Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice
Volume 10

Experiencing Persian Heritage

Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice

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Recognizing the increasing gap between what is researched in academic community and what is practiced in industry, this series aims to bring together academic and industry leaders in their respective fields to discuss, exchange, and debate issues critical to the advancement of tourism. The book series intends to not only create a platform for academics and practitioners to share theories and practices with each other, but more importantly, to serve as a collaborative venue for meaningful synthesis.

Each volume will feature a distinct theme by focusing on a current or upcoming niche or "hot" topic. It shows how theories and practices inform each other; how both have evolved, advanced, and been applied; and how industry best practices have benefited from, and contributed to, theoretical developments. Volume editors have both strong academic credentials and significant consulting or other industry engagement experiences. Chapter contributors will be identified through professional conferences and trade conventions. In general, the book series seeks a synergy of how concepts can inform actions, and vice versa. The book series will inspire a new generation of researchers who can translate academic discoveries to deliverable results valuable to practitioners.

Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice
Volume 10

Experiencing Persian Heritage: Perspectives and Challenges

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Acknowledgments

The editors would like to acknowledge the fruitful contributions of authors and reviewers of this volume, published in the *Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice* book series. The following pages represent the efforts of 40 authors, three editors, and 15 reviewers. These researchers and scholars from around the world together guarantee the value of this publication. The second assurance is the quality of the contributions, with a rigorous review process used to shape the book as the third. The fourth guarantee refers to the geography of the contributions. This book is comprised of chapters authored by scholars from Europe, Oceania, America, and Asia. This suggest that Persian civilization and the Iranian hospitality and tourism industry are studied all over the world.

As expression of our gratitude, this book is dedicated to all who have contributed to its making and shaping, authors and reviewers in particular.

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INTRODUCTION
Sociocultural Contexts

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Culture, despite being a widespread concept, is still difficult to define, especially as it involves the complexity of human development and constant learning by each generation (Birukou, Blanzieri, Giorgini, & Giunchiglia, 2009). The report by the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development regards culture as the medium of living together (UNESCO, 2008a, 2008b). According to Banuri (2012), culture is "shared" among the members of a certain group. In an attempt to clarify its structural content, McKercher and Ho (2006) suggest that culture can be both "intangible" (such as hospitality, traditions, gastronomy, and lifestyle) and "tangible" (monuments and archaeological sites).

As forms of tourism, cultural and/or heritage tourism fall under culture and heritage frameworks. There are a wide range of views concerning cultural tourism; however, in general, it can be defined as "visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a

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community, region, group or institution" (Silberberg, 1995, p. 361). Despite the wide spread of cultural forms of tourism worldwide, Richards (1996) notes that cultural tourists are selective in their consumption of heritage resources and that "traditional" heritage destinations still have considerable advantages over "new" ones because of their accumulated symbolic and aesthetic value.

The heritage and culture of a destination are attractiveness factors, able to generate competitive advantage if backed with adequate resources such as infrastructure, accessibility, and services. As in Palmer (1999), tourism might select and promote certain aspects of the past to the detriment of others. In this vein, the way in which destinations develop and market their tourism sources, particularly their heritage, is of utmost importance since this represents "many contemporary visitors' desire to directly experience and consume diverse past and present cultural landscape, performance, food, handicrafts, and participatory activities" (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003, p. 703).

Tourism, therefore, should be regarded as a way of promoting a nation's history or heritage. This is especially true for countries such as Iran (also known as Persia) which has a vast heritage and history. Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with its historical and urban settlements dating back to 4000 BC. However, the existence of historical and cultural resources alone is insufficient to develop a country as a destination; work is needed and this volume, *Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice*, advocates that the time has come for Iran to engage in profound reflection and debate, shedding light on topical issues to position itself as a highly endowed destination.

Because there is an intersection between heritage and image, the book also proposes a framework for strengthening Iran's image as a destination, by identifying a set of image attributes, both functional and affective (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). These attributes are grounded in the destination's heritage, myths, and legends such that it might differentiate itself in a way that is meaningful to tourists who have authenticity on their radars. Kozak and Rimmington (1999) stress that destinations should be oriented to target positioning in their own competitiveness set, depending on the type of products offered.

Furthermore, it is well known that the tourism and hospitality industry is a growing contributor to economies worldwide. However, it turns out that the industry's economic role on national and international scales invariably leads to the discussion of whether tourism really helps to construct and convey a sense of national identity (Palmer, 1999). Tourism

should be a way of promoting a nation's heritage and promoting international understanding. This is especially true for countries such as Iran, with its celebrated and sometimes mixed history.

Over the last two decades, there have been many books on the management and marketing of destinations, mostly biased towards Western or Asia–Pacific countries. Many other existing references can be added on service quality, tourist satisfaction, and experiences. However, the literature still suffers from a lack of major references focusing on Middle Eastern destinations, particularly Iran. On the industry side, as an emerging destination, Iran is still transitioning to position itself on the international tourism map. On the academic level, fortunately, there has been an increasing number of researchers, with or without a background in tourism, who have investigated different aspects of tourism as a part of their academic duties.

Prompted by this unfolding development, the purpose of this book is to analyze new perspectives and challenges for tourism and hospitality development in Iran. Without the presupposition that may constrain the arousal of new topics, this publication is the first attempt to bring to light how Iran can resume its tourism position by furthering its heritage and cultural values. With the potential of Iran's ancient Persian legacy, this volume contributes to unearthing issues that may boost Iran's competitive position. This book is a collection of contributions that focuses on and emphasizes the potential of tourism and hospitality in Iran as a heritage destination.

THE MAKING OF THIS VOLUME

This book was sourced in an international conference held in 2016 in Isfahan, Iran, where the lead editor of this volume and the chief editor of *Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice* were present. During the conference, the idea of a publication on the historical development as well as the current position of the Iranian tourism industry was discussed and some months later the idea started taking shape. Some chapters of this book were originally presented at the Isfahan conference; the rest were recruited from and submitted by those in the know from all over the world.

The authors commissioned were not only from Iran but also those not originally and culturally from this part of the world. The national scholars expanded their network to work together with their colleagues internationally. The chapters' authors are from Ecuador, Iran, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This contribution can be regarded as a

representative example of collaboration between insiders (Iranians) and outsiders (non-Iranians) to produce *Experiencing Persian Heritage: Perspectives and Challenges*.

Structured in five parts, this book compiles 17 chapters to further the understanding of tourism and hospitality issues based on Iran as a destination, and it reinforces the challenges the country will be facing to leverage its tourism development. The chapters, developed around conceptual and empirical research, can be considered as a starting point for the creation and management of natural and endowed resources – the bases of tourism development. As such, this book analyzes new perspectives and challenges for this development in Iran and countries with similar backgrounds, with the objective of contributing to the presently limited knowledge base, improving policymaking in this respect, and increasing the visibility of Iranian academics doing research on tourism and hospitality all over the world.

Part I introduces the contextual setting of this publication. Chapter 1, "Tourism in Iran: A Political Economy Perspective" is by Rahim Heydari Chianeh, Seyedeh Kadijeh Rezatab Azgoomi, and Behnam Kian. They establish broad historical, cultural, political, and religious contexts that can influence tourism development. In fact, Iran, during its long history, has experienced various social transitions which now shape its tourism. In spite of, or even because of, its antiquity, this country is now resuming its tourism industry with a new vigor, an observation which is reinforced by contributions appearing in this book.

Part II, "Taxonomies and Typologies of Cultural and Heritage Tourism", is made up of three chapters. Chapter 2, "Heritage Tourism in Iran: A Historical Perspective," contributed by Maria Isabel Roque and Maria João Forte, reveals the uniqueness of Iranian culture. It offers a thorough synthesis of Iranian history, where the legacy of successive cultures, the theocratic regime, and the openness of the new strategy reveals a country where richness of heritage can support tourism development with a uniqueness which deserves to be experienced.

Chapter 3, "Encounters with Iranian Culture: A Critical Incident Approach in Tourism," shows how Iranian culture is perceived and how it could be promoted. Samir Zare and Philip L. Pearce emphasize "critical incidents" that characterize how tourists react to local cultural encounters. Surprise, confusion, and curiosity are the emotions tourists verbalize when referring to the culture as experienced. Whereas in Chapter 4, "Cultural Heritage in Tourism Strategy: Insights from Iran," Minoo Esfehani emphasizes how intangible cultural heritage is perceived by tourists and how these

perceptions could be promoted as attractions. Together, Part II contributes to a better understanding of the nature of cultural and heritage tourism, paving the way for appropriate developmental courses of action.

Part III, "Visitors' Perceptions of Heritage Setting and Cultural Attractions," aims to understand the relationship between service design concepts and the management of tourists' experiences and satisfaction within a heritage setting. The understanding of tourists' experience is the path to improving Iran's tourism performance, considering the fact that the country is now interested in promoting its tourism industry. In Chapter 5, "Savoring Persian Travel: Analyzing Iranian Tourists' Memories," Philip L. Pearce and Zohre Mohammadi depicts Iranian tourists' narratives and compare their stories with those from Asia and Europe. They conclude that Iranian tourists savor their environments and culture in a distinct way.

In Chapter 6, "Host–Guest Relations: Cultural Tourists in Iran," Andrés Artal-Tur, Noelia Sánchez-Casado, and María Isabel Osorio-Caballero offer a conceptual model, based on experience literature, for clustering cultural tourists, which in turn is based on the profiles defining the potential impacts of opening the country to international cultural tourists. Chapter 7, "Kandovan Troglodyte Village: A Functioning Cultural Heritage Experience," is contributed by Martin Joseph Gannon, Renzo Cordina, Sean Lochrie, Babak Taheri, and Fevzi Okumus. They bring a rare example of cultural heritage into discussion to demonstrate that managing heritage sites may serve as a platform for social interaction – to engage tourists, stimulate memorable experiences, and encourage repeat visits and their recommendations to others. Mercede Shavanddasht, in Chapter 8, "Effects of Museum Visits on Adolescents' Motivations and Satisfaction," reasons that adolescents are tomorrow's tourists and shows how they react to compulsory and non-compulsory visits to museums. This chapter establishes paths for educating adolescents to become cultural tourists in the future.

Part IV, "Emerging Means of Promotion and Management," considers co-created experience due to the interaction of tourists, hosts, and places. This new understanding promotes the concept of hospitality in the tourism literature. Chapter 9, "The Meaning of Hospitality in Iran," argues that hospitality is a virtue or desire to please guests. Javaneh Mehran claims that hospitality has been intrinsic to Iranian people since the very beginning of their history. The chronology that has set forth the paths of hospitality in Iran since ancient times can be used as a marker to promote Iran. Under the umbrella of the hospitality construct, new means for

promoting cultural destinations are largely discussed; however, a consensus is far from being reached.

Storytelling and pictorial image are the most effective means of promoting cultural destinations, as discussed in Chapter 10, "A Textual and Visual-based Exposition of Iran as a Destination." Ana Isabel Rodrigues, Vahid Ghasemi, Antónia Correia, and Metin Kozak demonstrate that comments and photos of tourists while visiting Iran reveal emotions, sensory perceptions, intellectual comprehension, active participation, and memories that could be used to define the image and positioning of the country as a cultural heritage destination in the near future. Another means of promoting destinations is through social media. As discussed in Chapter 11, "Social Media and Hotels in Iran: Online Reputation of Hotels on Booking.com," María de la Cruz del Río-Rama, Claudia Patricia Maldonado-Erazo, José Álvarez-García, and Ramiro Leonardo Ramírez-Coronel offer a quantitative indicator of the online reputation of hotels in Iran by signaling the strengths and weaknesses of the target hotels and their promotional opportunities.

In a destination where culture is the drawing card, this part could not end without analyzing the importance of authenticity and innovation in tourism development. In Chapter 12, "Authenticity and Innovation: The Future of Tourism in Iran," Fabio Carbone, Neda Torabi Farsani, Peyman Seyeddi, and Anahita Malek stress that the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural resources must be the core of the strategic management of places and processes. Such a management strategy should be developed to ensure the preservation of authenticity and the wellness of local people.

Part V, "Image of Iran and Competitive Positioning," starts with Chapter 13, "The Impact of Branding on Tourists' Satisfaction and Loyalty in Iran." Zanete Garanti, Shiva Ilkhanizadeh, and Philip Siaw Kissi demonstrate that brand image, value, and awareness are critical to please tourists and to ensure that they return, with these as the bases to define a destination's personality. In the same vein, Chapter 14, "Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty in Heritage Sites of Shiraz," contributed by Shiva Hashemi, Shaian Kiumarsi, Azizan Marzuki, and Behnaz Babaei Anarestani, reinforces the importance of image to increasing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Both chapters provide insights for boosting tourism in Iran.

The image of a destination includes the local hospitality which contributes to tourism development, as advanced in Chapter 15, "Residents' Apathy and Heritage Tourism Development." Vahid Ghasemi, Giacomo Del Chiappa,

and Antónia Correia introduce "apathy" as a tool to guide tourism development. In the case of host communities with a passive attitude toward tourists, internal marketing to increase resident interest in, and commitment to, tourism is called for. Regarding place interactions and considering the increasing importance of residential tourism all over the world, Chapter 16, "A Holistic Analysis of the Second Home Tourism in the Caspian Sea Region of Iran: From Host Communites Perspective," makes this case. Habib Alipour, Hamed Rezapouraghdam, and Bazar Hasanzade show that this sector is associated with unique spatial characteristics, endowed with natural resources such as green landscape, sun, sea, and sand. Part V ends with Chapter 17, "Islamic and Halal Tourism in Iran: Toward New Horizons." Rahim Heydari Chianeh, Behnam Kian, and Seyedeh Kadijeh Rezatab Azgoomi introduce paths for influencing the Muslim world in one of the world's hubs for Islamic and Halal tourism.

Finally, this book demonstrates that Iran has a great potential to become a high-ranking international destination; its heritage, culture, and endless hospitality are competitive advantages which are difficult to find in other destinations. Iran is also covered by the magic curtain of that which is forbidden and full of mystery, and this is one of its most powerful tools to attract tourists. The support of the government and the population for tourism development also contribute to an image and personality which Iran is starting to enhance. However, plans without goals remain dreams, and as such this book brings to the forefront the discussion on how Iran can appraise its resources, identify opportunities, and boost tourism as the first door to open the country to new horizons.