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**JOURNEY TO THE COUNTRY OF CONTRASTS:
A HOLISTIC EXPLORATION OF THE PROJECTED AND
PERCEIVED IMAGES OF IRAN AS A TOURISM DESTINATION**

**TESIS DOCTORAL POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES
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**INFORME DEL DIRECTOR/TUTOR SOBRE LA IDONEIDAD DE PRESENTACIÓN DE LA
TESIS POR COMPENDIO DE PUBLICACIONES**

D. **Fernando Almeida García** como TUTOR Y DIRECTOR y D. **Pere Mercadé Melé** como DIRECTOR de la tesis doctoral de D. **Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji**, emiten el siguiente informe FAVORABLE a la presentación como compendio de publicaciones de la tesis doctoral: "Journey to the land of contrasts: A holistic exploration of the projected and perceived destination images of Iran" ("Viaje al país de los contrastes: Una exploración holística de las imágenes proyectadas y percibidas de Irán"), y así mismo EXPONEN que las publicaciones que avalan la tesis no ha sido utilizadas en tesis anteriores y que ninguno de los miembros propuestos para formar parte del tribunal o evaluadores externos figuran como coautores en ninguna de las publicaciones que avalan la tesis. La tesis se compone de tres publicaciones que avalan la tesis por compendio y que se incorporan en el documento de tesis.

Fdo. Fernando Almeida García

Fdo. Pere Mercadé Melé

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Resumen

La tesis doctoral, titulada '*Journey to the Land of Contrasts: A Holistic Exploration of the Projected and Perceived Destination Images of Iran*' (Viaje al país de los contrastes: Una exploración holística de las imágenes proyectadas y percibidas de Irán como destino turístico) se ha desarrollado dentro del Programa de Doctorado Interuniversitario en Turismo de la Universidad de Málaga. Esta tesis se estructura como un compendio de publicaciones y se compone de ocho capítulos, que incluyen tres trabajos que han sido publicados en revistas de prestigio. Estos trabajos están interconectados por una temática común centrada en el concepto de imagen de destino.

El concepto de imagen de destino es un elemento fundamental en el ámbito del marketing y la gestión del turismo. Se refiere a la suma de creencias, ideas e impresiones que la gente asocia con el destino. Estas imágenes influyen en las decisiones de los visitantes potenciales, conforman sus expectativas y afectan a sus experiencias durante la visita.

La investigación sobre la imagen de los destinos suele dividirse en dos categorías principales: a) imagen proyectada y b) imagen percibida. La imagen proyectada se refiere a la forma en que un destino se muestra a los visitantes potenciales. Esta imagen suele estar gestionada por las Organizaciones de Marketing de Destinos (OMD) a través de campañas de marketing, los equipos de relaciones públicas y las actividades de creación de marca. El objetivo es destacar las características más atractivas del destino, como los recursos naturales, el patrimonio cultural o la gastronomía, en función de lo que ofrezca el destino y de lo que desee el mercado destinatario.

Por otro lado, la imagen percibida es la visión que los turistas potenciales y reales tienen del destino. Esta percepción está influida por la imagen proyectada, pero también por una amplia gama de otros factores, como el boca a boca, las redes sociales, los contextos culturales, las experiencias pasadas y las expectativas personales. La imagen percibida es subjetiva y puede variar mucho de un individuo a otro.

La interacción entre las imágenes proyectadas y las percibidas es crucial. Si existe una gran discrepancia entre lo que se comercializa y lo que se experimenta, puede provocar decepción y un boca a boca negativo, lo que puede ser perjudicial para la reputación del destino. Por lo tanto, comprender e investigar la imagen del destino es vital para que los gestores de

destino y las empresas turísticas desarrollen sus actividades de marketing de acuerdo con las percepciones y experiencias de los visitantes, manteniendo así el atractivo del destino en un mercado competitivo.

El estudio subraya la importancia de explorar la imagen proyectada y percibida del destino para el desarrollo de la industria turística de cada país. En concreto, la investigación se centra en Irán, un destino emergente en el mapa turístico internacional, que ha sido en gran medida pasado por alto en los estudios turísticos existentes.

Para llevar a cabo esta investigación, se realizó una extensa revisión de la literatura existente en este campo. La investigación se centra en tres conceptos clave: i) la imagen proyectada del destino Irán, analizada a través de imágenes en las páginas oficiales de las redes sociales de turismo iraní en Instagram; ii) las imágenes percibidas que tienen los turistas reales y potenciales hacia un destino sancionado; y iii) la influencia de la animadversión o antipatía hacia la imagen del destino y el comportamiento posterior de los turistas hacia este país.

La investigación adopta un enfoque de método mixtos para alcanzar sus objetivos y abordar las preguntas del estudio. Inicialmente, se utilizaron el análisis de contenido y el análisis de contenido visual para evaluar la imagen proyectada de Irán en Instagram, lo que supuso el análisis de 1.270 publicaciones y 4.856 fotografías. A continuación, se empleó el estudio cualitativo para comprender cómo perciben los turistas la imagen de un destino sancionado y cómo influyen las crisis inducidas por las sanciones en las intenciones de comportamiento de los turistas. Por último, se adoptó un enfoque de investigación cuantitativa para comprender el papel de la animadversión en las intenciones de comportamiento de los turistas hacia el destino, en particular en el contexto de las tensiones políticas actuales.

Los resultados revelan que, en general, aunque la mayoría de los turistas que viajan a Irán son turistas religiosos, el principal atributo que configura la imagen proyectada de Irán en las redes sociales se basa en su riqueza histórica y paisajística (Publicación 1). Además, el estudio revela que las sanciones y la ausencia de relaciones bilaterales positivas afectan negativamente en las percepciones que las personas que no han visitado el país respecto a los componentes cognitivo, emocional y conativo. Por el contrario, los viajeros que han visitado Irán, a pesar de ser un destino sancionado, tienen percepciones positivas y a menudo describen el país como un lugar con gente hospitalaria y cálida. Este hallazgo subraya el papel fundamental de la experiencia de visita al destino a la hora de conformar y mejorar la imagen global del mismo.

Además, la investigación demuestra que las sanciones contribuyen a aumentar la percepción de riesgo entre los turistas que visitan un destino señalado como tal. Las sanciones se traducen en una serie de riesgos financieros, de seguridad y afectaciones a la imagen del destino (Publicación 2). Más allá del impacto de las sanciones en la imagen del destino de Irán, las cuestiones ideológicas o políticas también desempeñan un papel importante en el fomento de la hostilidad o antipatía entre los turistas, contribuyendo así a una percepción negativa de Irán (Publicación 3). Este efecto es especialmente destacado en los mercados turísticos de los países desarrollados, como Estados Unidos. Nuestro estudio subraya que los turistas potenciales occidentales consideran que las acciones militares, la política y el trasfondo social e histórico de Irán son factores influyentes en la formación de la animadversión, lo que se traduce en una imagen negativa y en un boicot a viajar a Irán (Publicaciones 2, 3). En general, esta tesis enriquece la bibliografía sobre la imagen proyectada y percibida del destino, la animadversión, las crisis y las sanciones al centrarse en las percepciones de los visitantes y no visitantes hacia un destino sancionado que también es objeto de hostilidad. La investigación explora los posteriores comportamientos de los viajeros en respuesta a estas circunstancias. En la conclusión se exponen las implicaciones teóricas y prácticas del estudio.

PUBLICACIONES:

Los artículos que avalan la tesis por compilación y que a continuación se presentan, cumplen las normas del Programa de Doctorado Interuniversitario en Turismo, las normas reguladoras de los estudios de doctorado de la Universidad de Málaga (artículo 21) y los criterios de la Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA).

- **PRIMERA PUBLICACIÓN:**

Siyamiyan Gorji, A., Almeida-García, F., & Mercadé Melé, P. (2023). Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: The case of Iran on *Instagram*. *Anatolia*, 34(2), 144-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.2001665>

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Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: the case of Iran on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the representative characteristics of the projected image of Iran, a destination largely neglected in the tourism literature. The projected image was obtained through an analysis of shared photographs and content on Instagram. To that end, we selected two official pages of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft on Instagram. To identify the key features of Iran's projected image, the authors classified photographs into 14 groups, determined the geographical distribution of shared pictures, and applied hashtag visualization in order to ascertain the most engaging posts. The findings of the study show that while most tourists travelling to Iran are religious tourists, the leading attribute of Iran's projected image relies on its rich history and landscapes.

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KEYWORDS

Destination image; projected image; pictorial analysis; visual platforms; Iran

La primera publicación "Análisis de la imagen proyectada de destinos turísticos en fotografías: El caso de Irán en Instagram" explora las características representativas de la imagen proyectada de Irán como destino turístico a partir de fotografías y contenidos compartidos en Instagram. El estudio clasificó las fotografías en 14 grupos, determinó su distribución geográfica y aplicó la visualización de hashtags para determinar las publicaciones más atractivas.

Los atributos dominantes de la imagen del destino de Irán presentados por la Organización de Gestión de Destinos (DMO) en Instagram incluyen un enfoque en sitios culturales y patrimoniales, paisajes naturales y patrimonio arquitectónico. La página de Instagram de la DMO presenta principalmente fotografías de arquitectura y sitios patrimoniales, que

representaron el 30,8 % de todas las imágenes compartidas.

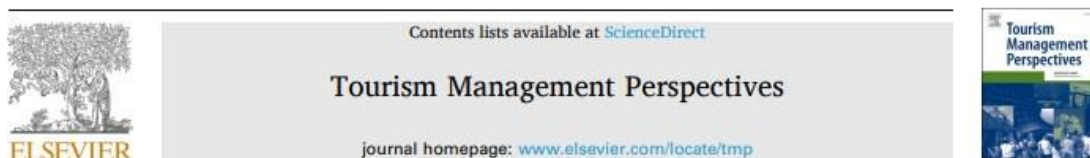
Le siguen las imágenes de naturaleza y paisajes, que representaron el 17,6% de las fotografías compartidas. El DMO también destaca la distribución geográfica de Irán, centrándose en destinos famosos como Teherán, Isfahán, Fars y Yazd, conocidos por sus aspectos arquitectónicos, culturales e históricos. Además, la DMO utiliza hashtags relacionados con la cultura, la naturaleza, la arquitectura, la historia y el arte para promover las características únicas de Irán como destino turístico. Las imágenes más atractivas para los turistas potenciales son las que muestran la naturaleza y el paisaje, así como las categorías de patrimonio. Estos resultados indican que la DMO aspira a proyectar Irán como destino turístico cultural en lugar de únicamente religioso, en consonancia con los esfuerzos del país por alcanzar los 20 millones de turistas en 2026.

Los resultados del estudio también subrayan la importancia de utilizar las plataformas de redes sociales, en particular Instagram, para el marketing de destinos, ya que proporciona información sobre la imagen proyectada y el compromiso de los turistas potenciales. Además, la publicación ofrece implicaciones prácticas para las campañas de marketing de los destinos, sugiriendo estrategias como la adaptación del contenido de los medios visuales para atraer a los turistas potenciales, dirigiéndose a mercados específicos y aprovechando el contenido generado por los usuarios para la promoción de los destinos. El estudio también subraya la importancia de adaptar las estrategias de marketing a los antecedentes culturales y las preferencias del público destinatario, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de un marketing turístico en línea con los aspectos culturales.

● SEGUNDA PUBLICACIÓN:

Siyamiyan Gorji, A. S., Garcia, F. A., & Mercadé-Melé, P. (2023). Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioural intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 45, 101062.

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Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioral intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors



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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a qualitative study, this study aims to provide an improved understanding of how tourists perceive a sanctioned destination's image and how sanction-induced crises influence tourists' behavioral intentions. To do so, this study employed semi-structured interviews with 30 individuals each with and without prior experience visiting Iran. The findings revealed that sanctions influence affective and cognitive images and enhance tourist risk perceptions, including financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. Furthermore, a positive post-trip evaluation was found to play a significant role in further behavioral intention, thereby enhancing destination image. Overall, this study enriches the literature on tourism and crises by focusing on visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions of a sanctioned destination and their subsequent behavioral intents. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are provided in the conclusion.

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El artículo examina la repercusión de las sanciones en la percepción que los turistas tienen de un destino, centrándose en Irán, para comprender cómo influyen las sanciones en las imágenes afectivas y cognitivas y cómo aumentan la percepción del riesgo por parte de los turistas. Irán ha sido objeto de sanciones como consecuencia de conflictos diplomáticos con países occidentales, en particular con EE.UU., que se remontan a la Revolución Islámica de 1979. Las primeras sanciones las impuso Estados Unidos después de que unos estudiantes iraníes ocuparan la embajada estadounidense en Teherán y tomaran como rehenes a más de 60 diplomáticos estadounidenses. Posteriormente, las tensiones en torno al programa nuclear iraní en 2010 llevaron a la imposición de sanciones sin precedentes por parte de Estados Unidos. Irán es especialmente conocido por estar sometido a algunos de los regímenes de embargo más duros y duraderos del mundo moderno. Estas sanciones de larga duración han afectado significativamente a la economía iraní y a la vida cotidiana



de sus ciudadanos. Las sanciones han tenido efectos económicos directos e indirectos, afectando a diversos sectores, incluidas las industrias relacionadas con el turismo. El estudio cualitativo utilizó entrevistas semiestructuradas con 30 personas con y sin experiencia previa en visitas a Irán.

El estudio se diferencia de investigaciones anteriores en que se centra en comparar las percepciones de visitantes y no visitantes hacia un destino sancionado, concretamente Irán. Este enfoque comparativo proporciona una comprensión más equilibrada de la imagen del destino, que en la bibliografía existente se ha centrado en gran medida en los visitantes. Además, el estudio aborda la falta de documentación sobre las opiniones de los turistas acerca de los destinos sancionados, en particular de los turistas occidentales, que constituyen un importante mercado generador de turismo. La investigación es oportuna debido a la reimposición de sanciones contra Irán por parte de Estados Unidos, tras un breve periodo en el que se levantaron, y a los debates en curso sobre la continuación de dichas sanciones. El estudio también amplía la corriente anterior de investigación sobre la imagen de los destinos al adoptar un enfoque cualitativo, que ha estado notablemente ausente en la bibliografía existente. Además, el estudio responde a la petición de que se investiguen más a fondo los efectos psicológicos de las sanciones en los destinos, en particular comparando las imágenes de los no visitantes y los visitantes, un aspecto que no se ha investigado ampliamente en anteriores estudios respecto a las repercusiones de las sanciones en los destinos turísticos.

El diseño de la investigación incluyó la elaboración de una guía de entrevista semiestructurada basada en una revisión bibliográfica y en estudios anteriores, con un estudio piloto realizado para garantizar la eficacia de las preguntas de la entrevista. El estudio priorizó cuatro grandes temas pertinentes para los objetivos de la investigación, centrados en las percepciones de la imagen de Irán como destino sancionado, los efectos de las sanciones en la decisión de visitar Irán, el peligro percibido al viajar a un destino sancionado y el impacto de las sanciones en la intención de visitar Irán y recomendarlo como destino turístico.

Los resultados revelaron que las repercusiones de las sanciones en la percepción que los turistas tienen de un destino sancionado son variadas y abarcan imágenes afectivas y cognitivas, así como el aumento de la percepción del riesgo por parte de los turistas. El estudio sostiene que las sanciones influyen en seis tipos de riesgos percibidos: financieros,

de satisfacción, terrorismo y guerra, políticos, delincuencia y seguridad y dificultades de funcionamiento de los servicios. Los no visitantes tienden a percibir más negativamente un destino sancionado, sobre todo en términos de seguridad y protección, debido al impacto de las sanciones. Expresan su preocupación por los peligros potenciales, como las tensiones políticas y los riesgos para la seguridad, que son predictores susceptibles de disuadir a los turistas a viajar a regiones consideradas de riesgo. Además, las sanciones pueden afectar negativamente a la imagen del destino, influyendo en los atributos cognitivos y afectivos, y pueden provocar una disminución de las llegadas de turistas y del gasto.

Las implicaciones del estudio subrayan la necesidad de revisar las estrategias de marketing y las campañas promocionales para mejorar la imagen de Irán como destino turístico, en particular mostrando mejor la situación de seguridad y protección. Los resultados sugieren que los no visitantes perciben Irán como un destino inseguro para los occidentales debido al impacto negativo de las sanciones. En cambio, los viajeros que han visitado el país tienen una imagen positiva de Irán y lo describen como un destino seguro y hospitalario. Esto pone de relieve la importancia de las campañas promocionales informativas y el uso de las plataformas de los medios sociales para configurar la imagen de Irán de forma que disminuya el riesgo percibido y destaque sus características positivas.

El estudio también analiza las limitaciones de la investigación, sugiriendo la necesidad de seguir investigando los efectos psicológicos de las sanciones en los destinos, en particular utilizando una perspectiva transcultural para evaluar las repercusiones en visitantes de diversos orígenes culturales. Además, futuros estudios podrían utilizar métodos mixtos para evaluar la percepción del riesgo y la imagen del destino antes, durante y después de viajar a destinos sancionados.

- **TERCERA PUBLICACIÓN:**

Siyamiyan Gorji, A., Almeida Garcia, F., & Mercadé-Melé, P. (2022). How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2022.2124023>

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How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand tourist behavioural intentions towards a destination when the tourism-generating market (US) and the destination country (Iran) are engaged in ongoing political tensions. This study has also attempted to understand how social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk and tourist attitude towards a given destination influence tourist boycott intentions in the light of a traditional enmity between both countries. Evidence from 251 respondents indicates the positive and negative impact of these constructs on travel boycott intentions. Overall, this study extends the literature on tourism behaviour by focusing on relatively overlooked concepts such as susceptibility to normative influence and animosity. Theoretical and practical implications of the study have been provided in the conclusions section.

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KEYWORDS

Animosity; susceptibility to normative influence; destination image; boycott intentions; Iran; USA

El tercer artículo de investigación explora el impacto de la aversión en la decisión de los turistas a viajar a un destino, especialmente en el contexto de las actuales tensiones políticas entre Estados Unidos (EE.UU.) e Irán. El estudio pretende comprender cómo influyen las normas sociales, la animadversión, la imagen del destino, la percepción que tienen los turistas del riesgo de viajar y la actitud de los turistas hacia un destino determinado en las intenciones de boicot de los turistas en un contexto de tradicional enemistad entre ambos países. La animosidad o aversión se refiere a un sentimiento negativo u hostilidad profundamente arraigados hacia un país concreto o sus ciudadanos, derivados de diversos factores como acciones militares, explotación económica, diferencias culturales, disparidades religiosas, acontecimientos históricos y desacuerdos políticos. Se trata de un constructo multidimensional que abarca una serie de percepciones y emociones negativas, como la antipatía, la intolerancia y la hostilidad. La animosidad puede influir en el comportamiento de los consumidores, sobre todo en el contexto de los mercados internacionales y el turismo, provocando intenciones de boicotear productos o servicios asociados con el objeto de la animosidad. Este sentimiento negativo puede repercutir en las actitudes, percepciones y comportamientos de los individuos, influyendo en su disposición

a visitar un destino concreto o atomar decisiones de consumo. Además, la animadversión puede verse influida por la presión social y la influencia normativa, lo que lleva a los individuos a conformarse con los pensamientos y emociones negativos asociados a sus grupos de referencia o a las normas sociales. En general, la animadversión es un concepto complejo y polifacético que desempeña un papel importante en la formación de las actitudes y comportamientos de los individuos hacia determinados países o destinos.

A través de las pruebas obtenidas de 251 encuestados, el estudio destaca el impacto positivo y negativo de estos constructos en las intenciones de boicotear los viajes, ampliando la bibliografía sobre el comportamiento turístico al centrarse en conceptos relativamente pasados por alto, como la susceptibilidad a la influencia normativa y la animosidad.

La metodología del estudio consistió en una encuesta en línea, en la que la mayoría de los encuestados eran hombres, solteros y con edades comprendidas entre los 21-35 y los 36-50 años. En el análisis de los datos se utilizó el modelo de ecuaciones estructurales por mínimos cuadrados parciales (PLS-SEM) para evaluar el modelo de medición, que demostró una gran fiabilidad y validez para todas las variables, altos valores de R^2 y un buen ajuste en el índice SRMR. Los resultados mostraron que la relación entre el riesgo percibido, la imagen del destino y la actitud del turista es crucial para comprender cómo influyen en la intención de no viajar a un destino.

Los resultados de la investigación indican que el riesgo percibido por los turistas tiene un impacto significativo en la imagen global del destino y en la intención de boicot. Cuando existe animosidad, tanto la imagen cognitiva como la afectiva repercuten en la imagen global, y ésta, a su vez, en la intención de boicotear. Además, la actitud del turista está positivamente correlacionada con la imagen del destino, y las actitudes desfavorables hacia un destino reducen la probabilidad de visitarlo.

Además, existe una relación positiva entre la percepción del riesgo por parte del turista y la aversión general, y se ha encontrado una correlación significativa entre la intención de boicotear y la percepción del riesgo. A medida que aumenta la percepción del riesgo de inseguridad por parte de los turistas, la imagen del destino se vuelve más negativa y aumenta la intención de boicotearlo.

Se aconseja a los responsables de la comercialización de destinos que tengan en cuenta el efecto amplificador de la animadversión sobre los riesgos percibidos en sus estrategias

de comunicación y tomen medidas proactivas para tranquilizar a los turistas sobre la seguridad de los destinos marcados por la hostilidad.

Además, la investigación aporta ideas para promover la imagen de un destino en el mercado occidental y subraya la necesidad de que los agentes del turismo y las organizaciones de gestión de destinos analicen las actitudes de los visitantes internacionales y permanezcan atentos al aumento de la hostilidad de los turistas. El estudio también sugiere que los agentes turísticos deberían considerar la posibilidad de segmentar su actual mercado turístico objetivo en función de los restos de hostilidad y atraer a turistas potenciales que no se hayan visto afectados por acontecimientos pasados. Además, se aconseja al gobierno de un país con una imagen negativa que repare su imagen proporcionando la información necesaria, resolviendo los problemas y reduciendo los riesgos reales.

La investigación también identifica posibles limitaciones y sugiere vías para futuras investigaciones, incluida la necesidad de estudios interculturales y la exploración de factores adicionales como el apego nacional y el etnocentrismo. En resumen, el estudio contribuye a comprender cómo influye la animadversión en el comportamiento de los turistas y sienta las bases para seguir investigando la dinámica de las intenciones de boicot de los turistas en entornos políticamente muy señalados. Comprender estas percepciones es crucial para desarrollar estrategias que promuevan el crecimiento del turismo, lo que puede conducir a la revitalización del sector turístico, la creación de empleo y una mayor reputación internacional. Un estudio centrado en la imagen del destino Irán puede mostrar el verdadero atractivo del país más allá del discurso político. Es un paso esencial para repositionar a Irán en la escena mundial, no sólo como un país rico en historia y cultura, sino también como un destino acogedor para viajeros de todo el mundo.

Los viajeros que han visitado Irán pueden ayudar al país a acceder a nuevos mercados turísticos, modificar los estereotipos obsoletos y mejorar su posición en la comunidad mundial.

Además, la imagen que se percibe de Irán como destino turístico puede influir significativamente en el proceso de toma de decisiones de los viajeros, lo que repercute no sólo en el turismo sino también en las relaciones socioeconómicas en general. Comprender estas percepciones es crucial para desarrollar estrategias que promuevan el crecimiento del turismo, lo que puede conducir a la revitalización del sector turístico, la creación de empleo

y una mejor reputación internacional. Un estudio centrado en la imagen del destino Irán puede llenar las lagunas de la investigación y mostrar el verdadero atractivo del país más allá del discurso político. Es un paso esencial para reposicionar a Irán en la escena mundial, no sólo como un país rico en historia y cultura, sino también como un destino acogedor para viajeros de todo el mundo.

Aspectos Destacados de la Tesis

Esta serie de estudios contribuye significativamente a la bibliografía sobre la imagen de los destinos, el comportamiento de los turistas y la percepción del riesgo, especialmente en lo que respecta a destinos sancionados como Irán. Los aspectos más destacados son los siguientes

- **Vacío en la literatura:** El estudio aborda la imagen turística de Irán, una área poco investigada, proporcionando perspectivas a través de un análisis de contenido visual en Instagram, e introduciendo una categoría novedosa para analizar las imágenes proyectadas de los países, especialmente aquellos vistos como destinos musulmanes o religiosos.
- **Expansión de la formación de la imagen del destino:** Más allá de los canales tradicionales, el estudio subraya la importancia de plataformas como Instagram en la formación de la imagen de los destinos y sugiere aprovechar los matices culturales y los contenidos generados por los usuarios para captar a turistas potenciales.
- **Impacto de las sanciones en el turismo:** La investigación profundiza en el impacto psicológico de las sanciones sobre el turismo, ampliando la comprensión de cómo las sanciones afectan a la reputación de los destinos y a la percepción del riesgo por parte de los turistas. Compara de forma única las percepciones y comportamientos de visitantes y no visitantes, destacando cómo las sanciones influyen de forma diferente en ambos grupos.
- **Opiniones de visitantes y no visitantes:** La comparación entre visitantes y no visitantes ofrece una visión completa de cómo la experiencia directa frente a la percepción externa influye en las actitudes hacia un destino sancionado, pudiendo cuestionar o reforzar los estereotipos.
- **Evaluaciones posteriores al viaje y a la lealtad de los turistas:** El estudio investiga cómo las evaluaciones positivas posteriores al viaje influyen en las intenciones futuras y en la fidelidad hacia destinos sancionados, contribuyendo a la comprensión de qué factores fomentan la repetición de las visitas y el boca a boca positivo en climas

geopolíticos desafiantes.

- **Percepción del riesgo en el turismo:** Enriquece el debate sobre la percepción del riesgo por parte de los turistas al detallar los riesgos específicos asociados a la visita a destinos sancionados y cómo éstos se contrapesan con los beneficios percibidos.
- **Perspectiva cualitativa:** Al adoptar un enfoque cualitativo, el estudio ofrece una visión más profunda y holística de las percepciones e intenciones de comportamiento de los turistas, lo que supone un cambio significativo respecto a la naturaleza predominantemente cuantitativa de las investigaciones anteriores.
- **Normas sociales y comportamiento turístico:** Por último, la investigación integra diversos constructos como las normas sociales, la animosidad y el comportamiento de los turistas en el contexto de la relación entre Estados Unidos e Irán. Explora cómo factores psicológicos como la percepción del riesgo y la animadversión influyen en la decisión de boicotear un destino y examina los distintos efectos de las normas sociales en las culturas individualistas y colectivistas.

En conjunto, estos estudios proporcionan un marco exhaustivo para comprender la compleja interacción entre los factores geopolíticos y el turismo, ofreciendo nuevas perspectivas sobre cómo los destinos pueden gestionar y mejorar su imagen en condiciones de sanciones internacionales.

Abstract

The doctoral dissertation, titled '*Journey to the Land of Contrasts: A Holistic Exploration of the Projected and Perceived Destination Images of Iran*' is related to the Inter-University Doctoral Programme in Tourism at the University of Malaga, and meets the requirements to obtain the mention "International Doctorate." This thesis is structured as a compendium of publications and is composed of eight chapters, which include three papers that have been published in prestigious journals. These papers are interconnected by a common theme centered around the concept of destination image.

The concept of destination image is a fundamental element in the field of tourism marketing and management. It refers to the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people associate with the destination. These images influence potential visitors' decisions, shape their expectations, and affect their experiences during their visit.

Research on destination image typically falls into two primary categories: a) projected image and b) perceived image. The projected image refers to the way in which a destination attempts to present itself to potential visitors. This is often managed by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) through various marketing campaigns, public relations efforts, and branding activities. The goal is to highlight the most attractive and distinctive features of the destination, such as natural wonders, cultural heritage, or gastronomy, depending on what the destination offers and what the target market desires.

On the other hand, the perceived image is the view that potential and actual tourists have of the destination. This perception is influenced by the projected image but also by a wide range of other factors including word of mouth, social media, cultural influences, past experiences, and personal expectations. The perceived image is subjective and can vary widely among individuals.

The interaction between the projected and perceived images is crucial. If there's a large discrepancy between what is marketed and what is experienced, it can lead to disappointment and negative word-of-mouth, which can be damaging to the destination's reputation. Therefore, understanding and researching destination image is vital for tourism authorities and businesses to ensure that their marketing efforts align with visitors' perceptions and experiences, thus maintaining the integrity and appeal of the destination in a competitive market.

The study emphasizes the importance of exploring the projected and perceived destination image for the development of the tourism industry in each country. Specifically, the research focuses on Iran, an emerging destination on the international tourism map, which has been largely overlooked in existing tourism studies.

To conduct this investigation, an extensive review of existing literature in the field was carried out. The research focuses on three key concepts: i) the projected destination image of Iran, analyzed through images on official Iran tourism social media pages on Instagram; ii) the perceived images held by actual and potential tourists toward a sanctioned destination; and iii) the influence of animosity on the destination image and subsequent behavioural intentions of tourists towards the targeted country.

The research adopts a mixed methods approach to achieve its objectives and address the study questions. Initially, content analysis and visual content analysis were used to assess Iran's projected image on Instagram, involving an analysis of 1,270 posts and 4,856 photographs. A qualitative study was then employed to understand how tourists perceive the image of a sanctioned destination and how crises induced by sanctions influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Finally, a quantitative research approach was adopted to comprehend the role of animosity on tourists' behavioural intentions toward a destination, particularly in the context of ongoing political tensions.

The findings reveal that, in general, while the majority of tourists traveling to Iran religious tourists, the primary attribute shaping Iran's projected image on social media relies on its rich history and landscape (Publication 1). Moreover, the study reveals that sanctions and the absence of positive bilateral relations adversely affect non-visitors' perceptions of the target country across cognitive, emotional, and conative components. Conversely, visitors to Iran, despite it being a sanctioned destination, hold positive perceptions and often describe the country as having hospitable and warm people. This finding underscores the pivotal role of the destination experience in shaping and enhancing the overall image of the destination.

Additionally, the research demonstrates that sanctions contribute to an increased perception of risk among tourists visiting a sanctioned destination, encompassing financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. (Publication 2). Beyond the impact of sanctions on Iran's destination image, ideological or political issues also play a significant role in fostering hostility among tourists, thereby contributing to a negative perception of Iran (Publication 3). This effect is particularly prominent in tourist-generated

markets of developed countries, such as the United States. Our study underscores that Western potential tourist consider Iran's military actions, politics, and social and historical background as influential factors in shaping animosity, resulting in a negative image and a boycott of traveling to Iran (Publications 2, 3). Overall, this thesis enriches the literature on projected and perceived destination image, animosity, crises, and sanctions by focusing on the perceptions of both visitors and non-visitors toward a sanctioned destination that is also a target of hostility. The research explores their subsequent behavioural intentions in response to these circumstances. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are provided in the conclusion.

PUBLICATIONS:

The papers supporting the thesis by compilation, presented below, adhere to the regulations of the Interuniversity Doctorate Program in Tourism, the doctoral studies regulations of the University of Malaga (Article 21), and the criteria set forth by the National Agency of Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA).

● **FIRST PUBLICATION:**

Siyamiyan Gorji, A., Almeida-García, F., & Mercadé Melé, P. (2023). Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: The case of Iran on Instagram. *Anatolia*, 34(2), 144-162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.2001665>

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Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: the case of Iran on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the representative characteristics of the projected image of Iran, a destination largely neglected in the tourism literature. The projected image was obtained through an analysis of shared photographs and content on Instagram. To that end, we selected two official pages of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft on Instagram. To identify the key features of Iran's projected image, the authors classified photographs into 14 groups, determined the geographical distribution of shared pictures, and applied hashtag visualization in order to ascertain the most engaging posts. The findings of the study show that while most tourists travelling to Iran are religious tourists, the leading attribute of Iran's projected image relies on its rich history and landscapes.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Destination image; projected image; pictorial analysis; visual platforms; Iran

The first publication "Analysis of the Projected Image of Tourism Destinations on Photographs: The Case of Iran on Instagram" explores the representative characteristics of Iran's projected image as a tourism destination based on shared photographs and content on Instagram. The study classified the photographs into 14 groups, determined their geographical distribution, and applied hashtag visualization to ascertain the most engaging posts.

The dominant attributes of Iran's destination image presented by the Destination Management Organization (DMO) on Instagram include a focus on cultural and heritage sites, natural landscapes, and architectural heritage. The DMO's Instagram page primarily features photographs of architecture and heritage sites, which accounted for 30.8% of all shared pictures. This is followed by images of nature and landscapes, which represented 17.6% of the shared photographs. The DMO also highlights the geographical distribution of Iran, with a focus on famous destinations such as Tehran, Isfahan, Fars, and Yazd, which are known for their architectural, cultural, and historical highlights. Additionally, the DMO uses hashtags related to culture, nature, architecture, history, and art to promote unique characteristics of Iran as a tourism destination. The most engaging images for potential tourists are those depicting nature and landscape, as well as heritage categories. These findings indicate that the DMO aims to



project Iran as a cultural tourism destination rather than solely a religious destination, aligning with the country's efforts to reach 20 million tourists by 2026.

The paper emphasizes the significance of utilizing social media platforms, particularly Instagram, for destination marketing, as it provides insights into the projected image and engagement of potential tourists. The study's findings also underline the importance of utilizing social media platforms, particularly Instagram, for destination marketing, as it provides insights into the projected image and engagement of potential tourists. Additionally, the publication offers practical implications for destination marketing campaigns, suggesting strategies such as tailoring visual media content to engage potential tourists, targeting specific markets, and leveraging user-generated content for destination promotion. The study also highlights the significance of aligning marketing strategies with the target audience's cultural backgrounds and preferences, emphasizing the need for culturally nuanced online tourism marketing.

SECOND PUBLICATION:

Siyamiyan Gorji, A. S., Garcia, F. A., & Mercadé-Melé, P. (2023). Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioural intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 45, 101062. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.101062>



The second article examines the impact of sanctions on tourists' perceptions of a destination,

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Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioral intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors

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ARTICLE INFO

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Sanctions
Destination image
Perceived risk
Crisis
Qualitative approach
Iran

ABSTRACT

Drawing on a qualitative study, this study aims to provide an improved understanding of how tourists perceive a sanctioned destination's image and how sanction-induced crises influence tourists' behavioral intentions. To do so, this study employed semi-structured interviews with 30 individuals each with and without prior experience visiting Iran. The findings revealed that sanctions influence affective and cognitive images and enhance tourist risk perceptions, including financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. Furthermore, a positive post-trip evaluation was found to play a significant role in further behavioral intention, thereby enhancing destination image. Overall, this study enriches the literature on tourism and crises by focusing on visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions of a sanctioned destination and their subsequent behavioral intents. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are provided in the conclusion.

focusing on Iran, to understand how sanctions influence affective and cognitive images and enhance tourist risk perceptions. Sanctions have been imposed on Iran as a result of diplomatic conflicts with Western countries, particularly the USA, dating back to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The initial sanctions were issued by the US after Iranian students occupied the American embassy in Tehran, taking more than 60 American diplomats hostage. Subsequently, tensions over Iran's nuclear program in 2010 led to the imposition of unprecedented sanctions by the United States. Iran is particularly well known for being subject to some of the toughest and longest-lasting embargo regimes in the modern world. These long-term sanctions have significantly impacted the Iranian economy and the daily lives of its citizens. The sanctions have had direct and indirect economic effects, affecting various sectors, including tourism-related industries. The qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with 30 individuals each with and without prior experience visiting Iran.

The study is different from previous research as it focuses on comparing the perceptions of visitors and non-visitors towards a sanctioned destination, specifically Iran. This comparative approach provides a more balanced understanding of the destination's image, which has been largely focused on visitors in existing literature. Additionally, the study addresses the lack of documentation on tourists' views of sanctioned destinations, particularly from Western tourists, who are a significant tourism-generating market. The research is timely due to the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran by the United States, following a brief period where they were lifted, and the ongoing discussions regarding the continuation of these sanctions. The study also extends the prior stream of research on destination image by adopting a qualitative approach, which has been notably absent in the existing literature. Furthermore, the study responds to the call for further inquiry into the psychological effects of sanctions on destinations, particularly by comparing the images of non-visitors and visitors, an aspect that has not been extensively investigated in previous research on the impacts of sanctions on tourism destinations.

The research design involved the development of a semi-structured interview guide based on a literature review and previous studies, with a pilot study conducted to ensure the efficacy of the interview questions. The study prioritized four broad themes pertinent to the research objectives, focusing on perceptions of Iran's destination image as a sanctioned destination, the effects of sanctions on the decision to visit Iran, perceived danger in traveling to a sanctioned destination, and the impact of sanctions on the intention to visit Iran and recommend it as a tourist destination.

The findings revealed that the impacts of sanctions on tourists' perceptions of a sanctioned destination are multifaceted and encompass affective and cognitive images, as well as the enhancement of tourist risk perceptions. The study argues that sanctions influence six types of perceived risk: financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. Non-visitors tend to perceive a sanctioned destination more negatively, particularly in terms of safety and security, due to the impact of sanctions. They express concerns about potential dangers, such as political tensions and safety risks, which are strong predictors likely to deter tourists from traveling to regions deemed risky. Additionally, sanctions can negatively affect the destination's image, influencing both cognitive and affective attributes, and may lead to a decrease in tourist arrivals and expenditure.

The study's implications emphasize the need for revising marketing strategies and promotional campaigns to improve Iran's image as a tourist destination, particularly by projecting safety and security issues. The findings suggest that non-visitors perceive Iran as an unsafe destination for Westerners due to the negative impact of sanctions. In contrast, visitors hold positive images of Iran, describing it as a safe and hospitable destination. This highlights the importance of informative promotional campaigns and the use of social media platforms to shape Iran's image in a way that decreases perceived risk and highlights its positive features.

The study also discusses the limitations of the research, suggesting the need for further investigation into the psychological effects of sanctions on destinations, particularly using a cross-cultural perspective to assess the impacts on visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Additionally, future studies could use mixed methods to assess risk perception and destination image before, during, and after traveling to sanctioned destinations.

THIRD PUBLICATION:


Siyamiyan Gorji, A., Almeida Garcia, F., & Mercadé-Melé, P. (2022). How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2022.2124023>.

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How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand tourist behavioural intentions towards a destination when the tourism-generating market (US) and the destination country (Iran) are engaged in ongoing political tensions. This study has also attempted to understand how social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk and tourist attitude towards a given destination influence tourist boycott intentions in the light of a traditional enmity between both countries. Evidence from 251 respondents indicates the positive and negative impact of these constructs on travel boycott intentions. Overall, this study extends the literature on tourism behaviour by focusing on relatively overlooked concepts such as susceptibility to normative influence and animosity. Theoretical and practical implications of the study have been provided in the conclusions section.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Animosity; susceptibility to normative influence; destination image; boycott intentions; Iran; USA

This paper explores the impact of animosity on tourists' decisions to boycott travel to a destination, particularly in the context of ongoing political tensions between the United States (US) and Iran. The study aims to understand how social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk, and tourist attitude towards a given destination influence tourist boycott intentions amidst traditional enmity between both countries. Animosity refers to a deep-seated negative sentiment or hostility towards a particular country or its citizens, stemming from various factors such as military actions, economic exploitation, cultural differences, religious disparities, historical events, and political disagreements. It is a multidimensional construct that encompasses a range of negative perceptions and emotions, including antipathy, intolerance, and hostility. Animosity can influence consumer behavior, particularly in the context of international markets and tourism, leading to intentions to boycott products or services associated with the target of animosity. This negative sentiment can impact individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, influencing their willingness to visit a particular destination or engage in consumption choices. Furthermore, animosity can be

influenced by societal pressure and normative influence, leading individuals to conform to negative thoughts and emotions associated with their reference groups or social norms. Overall, animosity is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards specific countries or destinations.

Through evidence from 251 respondents, the study highlights the positive and negative impact of these constructs on travel boycott intentions, extending the literature on tourism behavior by focusing on relatively overlooked concepts such as susceptibility to normative influence and animosity. The study's methodology involved an online survey, with the majority of respondents being males, single, and aged between 21-35 and 36-50 years. The data analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the measurement model, which demonstrated strong reliability and validity for all variables, high values of R², and a good fit in the SRMR index. The results showed the relationship between perceived risk, destination image, and tourist attitude is crucial in understanding how they impact travel boycott intentions. The research findings indicate that tourists' perceived risk has a significant impact on the overall destination image and boycott intention. When animosity exists, both cognitive and affective image have an impact on the overall image, and the overall image, in turn, has an impact on boycott intention. Additionally, tourist attitude is positively correlated with destination image, and unfavorable attitudes towards a destination reduce the likelihood of visiting. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between tourist risk perception and overall animosity, with a significant correlation found between boycott intentions and risk perception. As tourists' perception of the risk of terror increases, the image of the destination becomes more negative, and the intention to boycott the destination increases.

Destination marketers are advised to consider the magnifying impact of animosity on perceived risks in their communication strategies and take proactive steps to reassure tourists of the safety of hate-targeted destinations. Furthermore, the research provides insights for promoting a destination's image in the Western market and emphasizes the need for tourism stakeholders and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to analyze international visitors' attitudes and remain vigilant for increases in tourist hostility. The study also suggests that tourism stakeholders should consider segmenting their current tourism target market based on remnants of hostility and attracting potential tourists who are not affected by past events. Additionally, the government of a country with a negative image is advised to repair its image by providing necessary information, solving problems, and reducing real risks.

The research also identifies potential limitations and suggests avenues for future research, including the need for cross-cultural studies and the exploration of additional factors such as national attachment and ethnocentrism. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of how animosity influences tourist behavior and provides a foundation for further investigation into the dynamics of tourist boycott intentions in politically charged environments.

All in all, studying the projected and perceived destination image of Iran is of significant importance for multiple reasons. Iran boasts a rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and a storied history, yet it is often overshadowed by political and social narratives that can skew international tourists' perceptions. By analyzing how Iran is marketed by its Destination Marketing Organizations—the projected image—versus how it is actually perceived by tourists, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness of current marketing strategies. This study can uncover discrepancies between the intended messaging and public perception, providing a roadmap for more nuanced and effective promotion. Adjusting the projected image to more closely align with the authentic experiences of visitors can help Iran tap into new tourism markets, alter outdated stereotypes, and enhance its standing in the global community.

Moreover, the perceived image of Iran as a tourism destination can significantly influence travelers' decision-making processes, impacting not only tourism but also broader socio-economic relations. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for developing strategies that promote tourism growth, which can lead to the revitalization of the tourism sector, job creation, and an enhanced international reputation. A study focused on Iran's destination image can bridge research gaps and showcase the country's true allure beyond political discourse. It's an essential step toward repositioning Iran on the world stage, not as merely a country rich in history and culture, but also as a welcoming destination for travelers from around the globe.

Highlight of the Thesis

This series of studies contributes significantly to the literature on destination image, tourist behavior, and risk perception, particularly regarding sanctioned destinations such as Iran. Key highlights include:

- **Gap in Literature:** The study addresses Iran's tourism image, a topic that has been largely under-researched, providing insights through an analysis of visual content on Instagram, and introducing a novel category for analyzing the projected images of countries, especially those viewed as Muslim or religious destinations.
- **Expansion of Destination Image Formation:** Beyond traditional channels, the study emphasizes the importance of platforms like Instagram in shaping destination images and suggests leveraging cultural nuances and user-generated content to engage potential tourists.
- **Impact of Sanctions on Tourism:** The research delves into the psychological impacts of sanctions on tourism, broadening the understanding of how sanctions affect destination reputation and tourists' risk perceptions. It uniquely compares perceptions and behaviors of visitors and non-visitors, highlighting how sanctions influence both groups differently.
- **Visitor vs. Non-Visitor Insights:** The comparison between visitors and non-visitors offers a comprehensive view of how direct experience versus external perception influences attitudes towards a sanctioned destination, potentially challenging or reinforcing stereotypes.
- **Post-Trip Evaluations and Tourist Loyalty:** The study investigates how positive post-trip evaluations influence future intentions and loyalty towards sanctioned destinations, contributing to the understanding of what factors encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth in challenging geopolitical climates.
- **Risk Perception in Tourism:** It enriches the discussion on tourist risk perception by detailing the specific risks associated with visiting sanctioned destinations and how these are balanced against perceived benefits.
- **Qualitative Insights:** By adopting a qualitative approach, the study provides a deeper, more holistic view of tourists' perceptions and behavioral intentions, marking a significant shift from the predominantly quantitative nature of previous research.
- **Social Norms and Tourist Behavior:** Lastly, the research integrates various constructs such as social norms, animosity, and tourist behavior within the context of the US-Iran relationship. It explores how psychological factors like risk perception and animosity influence the decision to boycott a destination and examines the varying impacts of social norms across individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

Overall, these studies provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between geopolitical factors and tourism, offering new insights into how destinations can manage and enhance their image under conditions of international sanctions.

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PART ONE: THESIS BASIS

Part One of this doctoral thesis consists of three chapters, each contributing essential elements to the overall exploration. The chapters are meticulously crafted to provide a comprehensive foundation for the research journey.

Chapter One encompasses the groundwork for the investigation: the problem statement, research aim and objectives, and research questions. Additionally, this chapter offers a thorough review of the existing literature.

Chapter Two presents both the case study and establishes the context for the study.

In Chapter Three, the focus shifts towards the intricate details of the research methodology. This chapter meticulously outlines the chosen study design and provides insight into the overarching framework guiding the research. By delving into the methodological intricacies, the reader gains a profound understanding of how the research is structured and executed.



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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1. Preface

In the competitive travel and tourism market, countries vie intensively for the attention and favor of international travelers, with the image they portray playing a pivotal role in determining their success. Destination image is essentially the amalgamation of perceptions, deeply ingrained beliefs, and overall attitudes that individuals hold about a particular location. It serves as a powerful influencer, exerting significant influence not just on tourists' decisions to visit but also on their overall experiences and satisfaction. For emerging destinations, characterized by untouched natural beauty and a rich cultural heritage, there exists both a distinct challenge and an opportunity in shaping their image. This challenge goes beyond merely attracting tourists; the image of an emerging destination plays a crucial role in positioning it on the global tourism map, captivating travelers actively seeking unique and authentic experiences.

In the case of Iran, a country boasting a rich history and diverse landscapes, the task of shaping and enhancing its destination image becomes paramount. To achieve this, a thorough examination of how Iran has been projecting its image and, conversely, how it is perceived becomes crucial in formulating the right strategy. The projected and perceived destination image of Iran is a complex interplay of promotional strategies and individual perceptions. Despite the significance of this interrelation in shaping tourism dynamics, there exists a notable gap in comprehensive scholarly exploration. This doctoral thesis seeks to address this gap by delving into the multifaceted dimensions of Iran's destination image, examining how the intentional portrayal by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) aligns with or diverges from the perceptions held by actual and prospective tourists, especially focusing on European and American perspectives. Understanding



the projected and perceived destination image is crucial as it directly influences tourists' decision-making processes, impacting their choices of travel destinations. Iran, with its rich cultural, historical, and natural assets, holds immense potential for tourism development. However, the country's image has been subject to various external factors, including geopolitical events and international perceptions. It is imperative to investigate how the intentional projection of Iran's image by DMOs corresponds with the nuanced perceptions formed by potential tourists, as this alignment greatly influences the success of tourism initiatives.

The importance of a positive destination image for Iran extends beyond attracting tourists; it plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth, cultural exchange, and international cooperation. A positive image contributes to the creation of a favourable tourism environment, attracting investment, and promoting job opportunities within the tourism sector. Moreover, a well-crafted destination image enhances cultural understanding and breaks down stereotypes, fostering economic growth.

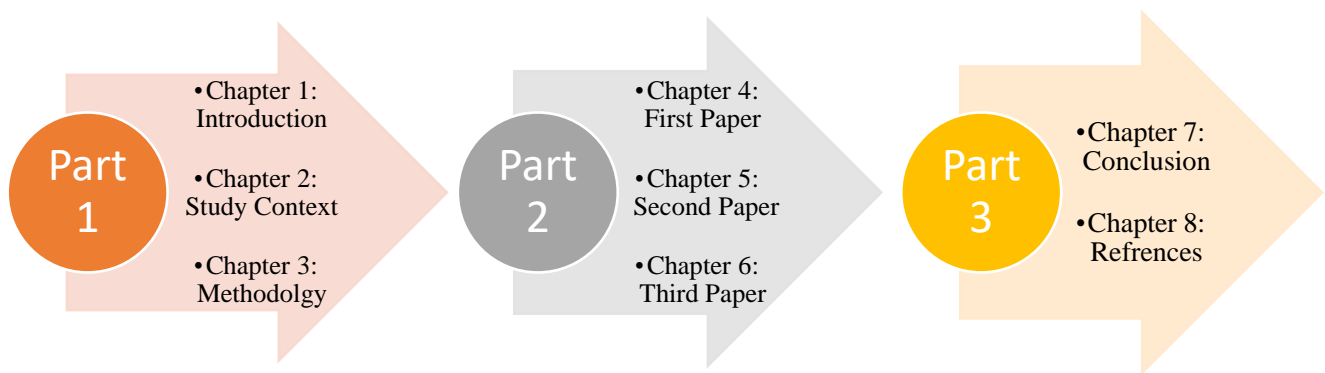
1.2. Thesis Structure

The thesis, categorized as a compendium of publications, consists of eight chapters and is organized into three parts based on the research schema. Part One comprises three chapters (Chapter One, Chapter Two and Chapter Three). Chapter One provides the background of the investigation, research problem, research questions, research aims and objectives, and literature review. Chapter Two provides an overview of tourism development in Iran as the study setting. Chapter Three details the methodology, study design, sampling and data collection.

The second part of the thesis, which consists of publications, covers the studies conducted to fulfill the research objectives. Three studies have been undertaken, each presented in a separate chapter (Chapter Four, Chapter Five, Chapter Six). These three articles follow the same line of research and have been previously accepted by different prestigious tourism-related journals.

Moving on to part three of the thesis (finale), which includes two chapters, Chapter Seven serves as a conclusion and discusses the main findings of the research. It interprets and describes the significance of the findings, highlighting the conclusions of the research and emphasizing their importance for the target audiences. Subsequently, this chapter addresses managerial and theoretical implications, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and quality considerations. Chapter Eight consolidates all references and resources used in the research and this document (in APA style), as well as the appendices of the articles.

Figure 1.1. Thesis Structure



The writing and designing of this thesis were carried out by the researcher himself. Information of the thesis document:

Number of Total Pages: 176

Languages: English and Spanish

Font: Times New Romans Light.

Used software: MS Word, MS Power Point, MS Excel, NVIVO, SmartPLS.

Used Online Social Platforms: Instagram, Facebook.

1.3. Research Problem

Destination image serves as a competitive advantage for tourism destinations, prompting many international tourist destinations to exert considerable efforts in promoting a favorable image (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Indeed, the success or failure of any tourism destination is closely tied to the images held by potential travelers. The effective management of these images by the destination should also be taken into account (Almeida et al., 2018). Projecting a positive destination image is crucial because the selection of tourist destinations is largely influenced by individual's perceptions of these destinations (Kuhzadi & Ghasemi, 2015). These perceptions significantly impact destination choice and attractiveness (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). In a broader context, understanding the diverse images different groups hold of a destination allows for market segmentation and, consequently, the formulation of an effective marketing strategy. Moreover, such this knowledge enables DMOs to shape an image tailored to the needs of their target tourists.

Furthermore, the image of a destination is vulnerable to diverse events, such as natural disasters, contagious diseases, cultural challenges, as well as criminal and terrorist incidents (Hosseini et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2018). The awareness of these events can affect the mental considerations of potential travelers and their intentions to embark on a journey (Lehto et al., 2008).

Building on this, the doctoral thesis seeks to explore the intricacies of how a destination, notably Iran, which has been exposed to adverse events ranging from war to nuclear energy disputes and geopolitical tensions, shapes its image and how that image is perceived. Additionally, we delve into how negative sentiments, such as animosity and hatred, which arise from the politicized and contradictory environment surrounding Iran, affect the destination's image and the travel intentions of Western tourists.

The research, indeed, endeavors to address the complex dynamics that impact tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions within the framework of destination image, economic sanctions, and political animosity toward an emerging destination. Deriving insights from three pivotal articles, the research problem is multi-faceted, entailing the investigation of interconnections among these factors to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the complexities that influence the decision-making processes of tourists.

Furthermore, the research explores the multifaceted aspects of destination image construction through social media platforms, specifically focusing on Iran's Instagram presence. Analyzing dominant attributes, frequently depicted geographical regions, and linguistic elements presented by Iran's DMOs, the study seeks to unveil how these factors collectively shape the projected image of Iran as a tourism destination. Simultaneously, it aims to gauge the engagement levels of potential tourists with these representations, providing insights into the efficacy of promotional efforts.

Additionally, the research extends its inquiry to examine the impact of economic sanctions on the destination image of Iran and its subsequent influence on tourists' risk perceptions when contemplating visits to sanctioned destinations. Through a comparative analysis of perceived destination image and behavioural intentions between visitors and non-visitors to a sanctioned destination, the study aims to identify tourists' behaviours, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the role of sanctions in shaping tourist decision-making.

The research problem further encompasses an exploration of how ongoing political tensions between a tourism-generating market and a destination country can manifest in tourist behavioural intentions, including the potential for travel boycotts. Investigating the role of social norms, animosity, destination image, perceived travel risk, and overall tourist attitude, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing tourists' decisions to boycott travel during tumultuous relationships between nations.

In essence, the doctoral thesis aims to contribute a holistic and integrated perspective on the complexities of destination image, sanctions, and animosity in shaping tourist behaviour, offering valuable insights for destination management, policymakers, and stakeholders in the tourism industry.

1.4. Research Gap

The bibliometric analysis highlights gaps in studies related to emerging destination images (Seyfi & Hall, 2017; Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). While there is extensive research on the projected destination image of Western countries (Picazo & Moreno-Gil, 2019), there is a notable absence of studies focused on destinations in Middle Eastern/Muslim countries (Seyfi & Hall, 2020d), with some countries such as Iran receiving limited attention (Akhoondnejad, 2015).

Quantitative approaches, particularly self-administered questionnaires, have been a primary tool in destination image studies (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). However, alternative research approaches have received less attention, leaving avenues unexplored in understanding the complex dynamics of image formation. While previous research has considered the impact of Social Networking Sites (SNNs) such as Facebook, Flickr, and TripAdvisor on destination image, the role of Instagram in shaping the projected image by DMOs remains underexplored (Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019). Given the significant role of visual images in destination promotion, especially for DMOs, the study highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of how destinations used platforms such as Instagram to project and shape their images for potential tourists. Consequently, one of the current aims of the thesis is to address this gap by focusing on Instagram data mining and visual analysis from a DMO perspective.

Additionally, as Iran has long been subject to international sanctions, there is a need for more research on the impact of sanctions on tourists' perceived destination image and behavioural intentions, an area receiving limited attention in the literature (Khodadadi, 2016a, Khodadadi, 2016b, Khodadadi, 2018; Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018; Seyfi & Hall, 2019a; Seyfi and Hall, 2020a, Seyfi and Hall, 2020b). This thesis aims to fill this research gap by using a multi approaches methodology approach to explore tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions towards Iran as a sanctioned destination. Moreover, this study investigates how a crisis triggered by sanctions has affected Western tourists' perceptions of Iran's image as a tourist destination.

Furthermore, despite the existing literature on destination image and visitor behavior, there remains a notable gap in understanding the dynamics between perceived destination image and behavioral intentions among two distinct groups: those who have visited a sanctioned destination and those who have not yet. While previous studies have extensively explored the destination



image from the perspective of visitors, there is a paucity of research that directly compares these perceptions with the pre-visit imaginations and intentions of non-visitors, particularly in the context of sanctioned destinations. This comparative approach is essential for comprehending the nuances of destination branding and marketing strategies under the unique constraints imposed by sanctions.

Moreover, while the influence of positive post-trip evaluations on future behavioral intentions has been well-documented in general tourism contexts, the specific role such evaluations play in shaping the intentions towards a destination under sanctions remains under-examined. Understanding post-trip evaluations in such a context is critical, as it can offer insights into the effectiveness of overcoming negative perceptions associated with sanctions and the potential for fostering repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth.

Furthermore, the examination of how sanctions influence tourists' risk perceptions has been largely overlooked in tourism research. Sanctions can have a profound impact on a tourist's risk assessment, potentially altering their travel intentions and behavior in ways that are not yet fully understood. Investigating this could provide valuable information for destination marketers and policymakers in sanctioned countries to develop strategies that mitigate perceived risks and promote tourism under challenging conditions. Addressing these gaps is not only critical for theoretical advancement in tourism studies but also for practical implications in destination management and marketing strategies, particularly for those charged with the promotion of sanctioned destinations in the face of complex geopolitical realities.

Lastly, this thesis aims to comprehend tourist behavioural intentions toward a destination in the context of ongoing political tensions between a tourism-generating market (in this case, the USA) and the destination country (Iran). Therefore, this research makes several contributions to the literature on tourism boycott intentions and animosity. To the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to explore the impact of intrapersonal psychographic factors, such as subjective norms, animosity, and risk perception, on destination image, tourist attitude, and visitors' preferences in choosing (or not choosing) a destination that is subject to hostile and resentful national sentiment.

Therefore, this doctoral thesis aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the interplay of the projected image of Iran on Instagram, tourists' perceived destination image, and the role of



animosity in shaping behavioural intentions, particularly in the context of a sanctioned destination. The findings can have practical implications for destination management, marketing strategies, and policy development, offering insights for Iran's tourism industry and serving as a valuable contribution to the broader field of destination management and marketing.

1.5. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this doctoral thesis encompass three parallel lines of exploration: firstly, to conduct an analysis of the projected destination image, with particular emphasis on the country of Iran; secondly, to comprehend the perceived destination image and discern its differences between visitors and non-visitors towards a sanctioned destination; and thirdly; to examine the intricate relationships between intrapersonal psychographic factors and various elements in the process of destination selection, particularly in the context of national sentiments.

Consequently, the objectives were divided into three publications (papers) and each study contained the following objectives:

RO 1: To identify the dominant attributes of Iran's destination image as presented by the DMO on Instagram.

RO 2: To determine the frequently depicted geographical regions of Iran by the official DMO.

RO 3: To analyze the commonly used words and phrases that depict the destination.

RO 4: To evaluate the engagement levels of potential tourists with posts regarding Iran's projected image.

RO 5: To assess the impact of sanctions on the destination image of Iran as a sanctioned country.

RO 6: To investigate the role of sanctions on the future intentions of both visitors and non-visitors towards a sanctioned destination.

RO 7: To compare the perceived destination image and behavioural intentions between visitors and non-visitors to a sanctioned destination

RO 8: To examine how sanctions influence tourists' risk perceptions when visiting a sanctioned destination.

RO 9: To explore how ongoing political tensions between a tourism-generating market and a destination country affect tourist behavioural intention towards that destination.

RO 10: To determine the impact of social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk, and tourist attitude towards a given destination on tourist boycott intentions.

1.6. Research Questions

To fulfill the objective of the thesis, ten questions have been identified as needing to be addressed:

Q1: What are the dominant attributes of Iran's destination image presented by the DMO on Instagram?

Q2: Which geographical regions of Iran are frequently depicted by the official DMO?

Q3: What are the commonly used words and phrases depicting the destination?

Q4: From the perspective of potential tourists, what posts regarding Iran's projected image are most engaging?

Q5: As Iran is a sanctioned country, how do sanctions impact the destination image of the target country?

Q6: How do sanctions affect tourists' risk perceptions when visiting a sanctioned destination?

Q7: How do sanctions affect the behavioral intentions of both actual and potential tourists towards a sanctioned destination?

Q8: Are there any differences in perceived destination image between visitors and non-visitors to a sanctioned destination?

Q9: How do ongoing political tensions between a tourism-originating country and a destination affect the behavioral intentions of tourists towards that destination?

Q10: What is the impact of social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk, and attitudes towards a given destination on tourists' boycott intentions?

1.7. Theoretical Background

1.7.1. Components of destination image

Destination image, as commonly defined in the literature, refers to the emotional qualities, including experiences, beliefs, ideas, recollections, and impressions associated with a destination (Almeida et al., 2016). For example, Boulding (1956) conceptualized image as individuals' feelings about anything they are aware of. Crompton (1979) described image as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination." Kotler et al. (1993) similarly viewed tourists' image as the genuine feelings and perceptions that visitors hold toward a place. Indeed, image is a multifaceted perception influenced by both objective and subjective elements, playing a pivotal role in the decision-making processes of potential tourists, both prior to and following their choice of destination (Akhoondnejad, 2015; Gorji et al., 2023).

When it comes to the internal composition of a destination's image, various models have been suggested. Milman and Pizam (1995) offer a straightforward perspective: A destination's image comprises three main elements: (1) the product offerings of the destination; (2) the behavior and attitudes of the local hosts; and (3) the surrounding environment, including aspects like weather, landscapes, and available facilities.

Matos et al. (2012) describe the structure of destination image with two main components:

- **Controllable forces** (induced image), which include factors like promotional activities, accessibility, and infrastructure that can be managed by destination marketers.
- **Uncontrollable forces** (organic image), which are influenced by personal factors such as a traveler's motivations and previous experiences, as well as external elements like interactions with locals, geographical distance, and service quality.

These forces contribute to the creation of induced and organic images in the minds of tourists. These mental constructs help tourists organize and interpret the stimuli they encounter. The destination image ultimately emerges from the tourists' cognitive understanding of the destination, their emotional responses, and their future intentions or behaviors. This results in an overall image that encapsulates both the functional and psychological attributes of the destination as perceived

by the tourists themselves.

Many researchers agree on the tripartite nature of destination image: the perceptual/cognitive component, the emotional/affective component, and the conative component (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Dann, 1996; Gartner, 1994; Jenkins, 1999; Pike, 2009; Styliadis et al., 2017). The prevailing consensus is that destination image is primarily a subjective concept, with each component reflecting specific features of a destination (Bigné et al., 2001; Gallarza et al., 2002). In this context, Gartner (1993) asserts that the image is shaped by the perceptions of tourists rather than the objective reality of the destination itself. While physical characteristics contribute to its formation, the subjective element incorporates individual opinions and beliefs. The existence of both dimensions (cognitive-affective) indicates that image is not solely shaped by the physical elements (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Therefore, the examination of destination image through cognitive-affective analysis is warranted.

Several studies underscore the significance of the image of a tourist destination. The perception that individuals hold toward a specific place not only affects their selection but also influences various behavioural intentions such as visit, revisit, satisfaction, WOM, engagement, etc (Gallarza et al., 2002; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kim et al., 2009; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Kim, Holland, & Han, 2013; Almeida-García et al., 2020; Rastegar, Seyfi, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021).

1.7.2. Projected image vs perceived image

The projected image is considered a significant pull factor in the process of selecting a destination, presented to a target market through various means of communication. It denotes the intentionally created and promoted image of a destination by DMOs with the aim of attracting potential tourists (Pabel & Prideaux, 2016; John & Villiers, 2020). The channels utilized for this purpose are as diverse as the experiences offered by a destination, encompassing visually captivating photographs and videos, as well as information-rich textual content embedded in the official web pages of DMOs (Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019). The projected image emerges as a crucial factor in the decision-making process of tourists when selecting a destination. Visual content, including the evocative power of images and videos, assumes a pivotal role in shaping this projected image (Hunter, 2012; Song & Kim, 2016). Scholars contend that the projected image

transcends being a mere representation of physical landscapes; rather, it constitutes a narrative—a story communicated through visuals—that entices travelers to embark on an exploration (Andreu et al., 2000; Hunter, 2012).

In addition to the considerations surrounding the projected destination image, the literature underscores the importance of the Perceived Destination Image as a pivotal facet in the understanding of tourists' decision-making processes (Gorji et al., 2023). Perceived destination image is often conceptualized as a tourist's overall perception, encompassing emotions, prejudices, imaginations, and impressions. Scholars posit that this multifaceted perception significantly shapes tourists' behavioural intentions, including decisions to visit, revisit, satisfaction levels, word-of-mouth recommendations, and engagement (Tasci et al., 2022; Almeida-García et al., 2020; Agapito et al., 2013). This concept is not only related to the tangible attributes and utilitarian aspects of a destination but also to the psychological and emotional dimensions that contribute to the overall perception. Scholars argue that these diverse elements are posited as imperative for a nuanced understanding of tourists' perceptions and their subsequent influence on behavioural intentions (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Furthermore, researchers have tried to explore factors that contribute to the formation of perceived destination image, such as the role of marketing strategies, cultural influences, and personal experiences. Understanding the dynamics of how these factors interplay in shaping tourists' perceptions provides valuable insights for destination management and marketing efforts (Park et al., 2019).

In the broader context of destination image research, the examination of both projected and perceived dimensions contributes to a holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between the representations of a destination and the perceptions held by potential visitors. This comprehensive perspective is crucial for destination marketers, policymakers, and scholars seeking to enhance the effectiveness of promotional strategies and destination management practices. (Andreu et al., 2013).

By examining both the projected image and the perceived image, we gain a nuanced understanding of the discrepancies and their consequences. This knowledge is crucial for policymakers, businesses, and tourism stakeholders to navigate the complexities of sanctions and

develop effective strategies (Seyfi & Hall, 2020).

For instance, a country under sanctions might project an image of resilience and defiance, while being perceived as unstable and risky due to international media narratives and geopolitical tensions. This disparity can deter tourists and investors, hindering economic growth (Ghaderi et al., 2017). By understanding these perceptions, the country can adjust its communication strategies and focus on highlighting its cultural heritage, natural beauty, or unique experiences to attract visitors.

Comparative studies also reveal how different countries adapt to sanctions, offering valuable lessons on resilience and economic diversification. Some may develop alternative trade partnerships or boost local industries, while others struggle with isolation and economic hardship (Li & Zhang, 2021). Analyzing these diverse responses helps in crafting effective policies and mitigating the negative impacts of sanctions.

Furthermore, understanding the perceived image of sanctioned countries is crucial for international businesses and investors. It informs risk assessment, investment decisions, and operational strategies (Khodadadi, 2016). By recognizing the discrepancies between projected and perceived images, businesses can better navigate these markets and contribute to positive economic development (Gorji et al., 2023).

Ultimately, comparative studies provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the multifaceted impacts of sanctions on a country's image. They promote informed decision-making, effective communication strategies, and a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between international perceptions and local realities. This knowledge is essential for fostering international cooperation, mitigating negative consequences, and promoting sustainable development in sanctioned countries (Seyfi & Hall, 2020).

1.7.3. Destination image for visitors and non-visitor

While extensive research has explored destination image, there is a noticeable gap in understanding how prospective visitors (non-visitors) perceive destinations compared to those who have experienced it firsthand. The literature notes that studies focusing on non-tourists' perceptions of destinations they have never visited are limited, and inconclusive regarding whether these

perceptions differ from actual tourists. Understanding the differences in perceptions between these groups is crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of destination image (Bianchi & Milberg, 2017; Davari & Jang, 2021; Maghrifani et al., 2022).

Various terms have been employed in the literature to describe the images held by non-visitors. The concept of "secondary image" is often used to denote a constructed image formed before a scheduled trip to a destination (Lopes, 2011). Davari and Jang (2021) introduce the idea of a "people-centered image," referring to the images projected by the natives of the destination in the minds of non-visitors. "Prospective visitors" describe individuals interested in visiting a destination but have not yet done so (Davari & Jang, 2021), while "potential tourists" are those likely to travel to a destination in the future (Maghrifani, Liu, & Sneddon, 2022). In our study, we adopted Pike's (Pike, 2008, p. 206) definition of "non-visitors" as "those who would like to visit but have not yet been able to for various reasons, as well as those who have chosen not to visit Iran." Understanding how non-visitors form their images is essential for comprehending the complexities of destination image perception. Research suggests that non-visitors rely on various sources, including media, word of mouth, and their imagination, to construct images of a destination (Prayag, 2009). The limited knowledge non-visitors have about a destination compared to visitors necessitates an exploration of how these different sources contribute to the formation of distinct images (Hughes & Allen, 2008).

Research highlights the impact of pre- and post-visit experiences on destination image. Pre-trip destination background, personal background, and long-term relations with people from another country are noted as influential factors shaping non-visitors' images. Post-visit experiences, on the other hand, enhance the image of a destination, particularly in terms of the social environment, attractions, weather, infrastructure, and people. This dichotomy between visitors and non-visitors, and the dynamic nature of image formation, underscore the complexity of understanding destination image comprehensively (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2020; Davari & Jang, 2021; Hughes & Allen, 2008; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

Challenges in studying non-visitors' perceptions include the reliance on sources that may not always provide accurate information and the dynamic nature of image formation. Future research in this area should explore the nuances of non-visitors' image construction, considering factors such

as media influence, cultural values, and the evolving nature of destination branding. Additionally, comparative studies focusing on emerging destinations, particularly in less-explored regions, can contribute significantly to the understanding of how different tourist groups perceive a destination.

In essence, the comparative analysis between visitors and non-visitors in destination image perception offers a nuanced exploration of the complexities surrounding image formation. As the tourism landscape evolves, investigating the dynamics of non-tourists' perceptions becomes crucial for destination marketers, policymakers, and researchers seeking a comprehensive understanding of destination image.

1.7.4. Destination image and sanction

Economic sanctions, a tool frequently used in international relations, have far-reaching implications beyond their intended economic and political consequences (Peksen, 2019). While the primary intent is to influence the targeted country's behaviour, the consequences of sanctions extend beyond the political and economic realms, significantly affecting the country's image and, consequently, tourism (Seyfi & Hall, 2019). Economic sanctions, designed for diverse geopolitical motives, frequently prompt negative portrayals of the targeted country within the media landscape (Khodadadi, 2018). Media coverage tends to accentuate economic hardships, political instability, and societal upheavals, collectively crafting a narrative that significantly molds the global perception of the affected country (Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018).

In the context of tourism, visitor perceptions, influenced by a multitude of factors, are profoundly shaped by media representations. Negative depictions stemming from economic sanctions contribute substantially to the formulation of biased or distorted images of a country. These images, in turn, play a decisive role when tourists contemplate potential travel destinations (Seyfi & Hall, 2019; Khodadadi, 2018; Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018). The image of a country emerges as a critical determinant in shaping tourists' preferences for potential travel destinations. Research underscores that negative perceptions arising from economic sanctions can dissuade prospective visitors. Sanctioned countries may be perceived as unsafe, unwelcoming, or politically charged, leading to a decline in tourists' willingness to visit (Gorji et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence from case studies, particularly those scrutinizing the impact of sanctions on

countries such as Iran, offers valuable insights into the multifaceted interplay between political dynamics, economic conditions, and resulting image alterations that influence tourism (Khodadadi, 2016a, Khodadadi, 2016b, Khodadadi, 2018; Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018; Seyfi & Hall, 2019a; Seyfi & Hall, 2020a, Seyfi & Hall, 2020b).

Countries that have faced sanctions have often experienced negative impacts on their destination image. Table 1 provides details related to the countries that have faced sanctions and how these have affected their destination images (Earl, 2021; Li & Zhang, 2021; Seyfi & Hall, 2020; Gorji et al., 2023; Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) 2018; EU 2019; UN 2019).

Table 2.1. Sanctions' Impacts on Destination Images Across Different Countries

Country	Years Imposed	Cause of Sanctions	Sanctioning Actor(s)	Effect on Destination Image
Iran	1979 - present	Nuclear program, support for terrorism	USA, UN, EU	Deters investment and tourism, viewed as risky
Russia	2014 - present	Actions in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, other international conflicts	USA, EU, others	Perceived as unstable, risky due to geopolitical tensions
North Korea	1950s - present	Nuclear weapons program, human rights abuses	UN, USA, EU, others	Extremely isolated, very limited tourism
Cuba	1959 - present (partially lifted)	Impeding democratic rule, political issues	USA	Limited tourism and trade, particularly with the US
Myanmar	1990s - present	Human rights abuses, military control	USA, EU, others	Viewed as politically unstable and risky
Zimbabwe	Early 2000s - present	Human rights abuses, political instability	USA, EU	Negative perception due to political and economic risks
Syria	2011 - present	Civil war, association with terrorism	USA, EU, others	Severely tarnished by conflict, unsafe for tourists
Belarus	Various, intensified in 2020	Political repression, election irregularities	USA, EU, Canada, others	Viewed as politically unstable, restricted freedoms
Libya	2011 (lifted 2011-2016)	Internal conflict, human rights abuses	UN, USA, EU	Unsafe due to ongoing conflict and instability
Sudan	1997-2020	Terrorism, human rights violations in Darfur	USA	Struggles with image of conflict and economic instability
Ivory Coast	2004-2016	Political crises and civil wars	UN, USA, EU	Recovering, but still affected by past instability
Somalia	1992 - present	Internal conflicts, terrorism, piracy	UN, USA, EU	Seen as dangerous, heavily affects any tourism potential
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	1990s - present	Human rights violations, destabilizing activities	UN, USA, EU	Risky due to conflict and political instability
Fiji	2006-2014	Military coups, political instability	Australia, New Zealand, USA	Political issues occasionally shadow tourism appeal



1.7.5. Effects of sanctions on destination image versus other political and social forces

While the previous literature review focused on various factors affecting a destination's image, examining the specific impact of sanctions on a country's destination image presents unique challenges (Seyfi & Hall, 2020). Destination image, is influenced by a complex interplay of factors beyond political and economic sanctions. This review explores the difficulties in isolating the effects of sanctions on destination image from other political, social, and media forces:

- **Multifaceted nature of destination image:** Destination image is formed by a combination of cognitive, affective, and conative components, influenced by personal experiences, media portrayals, and interpersonal communication (Almeida et al., 2016). Disentangling the specific role of sanctions within this intricate web of influences is inherently difficult (Partt & Alizadeh, 2018).
- **Overlapping political and social factors:** Political events, social unrest, and economic instability often coincide with the imposition of sanctions, making it challenging to isolate the unique impact of sanctions on destination image. For example, negative media coverage of political protests in a sanctioned country may deter potential visitors, but it's difficult to attribute this solely to the sanctions themselves (Gorji et al., 2023).
- **Media framing and agenda setting:** Media plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of destinations. The framing of news stories about sanctioned countries can significantly influence destination image, even if the sanctions themselves have minimal direct impact on tourism infrastructure or safety. Sensationalized or negative portrayals can create lasting impressions that deter potential visitors (Khodadadi, 2016).
- **Domestic political commentary and propaganda:** Governments of sanctioned countries often engage in domestic propaganda campaigns to counter negative international perceptions. This can further complicate the analysis, as it becomes difficult to discern genuine public sentiment from state-sponsored narratives (Seyfi & Hall, 2020).

1.7.6. Destination image, risk perception and animosity

In the context of tourism, animosity is emotionally and cognitively considered with unfavorable feelings and a negative image (Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). This perspective is reinforced by Loureiro and Jesus (2019), who investigated the impact of animosity and risk perception on the cognitive, affective, and conative images of Rio de Janeiro. Hostility, as evidenced by Campo and Alvarez (2017), diminishes a tourist's willingness to visit a destination, contributing to an unfavorable image and, consequently, a negative perception among travelers. Political tensions, economic hardship, conflict, and cultural antagonism can significantly influence prospective tourists' travel intentions (Antonetti et al., 2019; Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). Thus, the perception of antagonism and hostility toward a destination is anticipated to impact destination image, shaping an individual's feelings and thoughts about a place's location, beauty, or natural environment.

Previous investigations have identified several factors influencing visitors' destination choices, encompassing demographic profiles, interpersonal elements, and external factors such as media and advertising (Hosseini et al., 2021, 2022; Liu et al., 2013; Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). Scholars commonly assert that travelers tend to avoid risky destinations, and the concept of perceived risk has been identified as a state where something is threatened with unpredictable consequences (Liu et al., 2013; Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). This perceived risk, associated with various factors such as crime, psychological aspects, health concerns, and political instability, may lead to negative emotional responses, cognitive connections, refusal to select a specific destination for future holidays, and a reluctance to return. The impact of risk perception on destination image has been acknowledged in research (Karl & Schmude, 2017; Campo & Alvarez, 2019).

In the realm of research concerning customer animosity, previous studies have explored the impact of a country's product image on individuals' preferences for the products of that particular country. Additionally, attempts have been made to elucidate why individuals opt for items from specific countries (Maher & Mady, 2010). Drawing parallels between product country image and destination image, Mossberg and Kleppe (2005) propose a comparable conceptualization. Moreover, research indicates that when a destination is portrayed as a tourism product, animosity can directly influence tourists' decisions to choose a destination, either directly or indirectly through the lens of destination image (Campo & Alvarez, 2019; Stepchenkova et al., 2018).



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CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF IRAN; A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. Study Context

The modern history of tourism development in Iran traces its origins to the 1930s when the initial tourism infrastructure, comprising guesthouses and hotels, was established. During this period, concerted efforts were undertaken to promote and foster the growth of tourism in the country (Steele, 2022; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010).

However, the landscape of Iranian tourism underwent significant shifts in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution (Mirzai; 2013). Prior to this period, Iran stood as a major tourist hub in the Middle East (Khodadadi, 2016). Nevertheless, the revolution and subsequent structural changes resulted in a substantial decline in tourist numbers (Khaksari et al., 2015).

Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government implemented policies that significantly altered the tourism sector. These policies, largely influenced by new political, social, and religious dynamics, emphasized cultural and religious tourism over the more liberal tourism practices of the pre-revolution era. This shift aimed to align Iran's tourism with Islamic values, which included promoting destinations such as historical mosques and religious sites that are significant to Shia Islam.

In the years that followed, Iran faced further challenges in the tourism sector due to international sanctions and political tensions, particularly with Western countries. These sanctions affected not only the economic aspect of tourism but also international perceptions of Iran as a safe and welcoming destination for tourists. Despite these challenges, the government continued efforts to revive and boost tourism as a vital part of its economy.

In recent years, the protracted nuclear energy dispute further cast a shadow on Iran's destination image, contributing to its identification as a threat and an axis of evil (Gorji et al., 2023). Despite



the longstanding nuclear energy dispute and the resultant negative image, efforts to revitalize the tourism sector have been evident. The Iranian government has taken steps such as easing visa restrictions and promoting the country's rich cultural and historical heritage (Seyfi & Hall, 2017; Gorji et al., 2023). These measures underscore a concerted effort to enhance Iran's appeal and attract a diverse range of international tourists

The re-imposition of U.S. sanctions in May 2018 dealt a significant blow to Iran's tourism industry (Khodadadi, 2018). The departure of foreign investors and the suspension of flights by some European airlines heightened the challenges. Despite these setbacks, Iran's tourism industry has shown resilience. The depreciated currency rate has rendered the country an affordable destination, retaining its competitive advantage in attracting international tourists. Despite travel advisories and operational suspensions by major online travel companies, Iran's steps to ease visa restrictions and promote cultural heritage signal a commitment to overcoming economic challenges (Seyfi & Hall, 2017).

Iran's attractiveness for international tourists is evident, particularly for those interested in history and culture (Carbone et al., 2017). The country's association with pilgrimage, religious, and cultural tourism is well-established, drawing visitors from Western countries and other Islamic states with shared beliefs (Khaksari et al., 2014). Iran's tourism, despite challenges, offers diverse experiences that extend beyond cultural and religious dimensions (Alipour & Heydari, 2005). As the country continues to navigate economic hurdles and reshape its destination image, the potential for sustained growth in its tourism sector remains promising (Mozaffari et al., 2017).

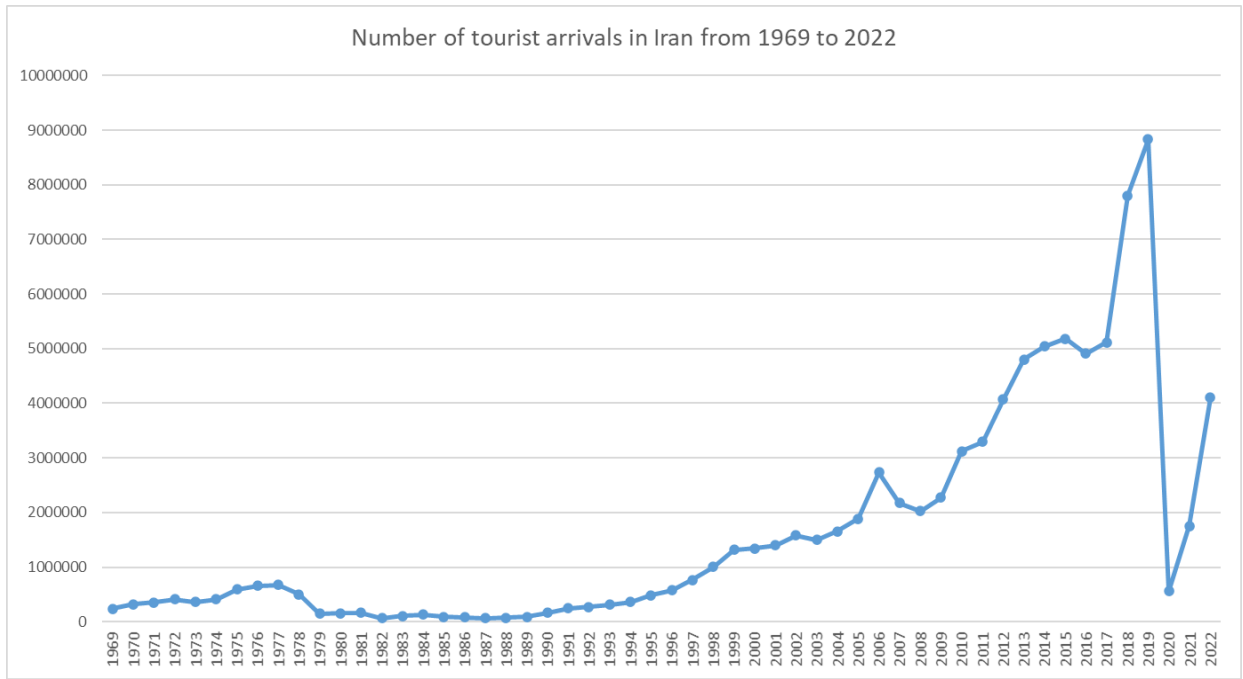


Figure 2.1. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran (1969 – 2022)

The below figure shows organizational chart of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Iran.

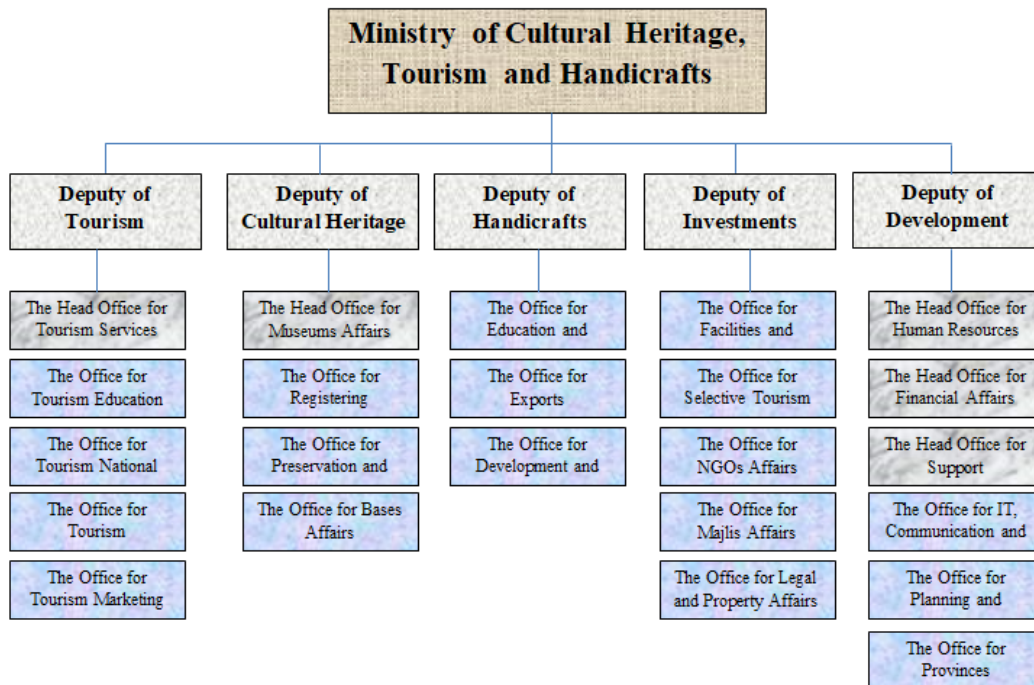


Figure 2.2. Structure of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handcraft (Updated 2024)

2.2. Before the 1979 Revolution: Pahlavi Monarchy's Visionary Initiatives

Before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's tourism industry was in a phase of notable growth and prosperity (Steele; 2022). The period leading up to the revolution, particularly during the reign of the Pahlavi monarchy, witnessed the emergence of Iran as a prominent destination in the Middle East (Khodadadi, 2018). In this period, Iran's tourism industry was on an upward trajectory, benefiting from a combination of modernization efforts, cultural promotion, and a positive global image (Steele, 2022; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010; Morakabati, 2011). The country was well-positioned to continue its growth as a significant player in the international tourism landscape (Khaksari et al., 2014). Several factors contributed to the vibrancy of the tourism sector during this era (Steele, 2022; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010; Mozaffari et al., 2017; Seyfi & Hall, 2017; Mirzaei; 2013; Khaksari et al., 2015; Morakabati, 2011):

Modernization and Infrastructure Development: The Pahlavi monarchy, under the leadership of Mohammad Reza Shah, embarked on a program of modernization and infrastructure development. This included the construction of tourism-related facilities such as hotels, resorts, and transportation infrastructure, laying the groundwork for a burgeoning tourism industry

Cultural Heritage Promotion: The government actively promoted Iran's rich cultural heritage, positioning the country as a repository of ancient history, art, and architecture. Historical sites such as Persepolis, Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square, and the city of Shiraz became focal points for attracting domestic and international tourists.

Global Allure: Iran became a sought-after destination for international travelers, drawing visitors from various parts of the world. The country's historical significance, diverse landscapes, and the warmth of its people contributed to its global allure.

Economic Impact: The tourism industry played a significant role in the country's economy, contributing to job creation, foreign exchange earnings, and economic growth. The government recognized the economic potential of tourism and implemented policies to further stimulate the sector.

Cultural Exchanges: Iran actively engaged in cultural exchanges with other nations, fostering

a positive image globally. Tourists were not only attracted by the historical and cultural attractions but also by the hospitality and openness of the Iranian people.

Diverse Offerings: Iran offered a diverse range of experiences, from exploring ancient historical sites to enjoying the natural beauty of its landscapes. The country's geographical diversity, ranging from mountains to deserts and coastlines, provided a variety of attractions for different types of travellers.

Strategic Marketing: The Iranian government strategically marketed the country as a destination for both leisure and cultural tourism. International events, festivals, and exhibitions were organized to showcase Iran's cultural richness and attract a global audience.

Based on the above-mentioned endeavours, Iran witnessed significant growth in the number of tourist arrivals, escalating from fewer than 80,000 in 1962 to nearly 700,000 by 1977 (Steele; 2022). Western Europe and the United States were the two main markets during this period (Mirzaei, 2013). Consequently, tourism became an increasingly vital sector of Iran's economy. However, the revolution and subsequent geopolitical changes had a profound impact, hampering Iran's tourism development (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). The figure below shows the number of international tourist arrivals in Iran from 1963 until before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.

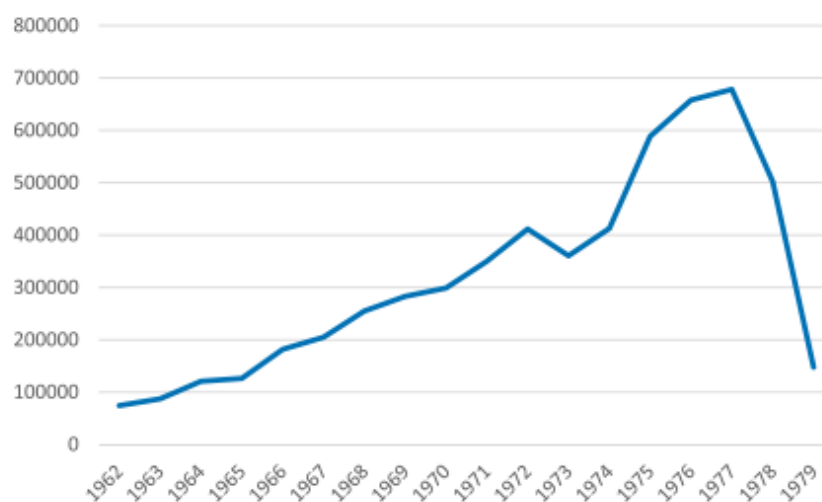


Figure 2.3. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran Before the Islamic Revolution (1963 -1979)

The below photos show the various advertisement activities the government employed to attract tourists, particularly tourists from the more lucrative markets in Europe and the United States.



Sparking tomorrow's tourist explosion

3 IRAN

IRAN is launching a special programme to show its vast inheritance of historical monuments to more people. It is doing this with the cooperation of UNESCO.

The careful restoration and display of Iran's artistic and architectural treasures will help to reveal to the world their full cultural significance.

To study these monuments is to contemplate a panorama of the country's history and art. Scattered across the miles and a half square kilometres of this and plateau traversed by mountains are the legacies of every period. Hundreds of Stone Age settlements lie along the former shores of dried-up lakes. The Zoroastrian fire worshippers have left altars which range from primitive altars to the ruins of sophisticated temples. The ancient capital of the Medes, Ecbatana, is still hidden under the modern buildings of the city of Hamadan, but the Persian Empire, which Cyrus founded 2,500 years ago and which was the real beginning of the Islamic state, reappears today in the palaces of Persepolis and Susa, the monumental bas-relief of Darius I at Behistun (whose inscriptions made it possible to decipher cuneiform writing) and especially the royal city of Persepolis, one of the world's most impressive historical sites.

The Parthian rulers, who recovered Iran's independence from the successors of Alexander the Great, and the later Sassanid dynasty have made their own contributions: domed palaces in picturesque settings and huge bas-reliefs on the sides of mountains are memorials of a time when the Great King of Persia and the Roman Emperor were called the twin lighthouses of the world.

This powerful head was once part of a capital (named as the legend of a horn-headed bull) crowned one of the immovable monuments to the mighty kings and lords of Persia, Iran, and it is now in the Louvre Museum.

Photo © Lucien Huxid, Paris

The largest inheritance has been that of Islam, which, from the seventh century onward, changed every aspect of art, architecture, philosophy and science, new customs and ways of living are reflected in its mosques and palaces and tanks. The style and conception of these Islamic monuments—which varied greatly during successive periods, for example those of the Seljuks, the Mongols and the Timurids—are in harmony with the contemporary poetry, miniature painting, ceramics and carpet-weaving that gave peculiarly rich expression to the Iranian genius.

FROM the beginning of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth, the Safavid rulers, especially the fabulous Shah Abbas I, gave Iran a new Golden Age. Every where in the country, the works of the Safavids remain, but their most astounding achievement was the thousand-and-one-night city of Isfahan, whose palaces, mosques, fountains, gardens and mysterious streets have survived until our time.

The subsequent Zand and Qajar periods were an age of decay, when technologically the country was falling behind the nations of Europe and North America galvanized by their industrial revolution. Nevertheless, many subtle, beautiful monuments of this time form a valuable portion of the cultural inheritance of Iran.

The Christian and other religious minorities which have lived side by side with the Muslims of Iran have left original monuments to their own faith and customs, dating from the Middle Ages down to this century.

The importance of these monuments for the cultural life of Iran is obvious. Yet the problems of maintenance, let alone of restoration and display, are enormous. Guardians for several thousand scattered sites, many of them in isolated areas, and the payment of

the most urgent repairs call for substantial sums. For the vast number of historical buildings in private hands, the difficulties are even greater. The archaeological sites of Iran are themselves a huge enterprise. The national ethnological and technical machinery for the protection of monuments needs to be strengthened, and schools for specialists created. Many new museums are needed, for example, there is not yet a carpet museum in the country.

In fact, the effort required could seem almost too much for a developing country that should husband all its resources to improve its economy and the social conditions of its people.

However, the growth of tourism has changed the problem. The expansion of modern communications has at last made international tourism in Iran possible; it is expected to take on considerable proportions during the next few years. It will not only open up the country and its culture more widely to the rest of the world, but also stimulate its economy. Financial sacrifices which will contribute to tourism are therefore acceptable, and even necessary.

New historical monuments and sites are important to tourism everywhere, but in a country like Iran they are vital. People will not travel this far merely for sport or recreation—which they can get closer to home—but for a unique cultural revelation. Iran, which wants to preserve its cultural heritage for its own sake, is also duty bound to do so for practical reasons.

As soon as it laid down this principle, the Iranian Government sought to translate it into action. For this, it called upon the technical aid of UNESCO. Missions were sent to advise the Iranian authorities on the preparation of a specific plan for the preservation and display of monuments and the development of tourism considered as a single, integrated activity.

The special programme which resulted from these studies has three main features. It was decided not to extend

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Figure 2.4. Excerpt from the December 1966 issue of the UNESCO Courier about tourism in Iran.

(Source: UNESCO)



Figure 2.5. A Travel Brochure During Pahlavi Monarchy

(Courtesy of the: <https://ajammc.com/2023/07/14/destination-persia-tourism-1960s/>)



12 airlines can fly you from New York to Tehran. Only one can fly you non-stop. Iran Air.

It's just one smooth flight from New York to Tehran in one of our new 747SP's...and at least 4 hours faster than any other direct flight! (And from any major U.S. city, you're only one stop away from Tehran.)
 You leave JFK at 8PM and arrive early the next afternoon. You get a solid night's sleep and awaken refreshed for the next day's business.
 First across the Atlantic with the 747SP (Special Performance), Iran Air flies a mile higher than other 747's for a smoother flight. With about 100 fewer seats, you have more intimate service. And our new



Persian Room in first class is the plushiest nightspot in town.
 In addition, with our expanded 707 schedule, you can depart any day of the week, with a choice of two flights on Thursdays and Sundays, via London or Paris. All direct, without changing planes.
 Iran Air also has immediate connections to Isfahan and Shiraz, plus connections to other Persian Gulf states and the Far East.
 For reservations, call your travel agent. Or call Iran Air in New York at (212) 940-8200; Houston (713) 629-1720; Los Angeles (213) 274-6336.



We've been welcoming travelers for 2500 years.

Which went where?

Did this London dolly fly to Tehran to do her shopping? Or was the embroidered Persian lambskin jacket flown from Iran to Carnaby Street? Either way, it would be no problem for Iran Air, for Iran Air serves major cities along the London-Bombay route. And we treat both passengers and cargo (especially pet lambs) with the utmost care.

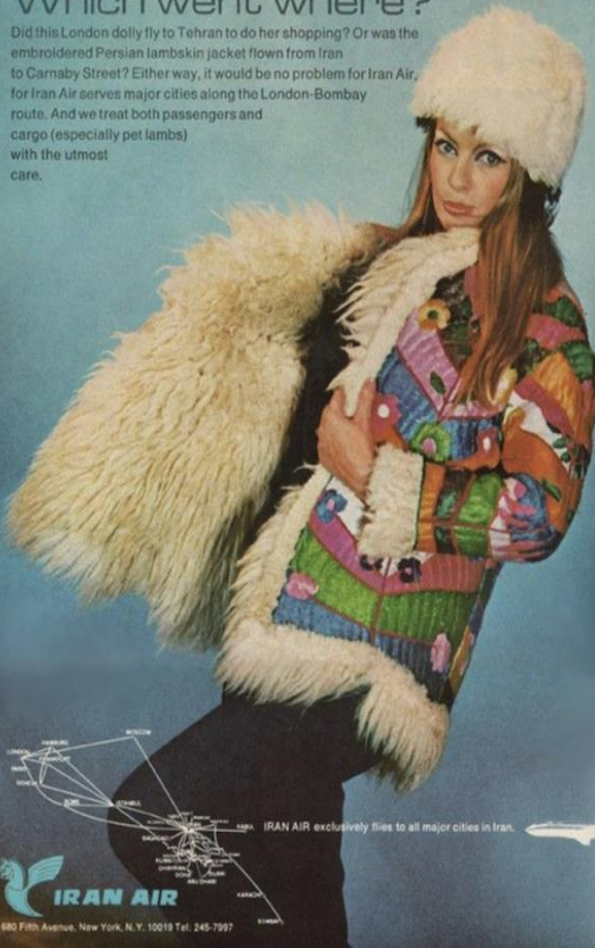


Figure 2.6. Iran Air Advertisements from the 1970s.

(Courtesy of the: <https://ajammc.com/2023/07/14/destination-persia-tourism-1960s/>)



2.2.1. Critical perspectives on tourism under the Pahlavi monarchy

During the Pahlavi monarchy in Iran (1925-1979), tourism experienced significant growth and development, particularly under the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. However, a critical analysis of tourism during this period reveals both positive and negative aspects (Steele, 2022; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010; Mozaffari et al., 2017; Seyfi & Hall, 2017; Mirzaei, 2013; Khaksari et al., 2015; Morakabati, 2011). On the positive side, the Pahlavi monarchy recognized the potential of tourism as a means of economic growth and modernization. The government invested heavily in infrastructure, including the construction of hotels, roads, and airports, which facilitated the growth of the tourism industry. The development of tourism also created job opportunities and contributed to the country's foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, the promotion of Iran as a tourist destination helped to showcase the country's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty to the world (Steele, 2022; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010).

However, there were also several negative aspects to tourism development under the Pahlavi monarchy. One major criticism is that the benefits of tourism were not evenly distributed among the population. The focus on luxury tourism catered primarily to the wealthy elite and foreign visitors, while many ordinary Iranians did not directly benefit from the industry. However, amid the optimistic narrative, critics mostly emphasised the potential damage to traditional values and customs in the face of Western influences associated with increased tourism (Khaksari et al., 2014).

While advocates argued that increased interactions between Iranians and foreign visitors fostered mutual understanding and cosmopolitanism, conservatives such as religious leaders questioned the genuineness of these exchanges (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). From their perspective, the tourism industry was perceived as a potential threat to cultural, moral, and religious beliefs that could undermine the values of Iran's traditional way of life. In their critique, the tourism industry was not merely an economic force but a transformative influence that could damage the very foundations of the values they sought to preserve (Hafeznia et al., 2007).

2.3. After the 1979 Revolution: Structural Changes and Global Perceptions

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran marked a pivotal moment in the country's history, ushering in a new era with far-reaching consequences for various aspects of Iranian society, including the tourism industry (Baum & O’Gorman, 2010). The post-revolutionary period presented a complex landscape for tourism, characterized by both challenges and opportunities (Gorji et al., 2023; Steele, 2022; Mozaffari et al., 2017; Seyfi & Hall, 2017; Mirzai, 2013; Khaksari et al., 2015; Morakabati, 2011).

One of the immediate challenges faced by Iran's tourism industry was the negative global perception stemming from the revolutionary upheaval (Gorji et al., 2023, Ghaderi, 2017; Baum & O’Gorman, 2010). The revolution and subsequent events, such as the U.S. embassy hostage crisis, and the Iran–Iraq war (1980–1988), had a detrimental impact on the image of Iran, fostering perceptions of political instability and unpredictability (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). International tourists, particularly from Western countries, were deterred by concerns over safety and an uncertain socio-political environment (Khodadadi, 2018; Mirzaei 2013). This negative perception created a strong barrier to the growth of international tourism in Iran during the initial years following the revolution (Baum & O’Gorman, 2010). Consequently, there was a substantial decrease in the number of inbound tourists from 700,000 in 1977 to less than 100,000 in 1988 (Mirzaei, 2013).

Internally, the establishment of the Islamic Republic led to a series of cultural and social transformations (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Conservative policies were implemented, including dress codes and restrictions on social interactions, which influenced the attractiveness of Iran as a tourist destination on the international tourism map (O’Gorman et al., 2007). The imposition of Islamic principles in public spaces, while reflective of the new socio-political order, raised questions about the compatibility of these policies with the expectations of international tourists, especially those accustomed to more liberal cultural environments (Baum & O’Gorman, 2010; Seyfi & Hall, 2017).

Economic sanctions imposed on Iran further complicated the situation (Ghaderi et al., 2017). The restrictions have limited international investments in the tourism sector, hindering



infrastructure development and contributing to economic challenges that affected the overall attractiveness of Iran as a tourist destination (Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018). The scarcity of resources for marketing and promotional activities exacerbated the difficulties in showing Iran's cultural and historical attractiveness to a global market n (Akhoondnejad, 2015).

Despite these challenges, Iran possessed enduring strengths that contributed to the resilience of its tourism industry. The country's rich cultural and historical heritage, with ancient sites such as Persepolis and architectural marvels like Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan Square, continued to be significant attractions (Alipour & Rahimi, 2005). Moreover, Iran's status as an Islamic Republic made it a prominent destination for religious tourism, with pilgrims and Shia Muslims from around the world visiting holy sites in cities like Qom and Mashhad (Ziaee & Amiri, 2017).

While international tourism faced challenges, there was a noticeable shift toward domestic tourism (Seyfi et al., 2017). Iranians explored their own country, contributing to the promotion of local destinations (Mirzaee & Ahmad, 2018). Efforts were made to highlight Iran's diverse landscapes, ranging from mountains to deserts, to foster nature-based tourism. This emphasis on domestic travel served as a strategy to stimulate the tourism sector from within, despite external challenges (Seyfi et al., 2017). Over time, Iran's tourism industry has demonstrated adaptability and resilience. The country has sought to overcome obstacles through diplomatic initiatives aimed at improving global relations and strategic measures to enhance its image as a tourist-friendly destination (Gorji et al., 2023).

2.3.1. The Rafsanjani Period (1989-1997): initiating early steps towards revival

The Rafsanjani period as known as the 'post-war reconstruction period' witnessed new steps towards the revival and development of Iran's tourism industry (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). Despite persistent challenges, there were discernible efforts to resuscitate the sector. Cultural and historical attractions were spotlighted in an attempt to draw international visitors. However, geopolitical complexities prevalent during this era constrained significant growth, revealing a hard path for the tourism industry to navigate external constraints (Affianian, 2017).

The persistent negative international image of Iran, influenced by political events, regional conflicts, and prevalent security concerns—including the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the Mykonos



Restaurant Assassinations (1992)—posed a significant challenge to the growth of the tourism industry during Rafsanjani's presidency (Hemmatiha, 2018). The war-torn legacy and the prevailing negative perceptions continued to deter potential tourists, particularly those seeking stability and a favorable socio-political environment (Ghaderi, 2017). Despite these challenges, efforts were made to show the country's ancient heritage, historical sites, and religious cities. Religious tourism, centered around pilgrimage to holy cities such as Mashhad and Qom, retained its significance, attracting visitors from across the Shia Muslim community (Ziaei & Amiri,2017).

While infrastructure development remained a gradual process, there were notable efforts to enhance the tourism-related facilities. Accommodation options and transportation networks saw incremental improvements in most touristic cities. Economically, Rafsanjani's broader reforms aimed at attracting foreign investment also extended to the tourism sector. The industry was strategically positioned as a potential driver of economic growth, aligning with his economic development strategies (Karimi, 2019). While the tourism sector experienced some positive developments during this period, there were also negative events that impacted tourism in the country.

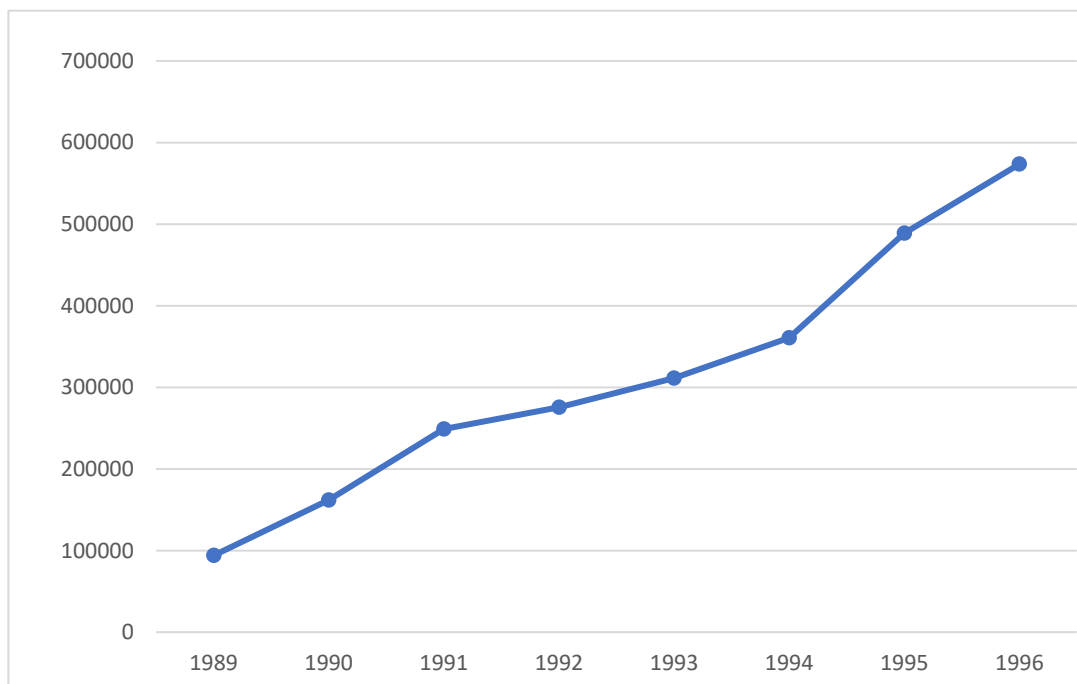


Figure 2.7. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran During the Rafsanjani Presidential Period (1989-1997)

2.3.2. The Khatami period (1997-2004): tourism as a catalyst for peace and dialogue among civilizations

During Mohammad Khatami's two presidential terms (1997–2005), commonly referred to as the 'reform period,' a distinct chapter for Iran's tourism industry unfolded. The Khatami administration prioritized cultural diplomacy to enhance Iran's global image and facilitate tourism (Ghaderi, 2013). Notably, this period witnessed a diplomatic and cultural shift, focusing on initiatives aimed at fostering a more positive international image of Iran (O'Gorman et al., 2007). Khatami's government aimed to present a more moderate and open face for the country, creating an environment conducive to international tourism (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). Efforts were made to counteract negative perceptions from previous years and position Iran as a welcoming destination for international visitors (Hemmatiha, 2018).

President Khatami's commitment to cultural diplomacy and the promotion of a "Dialogue of Civilizations" marked a paradigm shift in Iran's international engagement. By advocating for mutual understanding and cooperation among nations, Khatami aimed to reshape Iran's image as a culturally rich and open destination. International engagement played a vital role in reshaping perceptions of Iran. Active participation in global events and conferences not only fostered positive diplomatic relations but also showcased Iran's offerings as a destination with significant cultural and historical depth. The enhancement of transportation infrastructure, particularly the expansion of international flight connections, played a crucial role in improving accessibility. This development facilitated the movement of tourists, contributing to the overall dynamism of Iran's tourism industry. The Khatami period witnessed a notable increase in international arrivals compared to previous years (from fewer than a million people in 1997 to over 2.5 million), reflecting the impact of diplomatic overtures and a more open stance (Mozaffari et al., 2017).

While the Khatami era witnessed positive developments that fostered a conducive environment for tourism, the early 2000s brought forth challenges that adversely affected Iran's appeal to international visitors. Global and regional events casted a shadow over the country's tourism industry (Ghaderi, 2013). The aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks ushered in a period of heightened global security measures worldwide, affecting tourism in many regions, including the Middle East

Concurrently, the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, undertaken in response to the 9/11 attacks, indirectly affected Iran as regional instability and a surge in refugees contributed to heightened safety concerns throughout the broader Middle East (Mozaffari et al., 2017).

Adding to the complexities, then-U.S. President George W. Bush's 2002 "Axis of Evil" speech further strained international relations, placing Iran in a precarious position (O’Gorman et al., 2007). The ensuing tensions negatively affected Iran's image on the global stage, potentially deterring prospective tourists. The subsequent U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, although not involving Iran directly, exacerbated regional instability. Combined with the fallout from the "Axis of Evil" rhetoric and concerns about security, these events created a challenging environment for Iran's tourism industry during this period. Internal political challenges and the global outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003 further compounded the difficulties, with political instability and health-related fears contributing to a decline in international travel interest to Iran.

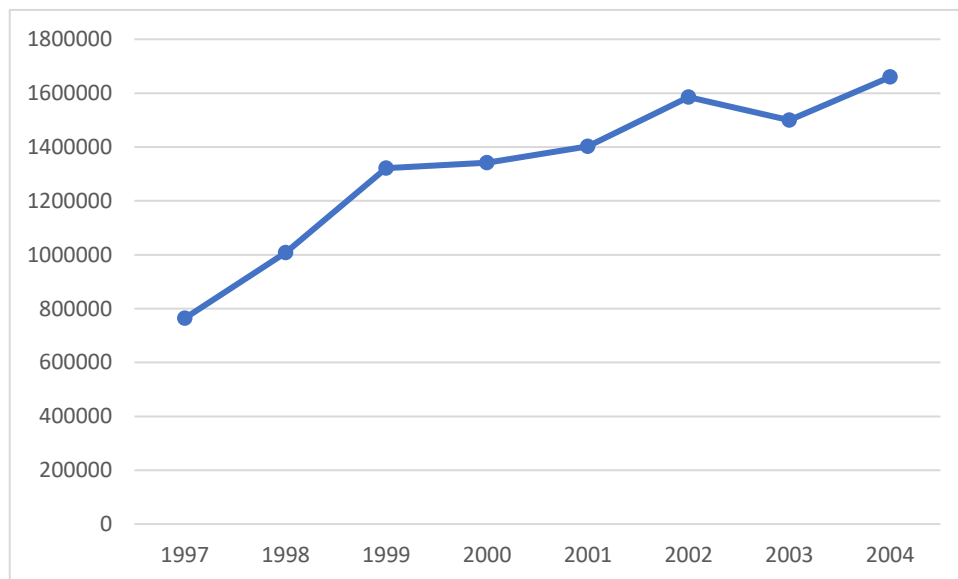


Figure 2.8. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran During the Khatami Presidential Period (1997-2004)

2.3.3. The Ahmadinejad period (2005-2013): economic sanctions and international conflicts

The Ahmadinejad period, spanning from 2005 to 2013, represented a complex chapter in Iran's tourism industry. The anti-Western stance of the Ahmadinejad state intensified geopolitical tensions, significantly impeding the growth of Iran's tourism industry (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). Central to these challenges was the escalating international concern over Iran's nuclear program, resulting in the imposition of stringent economic sanctions.

The global perception of Iran was damaged (Roque & Forte, 2019), creating an atmosphere of uncertainty that impacted the perception of Iran as a safe and welcoming destination (Ghaderi, 2013). The Ahmadinejad administration's confrontational stance on certain global issues further complicated efforts to improve the country's image and attractiveness to international tourists (Mozaffari et al., 2017). Political activists contend that the internal political landscape during this period was characterized by repression and crackdowns on dissent, exemplified by the suppression of protests in 2009. Such political instability and human rights concerns created an atmosphere of uncertainty, impacting the perceived safety and stability for potential visitors. Adding to the adversities, the global economic recession in 2008 had a ripple effect on international travel, with reduced consumer spending and a broader decline in global tourism. These economic challenges compounded the difficulties faced by Iran's tourism industry.

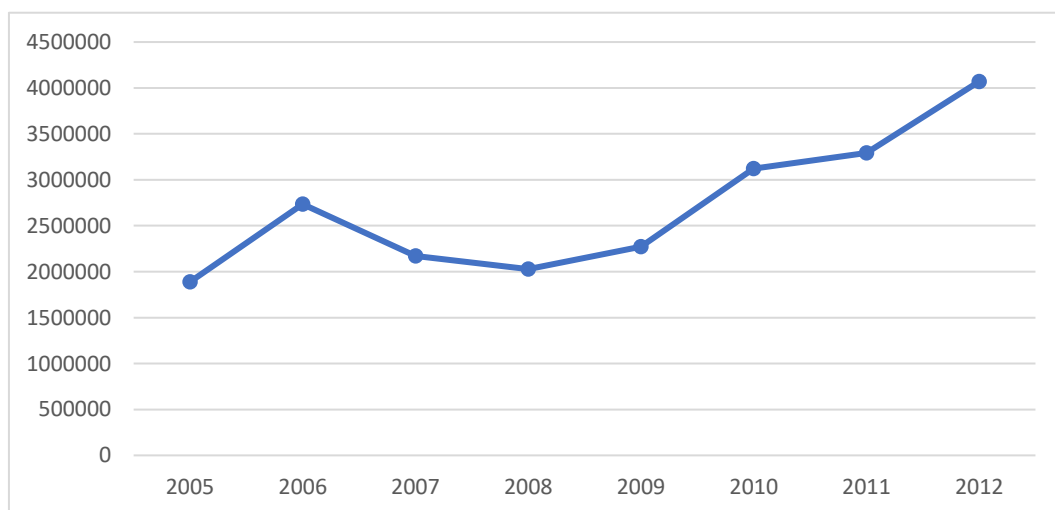


Figure 2.9. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran During the Ahmadinejad Presidential Period (2005-2013)

The overall negative image, influenced by political events, regional conflicts, and the nuclear dispute, created a complex environment that hindered the growth of tourism during Ahmadinejad's presidency. While Iran's cultural and historical attractions remained central to its tourism attractiveness, the limited international outreach and the challenging economic landscape during Ahmadinejad's presidency hindered the industry from fully realizing its potential (Ghaderi, 2013). Despite these challenges, some endeavours were made to promote specific aspects of Iran's attractions, particularly focusing on its cultural heritage and historical sites (Mozaffari et al., 2013). The Ahmadinejad administration invested in infrastructure projects, including transportation and accommodation facilities. Concurrently, efforts were made to promote Iran's rich cultural and historical heritage, potentially attracting cultural tourism.

2.3.4. The Rouhani period (2013-2021): the rebirth of Iranian tourism

During the Rouhani administration (2013-2021), Iran's tourism industry witnessed notable shifts. President Hassan Rouhani's administration adopted a more moderate approach, aiming to improve international relations and the country's global image (Seyfi & Hall, 2017). Rouhani's diplomatic efforts led to the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, easing nuclear-related sanctions.

This created a more favorable environment for international engagement and tourism (Gorji et al., 2023). The perception of Iran as a tourist destination gradually improved, contributing to an increase in international arrivals (Khodadadi, 2016).

The economic landscape also witnessed some improvements, allowing for gradual investments in tourism infrastructure (Orishev et al., 2020). Accommodation facilities and transportation networks saw enhancements, contributing to a more comfortable experience for visitors. Evident in this period were endeavors to ease visa restrictions, promote Iran's cultural heritage, and gradually revive the tourism sector (Seyfi & Hall., 2017).

Despite economic exigencies and the reimposition of U.S. sanctions in 2018, the sector displayed resilience, offering a glimpse into the potential for sustainable growth. This period highlighted the importance of strategic measures in navigating external challenges and fostering gradual resurgence.

However, in 2018, the dynamics changed with the re-imposition of sanctions by then-U.S (Khodadadi, 2018). President Donald Trump, which created challenges for Iran's economy, including its tourism industry. These sanctions, particularly in the economic sphere, affected the overall environment and potential growth of the tourism sector.

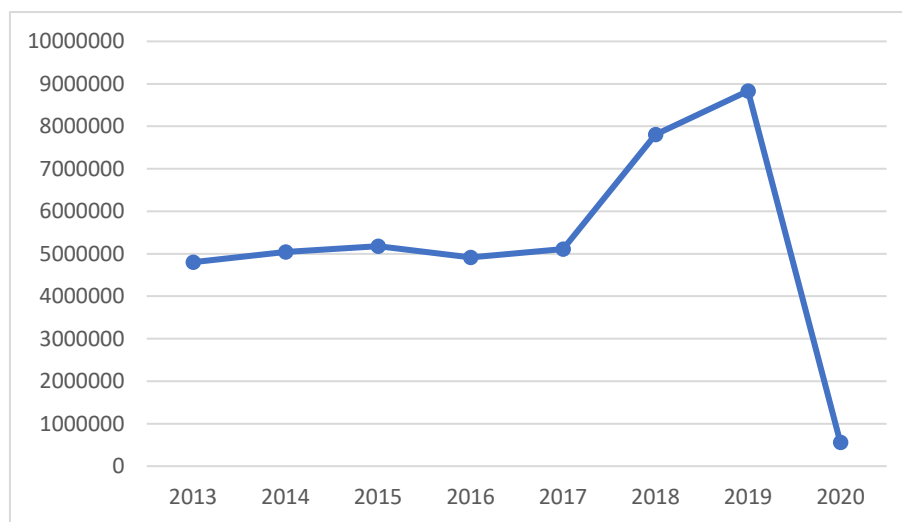


Figure 2.10. Number of Tourist Arrivals in Iran During the Rouhani Presidential Period (2013-2021)

2.3.5. The Raisi period (2021 Onward): anticipations and prospects

President Raisi inherited a situation shaped by both the positive and challenging aspects of the preceding Rouhani era. The tourism sector faced complexities due to the impact of economic sanctions and geopolitical dynamics. The re-imposition of sanctions in 2018, initiated by the Trump administration, had created challenges for the Iranian economy, affecting various industries, including tourism. The economic challenges, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, posed obstacles to the industry's growth. However, efforts to promote Iran's cultural and historical attractions are persisting, showcasing the country's rich heritage.

The new leadership's approach to economic development, international relations, and addressing the challenges posed by external factors will play a pivotal role in shaping the path of Iran's tourism industry in the years to come.

2.4. Iran and Sanction

Iran, a significant player in Middle Eastern geopolitics, has faced extensive international sanctions over several decades, primarily due to concerns over its nuclear program, regional activities, human rights issues, and alleged support for terrorism. These sanctions have been imposed by various entities including the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations.

The first major sanctions against Iran were instituted by the United States in 1979 following the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent U.S. Embassy hostage crisis. These initial sanctions included asset freezes and a trade embargo. Over the years, the scope of sanctions expanded to target specific sectors such as oil and gas, banking, and military procurement, which are crucial to Iran's economy and state functions.

A significant development occurred in 2015 with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), under which Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of many international sanctions. This agreement marked a brief period of relief from economic pressures. However, the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 under President Donald Trump led to the reinstatement of stringent U.S. sanctions, significantly impacting Iran's economy once again.

Sanctions have profoundly affected Iran's economy, limiting its oil exports, reducing foreign investments, and restricting access to international banking networks. Despite these challenges, the Iranian government has sought ways to circumvent the restrictions through various means, including the development of a domestic arms industry and pursuing alternative trade partnerships.

The ongoing sanctions regime against Iran remains a contentious issue in international relations, reflecting broader tensions between Iran and many Western countries, especially concerning security, regional influence, and nuclear capabilities.

Here is a concise table of major US and international sanctions imposed on Iran over the past 45 years:

Table 2.2. Timeline of Major US and International Sanctions imposed on Iran (1979-2023)

Year	Jurisdiction	Description of Sanctions
1979	US	Freeze of \$12 billion in Iranian assets; comprehensive trade embargo.
1987	US	Prohibition of all US imports from Iran.
1995	US	Executive orders preventing US companies from investing in Iran's oil and gas sectors; halting trade.
1996	US	Sanctions on foreign firms investing significantly in Iran's energy sector.
2006	US	Sanctions on Bank Saderat Iran, blocking it from US financial systems.
2007	US	Sanctions targeting Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and state-owned banks.
	UN	Sanctions on arms sales and financial assets linked to military activities.
2008	UN	Sanctions on assets for joint civilian-military use.
	US	Ban on US banks acting as intermediaries in transactions involving Iran.
2010	US	Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) bans imports of certain Iranian goods.
	EU	Sanctions on oil sector, technology transfer, banking.
2011	US	Coordinated sanctions targeting Iran's oil and petrochemical industries.
	EU	Sanctions on assets and specific individuals.
2012	US	Sanctions on Iran's central bank.
	US	Global banks prohibited from completing oil transactions with Iran.
2013	US	Ban on Iranian automobile sector, currency, gold, and petrochemicals.
2015	US	Lifted most sanctions under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).
2018	US	Withdrawal from JCPOA and reinstatement of previous sanctions.
2019	US	Sanctions on assets and specific individuals.
2022	US	Sanctions against the Iran Morality Police and specific individuals.
2023	US	Sanctions targeting seven individuals and six entities related to the Iran's missile and military programs.



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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approaches

To address the main goals and questions of the article, we formulated three different methods but in the same line, including i) content and visual analyses, ii) qualitative approach, and iii) quantitative approach (Figure 3.1). The shift in methodologies across articles was driven by the need for a comprehensive understanding of Iran's tourism image from different perspectives.

The concurrent mixed-methods design is indeed a deliberate choice in this thesis to ensure that the diverse dimensions of the destination image of Iran are thoroughly explored and understood. The integration of visual, qualitative, and quantitative methods within a mixed-methods framework offers a triangulated perspective on Iran's destination image. By combining visual data, thematic insights, and empirical analysis, the study achieves a comprehensive understanding that a single-method approach could not provide.

Data is collected through visual content analysis (qualitative), thematic analysis of interviews (qualitative), and surveys (quantitative). Findings from the qualitative and quantitative components are integrated during the analysis phase. The concurrent design allowed us to benefit from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data provides context, depth, and nuance, while quantitative data offers the breadth and generalizability necessary for a holistic understanding of the destination image of Iran. Therefore:

- **Visual Content Analysis** illuminates the projected image, highlighting how Iran is portrayed to the outside world.
- **Thematic Analysis** uncovers the perceived image based on individual experiences and beliefs, providing context and depth to the visual findings.

- **Quantitative Analysis** offers empirical support and generalizability to the perceptions and images identified, adding a layer of objectivity to the subjective qualitative data.

The sequential and complementary use of methods enriches the research with multiple data sources, interpretations, and viewpoints, leading to a more robust and multidimensional exploration of Iran's image as a tourist destination. By detailing each methodology at the beginning of Chapter 3, the thesis provides a clear and justified rationale for the mixed-methods design, demonstrating how each component coherently contributes to the overarching research question. The compendium of articles thus paints a detailed picture of Iran's destination image in the face of geopolitical conflicts, offering valuable insights for academics, policymakers, and industry practitioners alike.

The mixed-methods approach, therefore, is not merely a parallel employment of different techniques but a strategically concurrent and complementary design. This approach is based on the understanding that qualitative and quantitative data can mutually inform and reinforce each other, leading to a more nuanced and complete understanding of the research question.

In this regard, the first article initiated with a visual exploration, analyzing the projected image of Iran. To do that, a qualitative methodology is employed, utilizing visual content analysis. This method allows for a nuanced exploration of the subject matter by examining and interpreting visual elements. The sample is purposefully selected to ensure relevance to the research goals. Data is collected from Instagram, a platform rich in visual content, facilitating a detailed analysis. The process is supported by the use of Datawrapper for visualization and Nvivo for in-depth qualitative data analysis.

The second segment of the study adopts a qualitative approach through thematic analyses, capturing the perceived image. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data, offering insights into the underlying themes of the research. The sampling strategy employs a snowball approach, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Data is collected through depth semi-structured interviews, allowing for a more profound exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. NVivo is utilized for the systematic organization and analysis of qualitative data.

The third component of the research employs a quantitative approach based on deductive logic. This methodological choice is well-suited for testing predefined hypotheses and establishing statistical relationships. Non-random snowball sampling is employed to reach a broader audience through an online questionnaire. The data collection process is designed to gather quantitative insights into the research topic. SMART PLS is selected as the software tool for statistical analysis, ensuring the rigor and accuracy of the quantitative findings. This methodological evolution allowed for a triangulated perspective, combining visual data, qualitative insights, and quantitative approach. The multifaceted methodology ensured depth in exploring the various aspects of Iran's image as a tourist destination, reflecting a nuanced and comprehensive approach in the compendium. A brief description of each methodology related to the articles is provided in the next part.

Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design: Qualitative • Sampling method: Purposive sampling • Sample size: 1,270 posts • Data collection method: Social media analysis (Instagram) • Data analysis: Visual and textual content analysis <p>Software and tools: Datawrapper and Nvivo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design: Qualitative • Sampling method: Snowball sampling • Sample size: 60 visitors and non visitors • Data collection method: Semi-structured interviews • Data analysis: Thematic analysis • Software and tools: Nvivo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design: Quantitative • Sampling Method: Convenience sampling • Sample size: 251 tourists • Data collection method: Online questionnaire • Data analysis: PLS-SEM • Software and tools: SmartPLS

Figure 3.1. Research Methodology and Approaches

3.2. Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

In this thesis, we have adopted a flexible and thoughtful approach, utilizing distinct methods for sampling, data collection, and analysis in each article. This tailored strategy is carefully aligned with the unique needs of each research question. We have meticulously selected our participant recruitment techniques, data gathering methods, and analytical procedures to ensure that every step is optimally suited for the particular study at hand. This varied methodological approach has enriched the overall depth and quality of our research, enabling us to attain a more comprehensive understanding of our subject matter.

First Publication: Visual Analysis of Official Instagram Pages

The initial approach involved a visual analysis of Iran's official tourism Instagram pages, focusing on images and captions. The projected image of Iran was defined as images represented by the official Iran tourism Instagram (@MCTH and @VISITIRAN_IR). A sample of 2,301 posts was collected, leading to a refined analysis of 1,270 posts. Inter-rater reliability tests were conducted to ensure coding accuracy. The categorization, involving 14 categories, underwent iterative modifications for precision. The research utilized content analysis and visual content analysis to analyze pictorial materials, drawing on methodologies such as visual content analysis, hashtag analysis, and thematic content analysis. The application of content analysis to photographs involves breaking down images into attributes or categories based on their representations. In this study, each photograph was treated as one unit for content analysis. A classification system comprising 14 categories was developed and refined through discussions to accurately code visual data related to Iran's destination image.

To ensure reliability, two coders independently classified the images, achieving inter-rater reliability exceeding 90% for all categories. The geographical distribution of Iran's Destination Management Organization (DMO) photographs was mapped using extracted location data, visualized using "Datawrapper." The identification of common hashtags involved extracting descriptions from posts, utilizing online tools, and visualizing the data through software.

Additionally, to determine the most engaging images of Iran, the study considered metrics such as Likes and Comments. The number of Likes and Comments for each shared photo served as an



indicator of engagement rate, helping recognize attractions of interest to potential tourists. Dunham (2014) emphasizes that Likes and Comments are key metrics for evaluating engagement rate and assist DMOs in identifying the most captivating attractions from the perspective of potential tourists.

Second Publication: In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

The research adopted an exploratory approach, employing in-depth semi-structured interviews for data collection. The interview guide underwent development through a literature review and a pilot study, ensuring its effectiveness. Four broad themes were prioritized to address research objectives, centering on perceptions of Iran as a sanctioned destination, the impact of sanctions on travel decisions, perceptions of travel risk, and the influence of sanctions on the intention to visit and recommend Iran. Follow-up questions were utilized to extract deeper insights (see Appendix 1. for details).

The interviews persisted until data saturation was achieved after 60 interviews (see Appendix 2. for details), conducted in English by the lead author. In the context of our study, data saturation ensures the rigor and validity of our qualitative research, affirming that we have exhaustively explored the subject matter and achieved informational completeness in our investigation.

Content analysis, guided by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), open coding, and latent content analysis, was applied using NVivo software. The sample included European tourists, both those with and without prior experience visiting Iran. Interviewees were recruited through recommendations, snowball sampling, and predefined criteria. The interviews, lasting 40–60 minutes, were recorded with consent and conducted via Skype and Zoom platforms.

Third Publication: Online Survey via Google Docs

The research framework comprises six categories of relationships. The proposed framework integrates all hypotheses associated with two constructs, which were independently examined in previous works. The research, conducted from October 2021 to February 2022, utilized an online survey (Google Docs) targeting potential tourists. Respondents were invited through Facebook



pages of American citizens' groups, employing a non-random snowball sampling technique. The sample size of 251, exceeding the recommended 100 for PLS-SEM analysis, was deemed sufficient for data analysis.

The survey instrument included eight main sections measuring key constructs: (a) demographic information, (b) animosity, (c) tourism destination image, (d) attitude of tourists, (e) perceived risk of terror, (f) social norms, and (g) behavioural intentions. The animosity construct consisted of 15 items, covering historical, social, political, military, and religious animosity, along with three items for overall animosity. Destination image scales included cognitive, affective, and overall evaluation components. Risk perception, SNI, boycott intention, and tourist attitude were also assessed with adapted scales. A 7-point Likert-type scale was used for all statements.

A pilot test involving 45 questionnaires was conducted to ensure the survey's comprehensiveness, reliability, and clarity. Feedback led to modifications, including the omission of one tourist attitude statement and two animosity statements deemed unclear or redundant. The study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the data and test the proposed hypotheses.

3.3. Part One Summary

Part One provides a detailed overview of the thesis journey, covering key aspects such as the theoretical background, research problem, research objectives, research questions, and methodology. The chapter begins with the research problem, shedding light on the specific issues the study aims to address. Clear research objectives are then presented, offering a roadmap for the study's goals. Corresponding research questions are formulated, guiding the inquiry process and steering the focus toward the identified objectives. Following that, the chapter explores existing knowledge on the subject through a review of relevant literature. This helps to establish the theoretical background for the study.

The chapter proceeds to discuss the chosen methodology, outlining the approach and methods used to collect and analyze data. This includes details on research design, sampling techniques, and data analysis methods, providing a transparent view of the practical steps taken in the research process. In summary, Chapter Two serves as a foundational chapter that sets the stage for the subsequent phases of the study.



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PART TWO: DOCTORAL PUBLICATIONS

In this section of the thesis, we delve into three interconnected papers that have already been published, each contributing to the overarching theme of the destination image of Iran. Indeed, these three papers constitute a cohesive body of work that significantly contributes to the field of tourism development in Iran.

The interplay between these publications demonstrates a thoughtful progression of ideas, methodologies, and findings, reflecting the iterative nature of scientific inquiry.

The content of this chapter is an identical copy of the journal article cited above.



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CHAPTER FOUR: PUBLICATION ONE

Paper Title: ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTED IMAGE OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS ON PHOTOGRAPHS: THE CASE OF IRAN ON INSTAGRAM

Authors: Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji, Fernando Almeida Garcia, Pere Mercadé-Melé

Journal: Anatolia (An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research)

Publisher: Routledge

Published online: 13 Dec 2021

Printed Version: 2023

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Issue: 2

Number of Pages: 19

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.2001665>



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Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: the case of Iran on Instagram

Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji, Fernando Almeida-García & Pere Mercadé Melé

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Analysis of the projected image of tourism destinations on photographs: the case of Iran on Instagram

Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji ^a, Fernando Almeida-García ^b and Pere Mercadé Melé ^c

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the representative characteristics of the projected image of Iran, a destination largely neglected in the tourism literature. The projected image was obtained through an analysis of shared photographs and content on Instagram. To that end, we selected two official pages of the Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft on Instagram. To identify the key features of Iran's projected image, the authors classified photographs into 14 groups, determined the geographical distribution of shared pictures, and applied hashtag visualization in order to ascertain the most engaging posts. The findings of the study show that while most tourists travelling to Iran are religious tourists, the leading attribute of Iran's projected image relies on its rich history and landscapes.

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Received 8 May 2021
Accepted 30 October 2021

KEYWORDS

Destination image; projected image; pictorial analysis; visual platforms; Iran





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CHAPTER FIVE: PUBLICATION TWO

Paper Title: TOURISTS' PERCEIVED DESTINATION IMAGE AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS TOWARDS A SANCTIONED DESTINATION: COMPARING VISITORS AND NON-VISITORS

Authors: Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji, Fernando Almeida Garcia, Pere Mercadé-Melé

Journal: Tourism Management Perspectives

Publisher: Elsevier

Available online: 15 December 2022

Printed version: Year: 2023

Volume: 45

Number of Pages: 9

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.101062>



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Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioral intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors

Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji^a  , Fernando Almeida Garcia^b, Pere Mercadé-Melé^c

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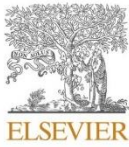
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Highlights

- Tourist perception of a sanctioned destination is overlooked in the extant literature on tourism and crisis.
- First study that has compared visitor and non-visitor perceptions of a destination to which sanctions are applied.
- Impacts of sanctions on destination image, perceived risk, and behavioral intention are investigated.
- Sanctions damage non-visitors' image of the targeted country in cognitive, affective, and conative components.

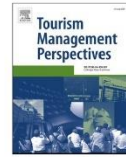




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Tourists' perceived destination image and behavioral intentions towards a sanctioned destination: Comparing visitors and non-visitors

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Keywords:

Sanctions
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Iran

ABSTRACT

Drawing on a qualitative study, this study aims to provide an improved understanding of how tourists perceive a sanctioned destination's image and how sanction-induced crises influence tourists' behavioral intentions. To do so, this study employed semi-structured interviews with 30 individuals each with and without prior experience visiting Iran. The findings revealed that sanctions influence affective and cognitive images and enhance tourist risk perceptions, including financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. Furthermore, a positive post-trip evaluation was found to play a significant role in further behavioral intention, thereby enhancing destination image. Overall, this study enriches the literature on tourism and crises by focusing on visitors' and non-visitors' perceptions of a sanctioned destination and their subsequent behavioral intents. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are provided in the conclusion.



CHAPTER SIX: PUBLICATION THREE

Paper Title: HOW TOURISTS' ANIMOSITY LEADS TO TRAVEL BOYCOTT DURING A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP

Authors: Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji, Fernando Almeida Garcia, Pere Mercadé-Melé

Journal: Tourism Recreation Research

Publisher: Taylor & Francis Group

Available online: 03 Oct 2022

Number of Pages: 19

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2022.2124023>

How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship

Abolfazl Siyamiyan Gorji, Fernando Almeida Garcia & Pere Mercadé-Melé

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How tourists' animosity leads to travel boycott during a tumultuous relationship

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand tourist behavioural intentions towards a destination when the tourism-generating market (US) and the destination country (Iran) are engaged in ongoing political tensions. This study has also attempted to understand how social norms, animosity, destination image, tourists' perceptions of travel risk and tourist attitude towards a given destination influence tourist boycott intentions in the light of a traditional enmity between both countries. Evidence from 251 respondents indicates the positive and negative impact of these constructs on travel boycott intentions. Overall, this study extends the literature on tourism behaviour by focusing on relatively overlooked concepts such as susceptibility to normative influence and animosity. Theoretical and practical implications of the study have been provided in the conclusions section.

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KEYWORDS

Animosity; susceptibility to normative influence; destination image; boycott intentions; Iran; USA



PART THREE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section of the thesis, we succinctly outlined the key findings and contributions of the research. This section serves as a culmination of the study, offering a comprehensive overview of the results in relation to the research objectives. Additionally, this part highlights the implications of the findings for the academic field and practical applications, providing a valuable synthesis of the entire thesis.

Part Three includes two chapters. In Chapter Seven, we discuss the main findings, summarize the results, and explore the theoretical and managerial implications of the study. Chapter Eight is dedicated to providing all references and supplementary materials.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

7.1. Conclusions

Iran's tourism industry, despite boasting an abundant wealth of natural and cultural assets, underwent abrupt changes in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution, leading to the under exploitation of many of these assets from a tourism perspective. Prior to the revolution, Iran held the status of a major tourist destination in the Middle East. However, the number of tourists sharply declined following the 1979 revolution and its subsequent structural and geopolitical changes. Additionally, Iran's destination image has been significantly impacted by various factors, including the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), often referred to as "the Sacred Defense" in Iran, and the longstanding nuclear energy dispute, categorizing the country as a threat and an "axis of evil." Nevertheless, in recent years, Iran's tourism industry has exhibited signs of recovery, with an increasing number of tourists visiting the country.

Based on, this doctoral thesis focused on three pivotal objectives: first, the examination of Iran's projected destination image, analyzed through the lens of official Iran tourism social media pages on Instagram; second, the exploration of perceived images held by actual and potential tourists towards a sanctioned destination; and third, the investigation into the impact of animosity on the destination image and subsequent behavioural intentions of tourists towards the targeted country. The comprehensive analysis conducted in this compendium thesis, supported by published papers, successfully achieved the outlined objectives. We have also addressed all questions raised during our exploration. Thus, the results obtained through publications highlighted the significance of social media, particularly Instagram, as a tool for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) in the tourism industry.

The findings reveal that although the majority of tourists traveling to Iran are religious tourists,



the primary attributes shaping Iran's projected image are its rich history and landscapes. Consequently, Iran's official pages strive to present the country as a destination for cultural tourism rather than focusing solely on religious activities (RO 1).

The photographs predominantly showcase architecture and heritage sites, followed by nature and landscapes. The study suggests that the DMO aims to target cultural and heritage tourism markets to attract international visitors. The geographical distribution of the shared pictures encompasses all 31 provinces of Iran, with a higher concentration in Tehran, Isfahan, Fars, and Yazd. These provinces, which are known as the "classic route" or "golden route", are popular tourist destinations owing to their World Heritage Sites and cultural highlights (RO 2). In addition, the specified categories encompass all essential features of the image of Iran, classified into the following 14 groups: 1) Nature and Landscape, 2) People, 3) Religious Building/Object, 4) Way of Life, 5) Architecture and Heritage Site, 6) Leisure Activities, 7) Traditional Object, 8) Rituals & Festivals, 9) Transport & Infrastructure, 10) Place, 11) Space, 12) Season, 13) Wildlife, and 14) Food.

The analysis of hashtags used by the official pages indicates that keywords related to culture, nature, architecture, history, and art are frequently employed to promote Iran as a tourism destination. These keywords aim to evoke positive feelings associated with travel and attract potential tourists (RO 3). Additionally, the most appealing images for potential tourists were those depicting nature and landscape, as well as heritage categories (RO 4).

Once the attributes of Iran's projected destination image and its classification have been identified, we have shifted our focus to the perception of the destination image of the country and the role of sanctions on tourist behavioral intentions. Our study highlighted the significant impact of sanctions on tourists' perceptions toward the targeted country. The research findings suggest that sanctions have an impact on the destination image and perceived risk of Iran, affecting both visitors and non-visitors. Furthermore, sanctions impact the cognitive and affective images of Iran (RO 5). Non-visitors perceive Iran as an unsafe destination for Westerners, influenced by the negative image created by sanctions. They express concerns about the Iranian government's hostile attitude towards Western citizens and the potential view of Western tourists as interlopers or spies. This perception of uncertainty and worry about Iran affects their overall perception of the destination.

However, visitors who have firsthand experience in Iran hold more positive perceptions of the destination. They describe Iran as having hospitable and welcoming people, and they appreciate the quality of infrastructure, such as modern buildings, shopping malls, transportation systems, and comfortable accommodations (RO 6). Their positive experiences and evaluations contribute to a more favorable behavioural intention to visit Iran and recommend it as a tourist destination. These findings highlight how tourists' perceptions can change after visiting a destination (RO 7). Several studies highlight that the destination image can change with the visit (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Gartner & Hunt, 1987).

Sanctions also enhance various types of perceived risks, including financial, satisfaction, terrorism and war, political, crime, security, and functional/performance risks. Non-visitors, in particular, express more negative perceptions of Iran and perceive a high risk of visiting the country. They associate sanctions with anti-Western sentiments, negative news, bilateral conflict, terrorism, and personal safety concerns, which deter them from considering Iran as a tourist destination (RO 8).

Moreover, in a tumultuous relationship, several factors influence tourist boycott intentions. We found that animosity is influenced by factors such as military acts, politics, social and historical background of the destination country. In addition, animosity significantly impacts tourists' travel boycott intentions in the context of ongoing political tensions between the tourism market and the targeted destination. Indeed, the level of animosity, stemming from geopolitical issues or conflicts, can substantially shape tourists' decisions regarding whether to engage with or abstain from visiting the targeted destination. (RO 9). Social norms and animosity have both positive and negative effects on travel boycott intentions. Subjective norms do not have a significant impact on animosity and boycott intentions. This suggests that individuals' perceptions of social expectations and pressures may not be strong determinants in shaping their feelings of animosity or their inclinations toward boycotting in an individualistic culture such as the USA. The absence of a substantial impact from subjective norms underscores the need to explore other factors and dynamics that play a more prominent role in influencing individuals' attitudes and behavioral intentions in the context of animosity and potential boycotts. Overall animosity has a significant impact on perceived risk and boycott intentions. Tourists' attitudes towards a destination are influenced by overall animosity, risk perception, and overall image. Notably, the perception of risk is significantly influenced by

the level of animosity. In this context, and the riskier a country is perceived to be, the more likely it is to be boycotted. This interconnected relationship among animosity, risk perception, and overall image underscores the complexity of tourists' decision-making processes. It highlights the importance of addressing and managing factors such as animosity and perceived risk to enhance the overall image of a destination and promote a positive attitude among potential visitors. (RO 10). The study contributes to the literature on tourism behaviour by focusing on overlooked concepts such as susceptibility to normative influence and animosity.

7.2. Theoretical Implications of the Research

This series of studies makes several significant theoretical implications to the existing literature on destination image, tourist behavior, and risk perception in the context of sanctioned destinations. Firstly, the exploration of the projected image of Iran addresses a significant gap in the literature, explored a destination that has been largely overlooked in previous studies. Through a thorough analysis of visual content on Instagram, the study illuminates the key attributes shaping Iran's projected image as a tourism destination. Secondly, we have also introduced a comprehensive category that can be used for analyzing the projected images of a country, particularly in the context of Muslim or religious destinations. Thirdly, the examination of destination image formation extends beyond traditional channels, with a focus on the role of photo-sharing platforms such as Instagram. The study also recommends considering cultural nuances and encouraging user-generated content to enhance engagement with potential tourists.

Moving forward, the study on tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions towards a sanctioned destination deepens our understanding of the psychological impacts of sanctions on the tourism sector of the target country. By focusing on the effects on destination reputation and risk perception, the research broadens the scope of existing studies on destination image. Notably, the comparison between non-visitors and visitors provides a comprehensive perspective, shedding light on the distinctive impacts of sanctions on tourism destinations. The existing literature on tourism and crisis management has predominantly focused on the perspectives of visitors, overlooking the crucial dimension of understanding how non-visitors perceive and interpret destinations under sanctions. This contribution is significant as it provides a more comprehensive



and balanced insight into the overall image of a sanctioned destination.

Indeed, by assessing the impact of sanctions on the destination image targeted country, this study shed light on how political and economic sanctions shape the perception of a country as a tourist destination. It has provided insights into the interplay between geopolitical factors and destination image formation, expanding the understanding of the external factors that influence destination image beyond the DMOs control.

Moreover, comparing the perceived destination image and behavioral intentions between visitors and non-visitors to a sanctioned destination contributes to the literature on destination image formation and decision-making processes. This comparison has revealed how direct experience with a sanctioned destination influences perceptions and intentions, potentially challenging or reinforcing existing stereotypes and preconceptions.

In addition, investigating the role of positive post-trip evaluations in shaping tourists' future intentions towards a sanctioned destination contributes to the literature on tourist behavior and loyalty. It provided insights into the factors that influence repeat visitation and positive word-of-mouth for destinations facing geopolitical challenges, expanding the understanding of loyalty formation in unique contexts.

Besides, examining how sanctions influence tourists' risk perceptions when visiting a sanctioned destination has enriched the literature surrounding on risk perception and tourist decision-making. This study revealed the specific risks associated with sanctioned destinations and how tourists weigh these risks against potential benefits, contributing to a deeper understanding of risk perception in tourism.

In addition, the study contributes to the literature by adopting a qualitative approach, which provides a deeper understanding and a more holistic insight into tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions. This is significant as previous research on destination image has predominantly been quantitative in nature, and there is a notable absence of qualitative research in this area.

Lastly, the study on social norms, animosity, and tourist behaviour in the context of the US-Iran relationship contributes by integrating various constructs that have been independently examined in previous works into a comprehensive framework. Our study also contributes to the literature by



suggesting that the decision to boycott a particular destination is influenced by psychological factors such as risk perception, animosity, and tourist attitude during international conflicts. The study also identifies the role of subjective norms and their limited impact on animosity and boycott intentions, providing insights into the factors that influence tourist decision-making processes. We also support the idea that potential tourists from individualistic cultures, such as the US, are less susceptible to being influenced by social norms in choosing their destinations compared to those from collectivistic cultures. In individualistic cultures, tourists' behaviors are not strongly influenced by others, and their desires originate from within themselves. The study also provides additional evidence that in situations where tourists exhibit significant hostility towards a holiday destination, the affective component plays a more influential role in shaping the overall image of the destination. These factors are reliable predictors of travel boycott intentions.

7.3. Managerial Implications of the Research

Managerially, the findings of the study have practical implications for destination marketers and policymakers. Within the domain of marketing strategies, the results suggest that destination marketing organizations (DMOs) should customize their visual media content strategies to engage potential tourists and highlight the unique characteristics of the destination. The study also recommends taking into account cultural nuances and promoting user-generated content to enhance engagement with potential tourists. Additionally, DMOs are advised to manage and differentiate their visual media content strategies, engaging with potential tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds and portraying a positive and comprehensive image of Iran as a tourism destination.

The study also proposes that Iran's national tourism administration reconsider and revise its marketing strategies to enhance the country's image. Promotional campaigns addressing safety and security issues in Iran may prove effective in attracting potential tourists. Furthermore, the study suggests that destination stakeholders, government agencies, and tourism organizations should proactively manage boycott intentions. This involves addressing the underlying causes of animosity, promoting a positive destination image, and implementing effective risk management strategies. Understanding the factors influencing tourists' boycott intentions enables destination



marketers and policymakers to design targeted campaigns and initiatives to mitigate the negative impact of animosity and promote tourism.

Highlighting the critical nature of effective destination image management, especially in the context of a sanctioned destination, the study emphasizes efforts to counteract the negative image resulting from sanctions and promote the positive aspects of the destination. The study advocates a holistic approach, considering animosity and risk perception jointly in marketing and communication strategies to prevent potential boycott movements.

The research suggests that active collaboration and participation in international tourism exhibitions play a pivotal role in promoting Iran as a desirable tourist destination. This suggests that engaging with the global tourism community through such exhibitions contributes significantly to enhancing the visibility and attractiveness of Iran as a place of interest for international travelers. Close partnerships enable destination marketing organizations to provide accurate information, training, and support to effectively portray Iran as a safe and attractive destination. Furthermore, as the study underscores the significance of a positive post-trip evaluation in enhancing tourists' behavioural intentions and improving the destination image, providing a positive experience for visitors can contribute to positive word-of-mouth and recommendations.

Acknowledging the varying perspectives of different age groups, the study emphasizes the need for targeted marketing strategies based on visitor segmentation. Lastly, the research enriches the understanding of how sanctions impact tourists' perceptions and intentions, providing valuable insights for destinations facing geopolitical crises. This knowledge informs crisis management strategies for effectively navigating challenging situations. In conclusion, these comprehensive managerial implications offer actionable insights for destination marketers and policymakers to refine their strategies, effectively manage perceptions, and navigate potential challenges, ultimately promoting tourism and shaping positive destination images.

7.4. Research Limitations and Future Directions

However, there are limitations to this study that provide potential avenues for further research. Firstly, the analysis is limited to Instagram as the chosen photo-sharing platform, neglecting other visual platforms such as Pinterest, Facebook, or Flickr. Future research could expand the analysis



to include these platforms and compare the projected image across different visual media. In addition, conducting comparative studies across different visual platforms would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the projected image of Iran and its variations across different media. This would enable DMOs to develop integrated visual media strategies to effectively promote the destination.

The study suggests the use of alternative methodological approaches, such as the stimulus-organism-response model or automatic categorization of photographs, for future research. Implementing these approaches could enhance the analysis and provide deeper insights into the impact of the projected image on tourist behaviour. Additionally, future research could explore the impact of the projected image on tourist behaviour and outcomes such as visitation, revisit intention, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and engagement. Understanding the specific effects of the projected image on these variables would enable DMOs to design targeted marketing campaigns and measure their effectiveness.

Furthermore, incorporating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms could enhance the analysis of visual content and provide more accurate categorization and evaluation of photographs. This would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the projected image and its impact on tourist behaviour.

Regarding the perceived image of Iran as a sanctioned destination, the study conducted interviews with a total of 30 individuals, which may be considered a relatively small sample size. A larger sample size could provide more comprehensive insights and enhance the generalizability of the findings. The study focused on visitors and non-visitors from Spain, Italy, and Germany, which may not represent the perceptions and behavioural intentions of tourists from other countries. The findings may be specific to these particular nationalities and may not be applicable to a broader range of tourists. As the study used qualitative methods, the findings are based on the subjective perceptions and experiences of the interviewees. Different individuals may have different perspectives and interpretations, which could introduce bias into the results. The study provides a snapshot of tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions at a specific point in time. A longitudinal analysis that tracks changes in perceptions and intentions over time could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of sanctions on destination image. The study

focused on Western tourists' perceptions of Iran as a sanctioned destination. Cultural factors and individual differences within the Western tourist population may influence their perceptions and behavioural intentions differently. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to tourists from other cultural backgrounds. As the current study didn't consider the motivation of tourists in visiting a politically sensitive environment, future research can also explore how the motivations for travel to politically sensitive areas align with or diverge from existing theories on tourist motivation, which typically emphasize factors such as escapism, relaxation, and fun. Additionally, comparing the destination image of sanctioned countries with similar destinations that have not been subjected to sanctions can help control for extraneous variables. This approach allows researchers to identify whether observed differences in destination image are likely attributable to the sanctions or to other factors.

Moreover, investigating how animosity and social norms play a role in destination image and boycotting a destination was conducted in a specific setting, and generalization to other contexts should be approached with caution. Future studies should retest the suggested framework in different circumstances, such as ongoing conflicts between other countries. Furthermore, the data were acquired via an online platform, which may introduce biases in the sample's demographic profiles. Future studies should employ a variety of data collection approaches, including personal distribution of surveys and interviews, to ensure a more diverse sample. Lastly, the study focused on social norms and animosity impacts on potential tourists, but other factors such as national attachment and ethnocentrism could be addressed in future studies. Overall, future research could investigate boycott actions, purposes, motivation, and participation, as well as the effects of boycotts on other tourist markets and cultures.



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CHAPTER EIGHT: REFERENCES AND SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

This chapter serves as a comprehensive repository where readers can access all the references used in this thesis and three published papers, along with supplementary data.



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8.2. Appendices

8.2.1. Chapter Six Appendices

APPENDIX 1:

Interview protocol

The interviewer (the lead author) welcomed participants and introduced the objectives of the research and interview procedure. The list of questions that were used as semi-structured protocols for the interviews are as follows:

Opening/Introduction

May I ask whether you have ever visited Iran? If yes, when did you visit? How long did you stay?

Part 1: Central questions

- How do you perceive Iran's destination image as a sanctioned destination?
- How do you personally perceive the effects of sanctions on your decision to visit Iran as a holiday destination?
- Do you feel it is dangerous to travel to a sanctioned destination?
- How have sanctions affected your intention to visit Iran and to recommend it as a tourist destination?

Part 2: Follow-up questions

- What reasons and factors make you have such perceptions?
- Could you please explain to me in detail your experiences regarding these perceptions?
- What have you seen and experienced? Would you like to give an example?
- What has impressed you most?
- Could you please tell me about your reasons for having such perceptions?
- How would you describe your emotions and feelings about Iran as a place to visit or a tourist destination subjected to sanctions? Why did you have that feeling? Can you give me more details?
- Will you visit/revisit Iran in the near future? Will you recommend family/friends and people in general to visit Iran? Why? Why not?

Part 3: Closing questions

Any concluding thoughts?

Note: Questions were never asked in a sequential way. The researcher followed the respondents' lead to discuss any of the images they perceive/experience.

Part 4: Demographic Questions:

- 1) What is your gender?
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) What is your highest degree?
- 4) What is your marital status?
- 5) What is your nationality?
- 6) What is your occupation?

Appendix 2: Demographic profile of respondents (visitors and non-visitors)

Code	Gender	Age	Education	Marital Status	Nationality	Visitor/ Non-visitor	Occupation
1	Male	53	Master	Married	Spanish	Visitor	Government employee
2	Male	37	PhD	Single	Spanish	visitor	Private sector employees
3	Male	64	PhD	Married	Spanish	Visitor	Retired
4	Male	/4	Master	Married	Spanish	visitor	Self-Employed
5	Female	50	Master	Married	Spanish	visitor	Government employee
6	Female	48	Bachelor	Married	Spanish	visitor	Government employee
7	Male	46	Bachelor	Married	Spanish	visitor	Private sector employees
8	Female	38	Master	Single	Spanish	visitor	Self-Employed
9	Male	51	Bachelor	Married	Spanish	visitor	Self-Employed
10	Male	55	Master	Married	Spanish	visitor	Private sector employees
11	Female	36	Master	Single	Germany	visitor	Private sector employees
12	Female	49	PhD	Married	Germany	visitor	Government employee
13	Male	52	Bachelor	Married	Germany	visitor	Self-Employed
14	Male	62	PhD	Married	Germany	visitor	Retired
15	Male	35	Bachelor	Single	Germany	visitor	Government employee
16	Female	44	Master	Married	Germany	visitor	Self-Employed
17	Female	42	Master	Married	Germany	visitor	Government employee
18	Female	49	Bachelor	Single	Germany	visitor	Other
19	Male	64	PhD	Married	Germany	visitor	Retired
20	Female	44	Bachelor	Married	Germany	visitor	Self-Employed
21	Female	48	Master	Married	Italian	visitor	Retired
22	Female	31	Master	Single	Italian	visitor	Private sector employees
23	Male	45	Bachelor	Married	Italian	visitor	Other
24	Male	41	PhD	Single	Italian	visitor	Private sector employees
25	Male	47	Master	Married	Italian	visitor	Self-Employed
26	Male	49	Bachelor	Married	Italian	visitor	Self-Employed
27	Female	41	Master	Married	Italian	visitor	Government employee
28	Female	48	Bachelor	Married	Italian	visitor	Self-Employed
29	Female	62	Master	Single	Italian	visitor	Retired
30	Male	64	Bachelor	Married	Italian	visitor	Retired
31	Female	36	PhD	Single	Spanish	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
32	Male	48	Master	Married	Spanish	Non-visitor	Government employee
33	Female	40	Master	Married	Spanish	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
34	Male	26	Bachelor	Single	Spanish	Non-visitor	Other
35	Male	35	Bachelor	Single	Spanish	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
36	Male	28	PhD	Married	Spanish	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
37	Female	30	Master	Single	Spanish	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
38	Female	41	Bachelor	Married	Spanish	Non-visitor	Government employee
39	Male	33	Master	Single	Spanish	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
40	Female	43	Other	Married	Spanish	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
41	Male	48	PhD	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Other
42	Male	31	Master	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
43	Female	48	Bachelor	Married	Germany	Non-visitor	Government employee
44	Female	29	Bachelor	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
45	Male	48	PhD	Married	Germany	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
46	Male	36	Master	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Other
47	Female	39	Bachelor	Married	Germany	Non-visitor	Government employee

48	Male	48	Bachelor	Married	Germany	Non-visitor	Private sector employees
49	Male	31	Master	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
50	Male	36	Bachelor	Single	Germany	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
51	Male	49	Bachelor	Married	Italian	Non-visitor	Government employee
52	Male	48	Master	Married	Italian	Non-visitor	Other
53	Male	41	PhD	Single	Italian	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
54	Female	30	Master	Single	Italian	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
55	Female	42	Bachelor	Married	Italian	Non-visitor	Other
56	Male	34	Master	Single	Italian	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
57	Male	29	Other	Single	Italian	Non-visitor	Other
58	Female	33	Master	Single	Italian	Non-visitor	Self-Employed
59	Female	43	Master	Married	Italian	Non-visitor	Government employee
60	Female	36	Master	Married	Italian	Non-visitor	Other

8.2.2. Chapter Seven Appendices

Appendix 3. Adapted items

Susceptibility to normative influence (After Bearden et al., 1989; Lee & Chon, 2021)

I achieve a sense of belonging by visiting the same destinations (and countries) they (people who are important to me) visit.
It is important that others like the country/destination I visit
I like to know what destinations make good impressions on others.

Social animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018)

I dislike the mentality of the people of Iran
I feel that people in Iran are hostile toward my country.
I dislike that people from Iran criticize my country's policies
My experiences with people from Iran are negative

Political Animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018)

I dislike the policies of the government from Iran
I dislike the political system in Iran
I dislike Iran because it does not respect human rights
I dislike Iran because it does not respect women's rights.

Religious animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018)

Iran does not respect other religions.
I dislike the religious system in Iran

Historic animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018)

I dislike Iran because of past historical events
I dislike Iran because of its history of oppressing other countries.

Military animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018)

I believe that Iran poses a huge military threat
I dislike this country's involvement in wars and conflicts.
I dislike the military operations in this country

Overall animosity (After Yang et al., 2015; Campo & Alvarez, 2017; 2019; Alvarez et al., 2020; Alvarez & Campo, 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007)

In general, I dislike Iran.
In general, I have negative feelings toward this country.
I feel resentful to Iran.

Cognitive Destination image (Campo & Alvarez, 2010)

I believe Iran is a well-known tourism destination with a good reputation.
I believe that Iran offers good value tourism services (quality/price)
Iran has important touristic and cultural attractions.
I believe Iran offers interesting leisure and entertainment activities

Affective Image (Campo & Alvarez, 2010)

Iran as a tourist destination is very unpleasant/ very pleasant

Iran as a tourist destination is stressful/relaxing

Iran as a tourist destination is anxiety/serenity

Overall image (Campo & Alvarez, 2010)

My overall image of this country as a tourist destination is entirely negative/entirely positive

My overall image of this country as a tourist destination is very non-satisfactory/very satisfactory

Tourist attitude (After Jalilvand et al., 2012; Gamble et al., 2009; Huang & Hsu, 2009)

visiting Iran would be Very good/Very bad

visiting Iran would be Very worthless/ Very valuable

visiting Iran would be would be Very unbeneficial/ Very beneficial

Tourist risk Perception (After Fuchs et al., 2013; Fuchs & Reichel, 2006)

The probability of being injured in a terrorist attack in Iran is high

My family and friends at home will worry about my safety during my stay in Iran

My government has issued travel warnings for Iran because of the risk of terrorist attacks

Iran is more dangerous in terms of terror risk than the area I live in

The international media reports a high level of terror risk in Iran

Boycott intentions (After Wang et al., 2012; Shoham et al., 2006; Klein et al., 1998)

I will visit Iran in the near future

I will buy Iran tour packages in the future

I would choose this country (Iran) for my next holiday



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