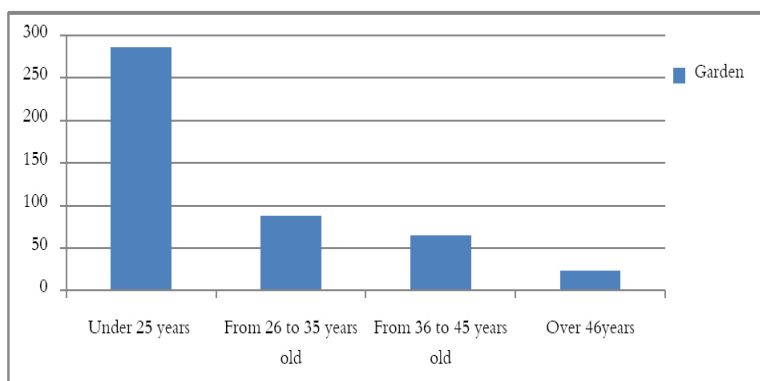
**Figure 2.** distance traveled by visitors and tourists to Mediterranean garden. Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022



**Figure 3.** Distribution of visitors by gender. Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022

Regarding the gender of park visitors, we have 295 male visitors and only 165 women due to the fact that these sites attract more male than women visitors, in addition to the Algerian society traditions, that do not allow the woman going out unless in a limited context (study trip, family outing, etc.). In order to attract both sexes to tourism, the creation of infrastructures such as roads, hotels, restaurants, and other reception facilities, as well as the security insurance is necessary.

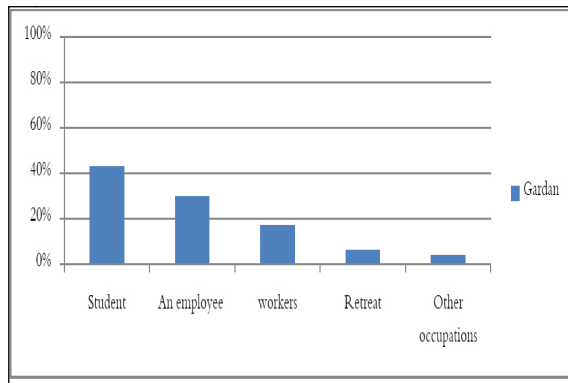
Most visitors are young, among the park visitors; the percentage of young people under the age of 25 is about 62%. Then, the age group 26 - 35 represents 19% of visitors, followed by the 36 to 45 age range representing 14%. This confirms the interest that young people have in this type of tourism. The Mediterranean garden in Oran offers to young people the opportunity to practice several types of tourism such as sports, hiking and ecotourism. This is in addition to student visits on organized university trips, however, it has been noted that the proportion of visitors have come as families.



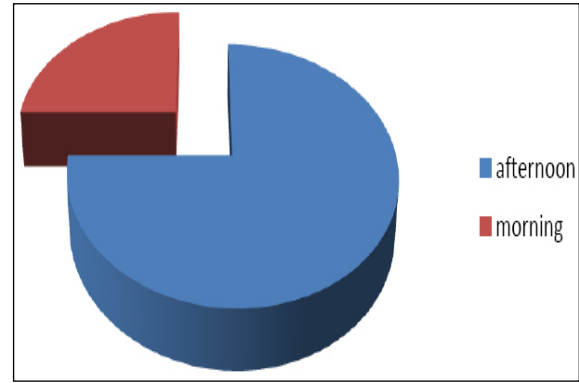
**Figure 4.** Distribution of visitors by gender .Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022

The proportion of students visiting The Mediterranean garden is 43%, followed by officials with 30%, then the laborers with 17%, the pensioners who do not exceed 6% and the unemployed with 4%. These ratios reflect either the purpose of the visit or the level of the visitor's income. For example, students come for field studies or often in inexpensive organized visits; and for laborers it concerns planned family visits. These educated classes accord great interest to leisure tourism. This allows the development of tourism culture in the society with awareness of the preservation of environmental balance.

This field study, which shows certain characteristics of the park's visitors and tourists, concludes that these visitors come from nearby towns, the majority of whom are educated young people with an average standard of living.



**Figure 5.** Professional characteristics of visitors. Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022

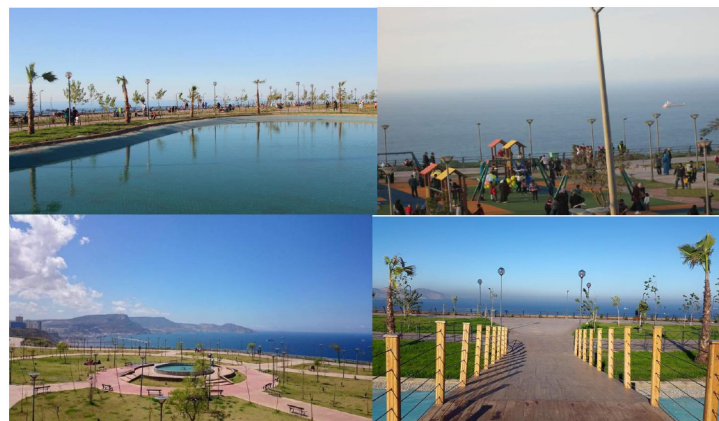


**Figure 6.** The length of time visitors spend in the Garden. Source: Field Survey, May- July 2022

Regarding attendance, we noticed that 50% of tourists had neither visited the The Mediterranean garden nor the tourist sites of Oran before, while 50% of them visited it once or more than ten times in the last three years. Among the surveyed, there are loyal visitors who come every weekend during the spring time and early summer, and it's this type of visitors that deserves our attention as they can attract others and will help increasing the number of visitors at the site.

We noted that the periods between March and June (spring and early summer) remains the preferred periods for many park visitors. But the peak of visits remains the weekend and the summer school holidays (78% of the sample surveyed). This attracts visitors, so there is a considerable flow of visitors during that period of the year. That about the two-thirds of the sample of visitors surveyed prefer visit this site with their family, while a quarter preferred the company of friends, and only 5% came alone. For means of transport, 80% of visitors use their own cars to get to the park and 20% taken public transport such as taxis and buses and finally some of them have used bicycle.

The time spent by visitors and tourists in the garden is limited to half a day, 75% of the visitors surveyed spent the afternoon, 25% in the morning, We should take care of all the visitors' needs in terms of accommodation, transportation and food. To be able to enjoy the short period, the visitor keeps walking through the garden. And despite its scope, walking remains the main way to move around for 90% of respondents, while 10% prefer riding the bicycle. Visitors prefer hiking because it is a simple and flexible way and offers the opportunity to enjoy the garden. Bicycle use remains the lowest in terms of use, limited to youths as a sport activity.



**Figure 7.** Open and recreational spaces in the Mediterranean Garden. Source: Authors May 2022

## CONCLUSION

Oran, with its natural potential and its proximity to Europe (the main international tourist market) can become an attractive tourist site, especially that it's equipped with necessary infrastructures for the Tourist. In order to establish a tourism culture in the Algerian society, an effective tourism policy must be implemented. An efficient policy that is able to achieve the desired objectives, as well as tourism programs that can meet the needs and the requirements of population. We will try to decipher, objectively, the data and the results of the field study while drawing some suggestions to promote the tourism sector in the region.

The garden attracts visitors of different age groups and of different cultural levels who come from most Algerian cities, especially bordering ones. It is known that the leisure tourism is more consumed in the urban areas, but the lack of this type of space in the other parts of the country makes the garden a distinct tourist offer. But with a seasonal nature "spring and summer", and a stagnation the rest of the seasons. Hence, the need to develop sporting and cultural tourism events and different other activities, such as festivals and handicraft presentations. Our study showed that they are not real tourists but excursionists. The UNWTO has clearly defined the tourist as the one who spends at least one night in the place visited. It has been found that tourists of city have visited the garden because it is considered an important tourist asset of Oran. The average length of stay for tourists varies depending on the type of the touristy activity and the level of the overall spending (transportation and accommodation) (Lozato., 2008, p. 25)

The Algerian youth represents about 75% of the total population, which requires the creation of recreational and leisure spaces and other types of tourism activities that meet their needs. It also contributes to the creation of new employment opportunities. It is necessary to intensify the awareness campaigns so as to give the added value to tourism among citizens, and to encourage them to participate in various organized touristic, cultural or sporting events, without neglecting the importance of the media and social networks in promoting this touristic area. The involvement of the local population in the planning and the organization of tourism events and activities are desirable. The latter remains as close as possible to their interests and needs.

Finally, we presume that by combining the efforts and the cooperation of all the sectors concerned with tourism development, the public and the private institutions, the non-governmental organizations, the local population and the associations, we help to meet the needs of visitors and tourists as well as to the consolidation of the culture of tourism in the Algerian family and society.

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