

Natural Tourism planning and sustainable tourism in Libya

The case of the Derna region

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Abstract.

The Derna region experienced a violent hurricane in 2023 that destroyed much of the infrastructure and residential neighborhoods. The area requires extensive reconstruction that takes into account the natural and touristic qualities of the place, beyond the obvious shortcomings in tourism planning processes. It is time to pay attention to this important sector, by adopting urban plans that are updated and modified according to circumstances in order to *create* a sustainable tourism project. The Derna region in eastern Libya is one of the cities that, if it benefits from tourism urban programs adopted within a national strategy for sustainable tourism development, will constitute a tourism pole not only in Libya but also at the regional level. The area is coastal, characterized by stunning natural landscapes with the presence of the sea, valley and plateaus. It is also located within a rich tourism field that provides the practice of various types that attract tourists at different levels, capabilities and ambitions, and establishes true sustainable tourism. However, the effectiveness of the tourism sector in the region and in all cities of the Libyan country is still modest in its practice compared to the opportunities and capabilities available. It also does not have sustainability requirements, as it does not have an effective tourism plan. This requires a redoubled effort to overcome various challenges and create a sustainable future tourism project.

Keywords. Tourism planning, sustainable development, sustainable Tourism, challenges, Derna

Introduction

Urban planning is of great importance in setting goals in sustainable tourism projects and ways to achieve them according to a time plan and specific material and human resources that lead to achieving comprehensive development, as determined by experts and multiple international conferences on the subject. Planning is defined as “a mental process that can be embodied on the ground, according to the available circumstances, enabling one to look toward the future of

economic, administrative, or urban projects, taking all variables into account to overcome the barriers that prevent the achievement of the desired goals. This process also allows for the development of plans. An alternative in the event that the original plan cannot be implemented". (Kabashi, 2010).

Tourism planning plays a very important role in organizing and managing various tourism activities. This is done by providing a joint framework for making the right decisions that will develop the tourism movement in scientific ways. It also "provides various actors with the methods that must be followed to achieve sustainable tourism development" (Asmaa Mahfouz et al., 2017).

Within the framework of activating the tourism sector Libya according to the path of sustainable development to correct the shortcomings and lapses recorded in the sector previously, and within the framework of the reconstruction of the coastal area of Derna, the authorities must launch a new tourism strategy, which is within a national vision for sustainable tourism development to achieve a sustainable tourism project. The project is being implemented by launching studies and consulting with the guardian authorities, based on the fact that tourism revenues are similar to fuel revenues, according to many experts. Therefore, planning to increase the volume of incoming tourist traffic has become inevitable within the framework of respect for local natural, environmental and cultural resources. Here we ask the following questions:

- Does the Derna region have tourism qualifications?
- What are the causes of the shortcomings in tourism planning that prevented the establishment of the foundations for sustainable tourism development?
- How can it be bypassed?

Materials and methods

Tourism planning

There are many definitions of tourism planning, including that it represents "all procedures leading to setting goals that can be implemented in terms of the environment of the tourist site, in light of the available human and material resources, and in view of the established priorities. This requires inventorying the state's resources until the goals of the tourism plan are determined and rapid and organized tourism development is achieved" (Al-Sirafi, 2006).

Tourism planning is one of the necessities of achieving sustainable tourism, as it aims, on the one hand, to "achieve the largest possible rate of tourism growth at the lowest possible cost and in record time conditions" (Alaa Al-Assali, 2016), and as it also "enshrines the principle of prevention is better than cure" (Kabashi Qasima,). It enables the containment of the problems facing the tourism sector in general, as well as its sustainable development.

Tourism planning is based on "identifying the alternatives and opportunities available to stimulate demand for tourism products and promote tourism rates" (Fathia Al-Alami, 2001). It is an important factor in the success of sustainable tourism development, by developing the aesthetic, social, economic, cultural and environmental features of the place. "Planning is based on continuous analysis of the tourism product according to demand, to achieve sustainable tourism that is compatible with the country's capabilities." (Pearce.D,Longman 1981).

Tourism planning and sustainable tourism

Tourism planning seeks to achieve a set of sustainable tourism goals as follows:

- Creating new tourist areas and developing the local tourism product without compromising its privacy.
- Ensuring the protection of environmental and natural resources, preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and ensuring its continuity.
- Improving the performance of eco-tourism areas and upgrading their infrastructure without compromising their tranquility and distinction
- Using what is called green transportation
- Developing human development programs to create cadres capable of understanding and promoting sustainable tourism.

The Study Area

Derna area is a mountainous, eastern Mediterranean coastal Libyan area bordered to the south by a chain of Jabal al-Akhdar hills. It is divided into two halves by the Derna Valley, which is located on its banks and at its mouth in the Mediterranean Sea (Figure 01).



Fig n°1, Situation of Derna area (Source: Wikipédia, visit on 12/01/2024).

The population of Derna Area is estimated at more than 300 thousand people, according to several sources. Many civilizations succeeded it. Due to this strategic location and its location on the coast, which gave it, a diversity of views. (Fig 02). The city suffered from pressure on the housing sector. After the hurricane, adapting this sector to the requirements of sustainable development became an urgent necessity



Fig n°2, beauty and diversity of landscape (Source: khalfallah.b, Abuazziza, 2023)

Tourism qualifications in the Derna region

Tourism planning depends on monitoring tourism qualifications in order to protect and develop them in a way that serves sustainable tourism development. The Derna region is one of the mountainous regions characterized by the sweetness of its waters and the beauty of its beaches and mountains. It is also full of ancient historical sites, making it a tourist attraction and attraction that can be considered real ingredients for the advancement of a sustainable arena. Among them we mention:

- **Waterfalls:** The waterfalls of the Derna region are distinguished by being one of the picturesque places located south of the city near the Green Mountain. It is 20 meters high. Due to its location in the middle of stunning scenery (Fig 03), it provides a distinctive place for rest and recreation that is compatible with the requirements of sustainable tourism development.

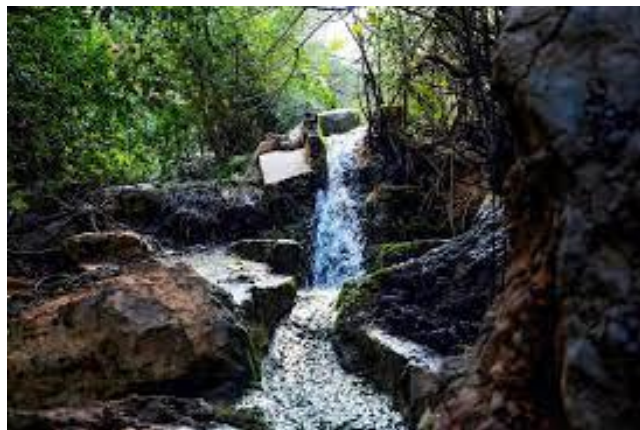


Fig n°3, Watterfals of derna area (Source: startimes.com, visit on 22/01/204)

- **Mosques and churches:**

These religious buildings, the most important of which are the ancient mosque and the Byzantine church, are considered attractions for visitors (Fig 4). These are areas whose character preserves the general environment.



Fig n°4, The Ancient mosque of Derna (Source: startimes.com, visit on 22/01/2024)

- **Ras al-Tin Beach:**

Ras al-Tin is considered one of the most important beaches and favorite tourist destinations in Libya because it is one of the country's most beautiful, diverse natural landscapes and abundant capabilities capable of meeting the needs of tourists (Fig 5). It is a place that still maintains its privacy, and is capable of achieving eco-tourism.



Fig n°5, Ras al-Tin Beach (Source: www.ltv.ly , visit on 15/01/2024)

- **Ras Al-Hilal area:**

One of the features of this place, located west of the city of Derna, is the intersection of the green beach with the forest topped by a waterfall over the mountain (Figure 06). This environmental diversity is capable of providing sustainable tourism requirements.



Fig n°6, Ras Al-Hilal area (Source: www.ltv.ly , visit on 15/01/204)

- **Wadi Al-Khabta:**

This beautiful valley is located east of the city of Derna, and has very beautiful views. The most important feature that the visitor notices is the huge sand mountain offset by a rocky mountain. On the other two sides is a body of water in which the freshness of the lake's water meets the salinity of the Mediterranean Sea (Fig 7).



Fig n°6, Wadi Al-Khabta (Source: www.ltv.ly , visit on 15/01/204)

- **Wadi Markus:**

The valley is located west of the city of Derna in the Al-Athrun area. It is an environmental zone par excellence, due to the presence of fresh water, fruit trees, juniper trees, marigolds, terebinth trees, and others (Fig 8). Here is the cave of Saint Mark.



Fig n°6, Wadi Markus (Source: www.startimes.com , visit on 15/01/2014)

Sustainable tourism and tourism planning

Sustainable tourism meets the needs of tourists while preserving tourist areas and increasing employment opportunities for the local community. It “ works to manage all available resources, whether economic, social, aesthetic, natural or cultural, in dealing with heritage data, in addition to the necessity of preserving environmental balance and local diversity ” (Al-Qabandi, 2010). Sustainable tourism often preserves the diversity of existing ecosystems, because it constitutes the basic basis on which this activity is based.

The positions of nations and organizations were based on elements to achieve the concept of sustainability, as stated in Agenda 21 that appeared at the Earth Summit. The World Tourism Organization has called for the need to shift to more sustainable development practices for tourism activity. Considering that Libya is one of the members of this organization, it is necessary to put forward plans aimed at achieving sustainable tourism accordingly. Hence, we propose tourism planning based on a guiding plan in accordance with principles that contribute to the transformation of the Derna region in Libya into a national and regional tourist destination, and enable it to reserve a strategic location among the attractive destinations for tourists. They are:

- **Reviving tourism quality:** It is known that quality has become a basic requirement all over the world, as it represents an indicator for measuring the extent of the competent authorities’ ability to protect their cultural and environmental heritage, and to support their tourism path with modern equipment, in addition to investing in the human element in the field of hotel and catering. This is done by creating new schools in the field of tourism training with a world-class level of organization and efficiency, and activating tourism marketing in coordination with the media and communication.

- **Activating partnership with private individuals:** It aims to activate coordination between public and private traders in the tourism field by dividing resources, risks and profits, providing sources of funds, reviving tourism investment, and stimulating the local community.

- **Preserving the privacy of places:** It aims to create sustainable and advanced tourism in the region, without compromising the fertility of the places and their environmental, cultural, social and aesthetic excellence.

Results and discussion

Implementing this proposed plan, relying on the tourism capabilities of the Derna region, will lead to achieving social and cultural tourism sustainability and environmental tourism sustainability by making optimal use of existing resources, respecting the authenticity and culture of the local host communities, and contributing to intercultural understanding and tolerance. This can only be achieved through the following (Engel et al, 2009):

- Strong participation of local people in tourism as an active element,
- Awareness of both visitors and the local community, about all aspects of sustainability in tourism.
- Establish a monitoring system that responds very quickly to consequences.

With the above, the following most important results are achieved:

- Developing the heritage, cultural, aesthetic and recreational properties of qualified places in the Derna region. This applies, for example, to the ancient mosque, the church, and the shrine of Saint Mark. International bodies can even be involved in this.

- Preserving the environmental and aesthetic properties available in the place by controlling and reviewing the laws, as is the case in the distinctive waterfalls, Ras Al-Hilal, and Ras Al-Tin Beach.

- Exploiting some places that are still virgin in all rationality, without compromising their nature, by preserving their fertility, keeping human hands away from them as much as possible, while marketing them well. This applies to Wadi Al-Khabta and Wadi Markus.

- Improving reception capabilities in the place, by establishing eco-tourism hotels in partnership with the local community to maintain a healthy environment on the one hand and stimulate the local economy on the other hand.

- Improving the connection of these tourist areas that are qualified by nature, to contribute to the development of sustainable tourism with major road hubs to increase their competitive capabilities.

- Use sustainable or green transportation within the region.

Conclusion

To develop sustainable tourism activity and improve its profitability, the urgent need has emerged to adopt tourism planning according to the dimensions of sustainable development, as it enables an estimated future picture of the tourism sector and its development through unifying the efforts of all stakeholders and coordinating their work to establish a real tourism industry that focuses on realizing opportunities and reducing the proportion of future risks to ensure the continuity of tourism. Tourism giving to subsequent generations.

It is noted that at the level of the Derna region, plans must be reviewed, to identify the obstacles that prevented the implementation of integrated and sustainable tourism. This is done by preserving existing natural tourism resources, and promoting sustainable tourism services in important elements such as accommodation, marketing and transportation, which in many tourism countries have become a given. Thus, sustainable tourism development and comprehensive development are achieved, which represents the essence of the goals of good and sustainable tourism planning.

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