

Report on MINOR WRIRITE for PhD Thesis

By

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First of all, I would like to thank all examiners for spending time on my thesis and for their valuable comments which resulted in enriching my research.

This report is divided to three parts according to the examiner's comments with the new materials that are added to the thesis at the end.

Part one

Concerning the comments provided by Professor Cooper I did changes below

- The materials on Iranian Tourism Organization are moved back to chapter 4, (Pp: 70-73). It is in harmony now with the rest of information at that section.
- Research question and objectives are reviewed in chapter7 explaining how the thesis met the objective and trying to do the thesis justice.
- The position of Sakura Travel Company in this research is clarified as well as the author's relationship with the company by materials added in P 193
- Time period confusion on Pages 154-155 and the tense problem on Pp 171-172 are corrected.
- The references are checked against the bibliography to ensure the consistency
- The total text is checked again and editing is done to avoid repetitions and render a consistent format

Part two

The following are done concerning the suggestions made by Professor Eades

- The references are checked against the bibliography

- The text is reviewed in order to avoid repetitions, for instance the footnote on p. 168 is deleted in is deleted.

- The new material in Chapter 7 is moved back to chapter 4 integrated with other materials about Iranian tourism industry.

- New information about Iranian tourism industry (ecotourism) is added to chapter 4 Pp: 68-69 as well as discussion of Kish island.

Part Three

The revisions recommended by Professor Bruce are done as mentioned bellow:

- New materials are added to the section on Cultural Tourism Pp: 16-17 to enhance the discussion on Cultural tourism. For that, I used Richards. 2007, as one of the most updated sources which collected literature on cultural tourism.

- Research objectives are reviewed and addressed in Chapter 7 Pp: 213~215

- Research limitations are outlined in chapter 1 Pp: 9-10

- The justification of methods adopted for this research is added to the section on research methodology p.5

New Materials which is added to the new edited copy of thesis

Enhancing Cultural Tourism

(Pp: 16-17)

Richards (2007) argues that the current field of cultural tourism is increasingly complex. Complexity is being added by the process of globalization and localization, the rapidly changing cultural field, and the changes in the nature of tourism demand. Tourism literature contains both optimistic and pessimistic approaches toward the future of cultural tourism. Whether one adopts a pessimistic or an optimistic view of cultural tourism depends to a large extent on one's position. In the optimistic point of view cultural and heritage tourism can be means for learning and exploring environments and hopefully awakening interest in other cultures as well. However, in many cases the cultural pessimist looks at changes at cultural products, bemoaning the loss of "authentic" culture. Therefore, in terms of research on cultural tourism we should be shifting our attention away from concepts of culture as a collection of products toward a more fluid concept of cultural acquisition as a process which the tourist and the host community can modify as appropriate.

More information on Iranian tourist industry

(Pp 68-69)

Ecotourism is very popular among domestic tourists in Iran, resulting in some five

million travellers each year. One of the highest seasons for ecotourism in Iran is in the second half of March at the time of Persian New Year holidays. Aside from the rich cultural heritage available, Iran offers a wide array of natural attractions and scenery as well as undeveloped rural areas which could present a considerable opportunity for the development of ecotourism in the country. Iran exceeds most of its neighbours in terms of natural attractions including 20 lagoons, 150 protected regions, national parks, wildlife shelters as well as jungle territory (Euromonitor 2007). It is therefore likely to be able to capitalise on these during the coming years to the interest of Japanese tourists.

Among the major Iranian tourist resorts is Kish island located in the southern Province of Iran, "Hormozgan". Due to its status as a free trade zone, the island is a shopping tourist resort which attracts more than a million domestic tourists annually. The island was planned mainly for touristic purposes but the development stopped by the time of the Islamic revolution. Government attempts to develop Kish as an industrial free zone to attract foreign investment and promote Iran's non-oil exports failed during the 1990s and in the process Kish shifted back to its original purpose of tourism. Kish island at present hosts numerous working tourists from the Arab states of the Middle East especially from the UAE who have to stay a month away from their working place in order to change their visa (Vafadari, 2001). However Kish Island is not usually included in Japanese travel plans to Iran.

Research limitations

(Pp 9-10)

Lack of research and reliable academic work on Iran's tourism industry in general and especially on Japan-Iran tourism relations has meant that this thesis must break new ground. In particular the number, quality and nature of available data on different sectors of Iranian tourism industry (such as transportation, accommodation and even the number of international and domestic tourist in Iran) does not provide clear and solid guidance to the level of analysis desired.

The fact that there is limited number and dispersion of Japanese tourists to Iran means that there is an image problem and unfamiliarity with Iran as a tourist destination among Japanese which resulted in a lack of interest to take part in this research from Japanese tourists and travel agencies.

In addition, the monopolistic nature of the tourism business between Iran and Japan and a lack of clear information about the operation of Iranian tour operators and their Japanese counterparts meant that the author has to rely on Sakura Travel Agency and Japan-Iran cultural association for made of information analysed below.

The absence of a national tourism plan in Iran for about two decades and the very young Tourism Master Plan which is to be implemented currently are contributed to a lack of literature in the Iranian context of the performance of the Iranian tourism industry both within the country and in relation to overseas travel. This was not made earlier by the fact that there is lack of courses on the tourism industry in Iranian higher education

institutes and universities, which in other markets can provide at least research on tourism.

Justification of Methods

(P. 5)

There was therefore a need to adopt a methodology for this thesis to link qualitative and quantitative data as well as qualitative observations of the relationships between culture, tourism and politics. In order to do this consumer surveys were adopted to clarify the existing situation of Iran as a tourist destination in present-day Japan without which one can not expect to develop a special marketing plan to promote Iranian tourism in Japan.

The fact that only small number of Japanese tourists with special interests in culture and ecotourism may visit Iran has also lent a monopolistic nature to the tourism business between Iran and Japan. Therefore, personal relations and interaction with Iranian travel agencies and their Japanese counterparts, and the use of recommendations, were adopted by the author as the best method for conducting both quantitative and qualitative research activities in this area. The methodologies are more fully explained bellow.

The role of Sakura Travel in the thesis

(P.193)

It was often the case in the earlier stages of conducting this research that the author faced difficulties or some times found it impossible to interact with Japanese society in order to collect data both in delivering questionnaires and through interviewing people. Unfamiliarity with Iran as a destination among Japanese people was also a fact or that made this research more difficult without the help of a Japanese third party such as a travel agency. Therefore, the role of the travel agency here was to facilitate the author's access to the sources of data and to provide recommendations where needed. Furthermore, enhancing the feasibility and efficiency of research activities was gained by interaction between the author and Sakura Travel Agency however the data was collected and processed by the author himself.

Review of the Research Objectives

(Pp: 213~215)

This section recapitulates and reviews the objectives of this thesis as outlined in chapter 1. One of the main tasks of this research was to define the reasons for the collapse of the Iranian tourism industry after the Islamic revolution of 1979. While political confliction and revolution played a negative role in bringing safety and security concerns about the destination, it was the long Iraq-Iran war that stared a few months after the revolution that aggravated this situation. On the one hand, the local tourism industry had no priority for Iran during war time. On the other hand, international tourists were not expected to visit the Iranian cities at that time which could be hit by Iraqi missiles.

Chapter 5 shows that the image of war is still in Japanese people's mind when they think about Iran even though two decades has passed from the end of Iran-Iraq war. Although this is now often confused with the Iraq war of 2003 as we have seen.

To explain the role of Iran's international relations in tourism promotion is also one of the objectives of this thesis. Chapter 4 discussed how the symbolic relations of Iran and America before the Islamic Revolution for example gathered a crowd of Americans in Iran, and the reasons they were replaced by Russians during the years after the revolution. It also shows that the matter of Iran- America relations that negatively impacts on Iran's international relations is not limited just between thees two countries but is also found in Iran's relations with the international community. Through the activities of the USA Iran has however experienced relatively more stable relations with Japan which could be due to the natural advantage of Iran as an oil productive country sourcing a considerable share of Japan's energy. Therefore, chapter 4 also refers to the potentials that exist in expanding Iran-Japan relation from Oil business relations to cultural and heritage tourism relations.

To visualize the image of Iran as a tourist destination in present-day Japan and to determine the performance of Iranian tourism authorities in bringing about awareness of Iranian tourist attractions internationally and in Japan were also among the objectives of this thesis and discussed in chapter 5. As the results of the survey study showed that while about one third of Japanese people think there is civil war in Iran, the country represents Persian historical sites for only about 5% of the respondents. The

fact that Iran is misunderstood and lumped together with the Arab states was stressed indirectly when the study showed that half of the respondents didn't know that Iranians do not speak Arabic. The current image of Iran in Japan does not help with promoting Iranian tourism in Japan but an active performance of Iranian tourism authorities to advertise Iranian tourist attractions is yet to be started. Tourism promotion has been limited to participating in few events such as Aichi-Expo, 2005 and JATA, 2007, which are not adequate to counter such influences.

There are only a few travel agencies in Japan which operate Persian tourism due to the limited number of customers in the Japanese travel market for visiting Iran. Chapter 6 also analyzes the nature of these limited tourism relations between Iran and Japan as an objective of this research. It reveals that Iran is still an unfamiliar destination for the majority of Japanese tour operators who do not even dare to recommend it to their customers. Furthermore, tourism from Iran to Japan has been pending since 1992 when the visa waiver program between Iran and Japan was suspended due to the increasing of the number of Iranian working tourists to Japan. Consequently, it is difficult for Iranian tour operators to obtain visas to visit Japanese counterparts in order to market Iran tourism in Japan even if they can afford it.

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