

The Role of Tourism in Iran's Cultural Convergence in the International System (with Emphasis on Tourism Stakeholders)

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Increasing the ability to access large volumes of information and the speed of their transmission to audiences around the world has challenged foreign policy management by governments. Traditional hierarchical models, in the shadow of communication technology, have unwittingly contributed to intricate and uncontrolled networks. In such a situation, one of the drivers of diplomacy, is the tourism. A country that attracts foreign tourists, in addition to economic benefit, can take steps to spread its culture to other countries and thus display its cultural authority. Iran can also use this capability to present the true face of Iran, which has been introduced insecure after the Islamic Revolution, through the use of vast tourism capacity through cultural diplomacy to the world. The question is, what is the role of tourism in the cultural integration of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international arena? The purpose of this study is to examine the role of tourism in cultural diplomacy by using a descriptive-analytical approach and interviewing relevant authorities. In this research, using descriptive-analytical method and interviewing relevant authorities, we have tried to examine the role of tourism in cultural diplomacy. The research findings support the hypothesis that; tourism has a great influence on promoting cultural diplomacy and deepening relations between states and nations, and this has been particularly considered by decision makers in the last decade, and has paid serious attention to macro policies, but this requires strict policy and government support from the private sector in the field of tourism. But the most important problems are in the foreign arena; Including Iranophobia, sanctions and colonialism.

Keywords: tourism, cultural diplomacy, international relations, convergence, stakeholders.

Introduction

In the era of cultural relations and international convergence, the opening of new arenas in cultural relations between nations and the approach to innovative methods and initiatives have become of particular importance. The formation of cultural diplomacy is a continuation of this process and has led to its use as an effective and empowering tool in the field of global equations and promotes the development of relations between governments and the growth of understanding between nations and regional and global Strengthening ties. As cultural diplomacy today is very important in providing long-term interests and national security of any country and has improved the national image, influence and influence in public opinion and the expansion of cultural exchanges and communication in countries (Abolhassan Shirazi, 1396: 10). Therefore, the development of tourism in all areas, both nationally and regionally and internationally, has been considered by government planners and private companies, and many countries have come to the conclusion that order to improve their economic situation, they should take the initiative and try to find a new way (Lotfi, 2005: 60).

The concept of tourism can be studied from different angles and perspectives. Tourism is an activity in which people travel outside their usual place of residence for recreational or economic purposes, provide services and goods to travelers, including expenses paid by visitors or their attendance and it creates such costs. The tourism industry, which is in fact a kind of foreign direct investment within the country, has a lot of development effects so that it is closely related to other industries such as hotel management, transportation and quotes, travel agencies, restaurants, etc. The main function of this industry is to earn foreign exchange income, redistribute income, sell goods and services needed by tourists, create employment and economic prosperity. Meanwhile, non-governmental stakeholders in the field of tourism have great potential to play a role in international relations. What makes NGOs a collection in the service of humanity, apart from generation, gender, race, etc., is the category of public interest of humanity. Today, NGOs are more interested in the fate of human beings than any other state that claims to be in the public interest. In the last fifty years, major changes have taken place in the relations between nations, in the sense of democracy, in the economic situation and in international law, by the efforts of "non-governmental organizations" and "stakeholders". Struggle for the establishment of human rights, humanitarian work, immediate medical assistance, free birth control, respect for women's rights, attention to the treatment of emerging diseases, the right to free health and education, the right to free access to information and news, the right Membership in groups and parties has made considerable progress. All these achievements are not the result of the work of political parties, financial institutions and administrative organizations or unions, but have been achieved by intellectuals with the help of non-governmental organizations and stakeholders. (Salehi and Tohidfam, 1396, 125).

Iran is also one of the countries that have many capabilities in various sectors of tourism. The very important point is that despite the strong presence of the government and its high investment in the tourism industry of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the role of institutions and stakeholders is undeniable. These groups have a direct relationship with tourism and its development, and given that these groups have economic benefits, they are more interested in attracting tourists. Therefore, is essential researching on this issue and identifying these groups and also providing solutions to encourage the private sector to enter tourism policy.

The main question of this article is what role can the tourism industry play in Iran's cultural convergence with countries in the international system? Our hypothesis is based on that tourism is one of the elements of cultural diplomacy; Therefore, this industry can be used in the development and expansion of relations with other countries and as a result, the convergence of more countries.

One of the most important goals of this article is to evaluate and analyze the positive effects of tourism development in Iran in terms of international relations. The issue of tourism in Iran has been criticized and evaluated by experts and those involved in this field, and many times in terms of benefits can be an article or book about the role of this industry in changing the attitude of Iranian and non-Iranian communities towards our country and evaluation of this change of perspective and its effects on the country was discussed. As a result, by examining and evaluating the effects, it is possible to help relevant experts in formulating macro-policies in this field so that they can make good use of this industry as one of the effective components in foreign policy. It is also necessary for this research that; Creating interactive populations (Iran and the world) through sustainable tourism and emphasizing that sustainable tourism and its expansion can have a positive effect on interpersonal interactions and should be seriously pursued in this regard. Failure to pay attention to this huge industry has harmful effects that our country suffers from. Also, one of the necessities of research is to explain the development of tourism from other dimensions such as cultural, social and economic dimensions, its positive impact on the environment and cultural heritage, etc. Because by expressing these effects, the issue can be expressed better and more clearly in terms of international relations.

Research background

Abolhassan Shirazi (2017) discusses the role of cultural diplomacy in international relations and states that the field of public cultural diplomacy causes the culture and cultural thought of the system, is reflected in world public opinion, and find their true place and status in the international system. Amirian and Sabbagh Kermani (2000) have studied the economic effects of tourism in Iran using data-output analysis. In this article, is calculated the effect of foreign tourists' expenditures on production, income, employment, government revenues. Their results show that the activities of hotel and restaurant management, clothing

and leather industries, handicrafts and domestic transportation industry have the most impact and the largest share of production, income and employment created by the expenditures of foreign tourists. Are dedicated to themselves. Hall and Jenkins (1999) in the book "Tourism Policy" have discussed the role of various elements (government, ideology, power and stakeholders) in the tourism policy process. This book refers to the networks of stakeholders. Roger Das Vile (2008) in the book "Tourism Management" has discussed the basics, effects and strategies of tourism management. In the section related to the effects of tourism management, its effects on the environment are discussed and awareness of environmental issues and the need for preventive and remedial measures are examined. Chak. Way. Gay (2003) in the book "Tourism in a comprehensive perspective" in the second part, which is related to the organization and services of tourism travel, introduces productive groups in tourism, including transportation service organizations (water, air, land and rail), Accommodation and catering services (guesthouses and hotels), distribution system of tourism products and services and also special products and services.

Theoretical Framework

1. Cultural diplomacy

If we consider diplomacy as the "technique of managing the interaction with the outside world" by governments, various tools and mechanisms can be used to apply this management. Whereas political, economic and security considerations have traditionally constituted three fundamental areas of foreign policy discourse; Therefore, in the custom of the international system, the foreign policy of countries is designed with the aim of securing the national interests of the country in the three aforementioned areas and is operationalized with mechanisms and tools of the same three types. However, many experts in the field of international relations believe that "culture and cultural components" constitute the fourth pillar of foreign policy, from which in many cases the underlying layers of the other three spheres also originate it turns. To what extent does the design of an active diplomacy and its successful advancement depend on its cultural origins, or to what extent can an ancient, rich and productive culture lay the groundwork for institutionalizing the mechanisms needed to design a dynamic diplomacy, the training of skilled diplomats is also an important question in this area. Frank Ninkovich considers cultural diplomacy as an attempt to improve the level of communication and interaction between the nations of the world with the aim of designing and establishing agreements based on common values (Ninkovich, 1996, 3). According to Gifford Malone, cultural diplomacy is the architecture of a two-way highway to create channels to introduce the true image and values of a nation, while at the same time trying to get the right images from other nations and understanding of their values (Malone, 1988, 12). Finally, in Milton Cummings' definition, cultural diplomacy is the exchange of ideas, information, art, way of life, value system, traditions, and beliefs in order to achieve common

concepts and strengthen mutual understanding between nations and countries (Cummings, 2003, 1). Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri and Saeed Mohammadi believe that cultural diplomacy means trying to understand, raise awareness, participate and influence the public opinion of institutions, organizations and governments of other countries. In this process, the culture of a nation is presented to the outside world and the specific cultural characteristics of nations are exchanged at bilateral and multilateral levels; Therefore, one of the most sensitive issues of strategic cultural management is the mechanism of using cultural tools and capacities to influence public opinion and governments of other countries. The field of public cultural diplomacy causes the culture and cultural thought of the system, which is manifested in various areas of theory, policy, decision-making and behavioral patterns of the government, to reflect the public opinion of the world and its true position and status in Find an international system (Abolhassan Shirazi, 2017, 11-12).

2. *Tourism policy*

Tourism policy is a set of rules, regulations, guidelines, promotional and development goals and strategies that provide a framework for individual and group decisions, decisions that directly affect the long-term development of tourism and day-to-day activities. A destination is served by it (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006: 414). In other words, tourism policy is what governments want to do or not do in relation to the tourism industry (Hall and Jenkins, 1389: 17). Tourism policy-making as a social activity focuses on how different actors in the tourism industry, such as institutions, organizations, groups, and individuals, relate to each other. In most countries of the world, the top-down approach to tourism policy, in which governments took the initiative and was centralized, has largely given way to the bottom-up approach, which is decentralized in nature and is a form of governance that, local communities and different areas of business have found more responsibility (Scott, 2011: 23). Tourism policy is the result of activities planned at the national and international levels, and its analysis determines the extent of the need for government intervention; Because governments play an important role in the success of the tourism industry. Balancing the market, supporting innovation and creating positive developments in this field, management and planning, creating and maintaining infrastructure, are among the duties of governments. In industrialized countries, according to the advantages of each region, decentralization has led to the development of tourism; In developing countries, however, tourism development programs have resulted in regional planning with the financial and technical assistance of international organizations. This has reduced financial imposition in developing countries and increased the profitability of tourism infrastructure in these countries. (Hall & Gossling, 2009, 30)

3. Stakeholders

A stakeholder is a group of individuals who come together based on common interests or needs and try to influence the policy-making process and, of course, are reluctant to use formal forms of power like the government (Matthews, 1980: 142). The characteristics of infiltration groups include the following:

1. Not all group activities are necessarily political.
2. This group is always trying to influence governments but has no desire to gain power.
3. Government officials do not have a positive view of these people, but analysts consider stakeholders to be neutral and evaluate their activities as positive and useful.

Research method and statistical population

This research is based on library resources and related documents and has been done by qualitative analysis method and based on interviews with individuals and groups related to tourism. In order to enumerate the institutions and organizations related to tourism, in addition to studying the relevant texts, experts were interviewed and at least 20 institutions, organizations and unions related to the field of tourism were put on the agenda. The methods of collecting information in this article are:

1. Libraries and valid written documents as well as documents related to the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization
2. Official information and statistics provided by the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization
3. Interviews with tourism experts, managers and experts at the national level
4. Interviews with the heads of tourism-related unions such as unions of travel agencies, hoteliers, tour operators, etc.
5. Interviews with university professors, specializing in tourism, international relations, political science and public policy.

Research Findings

The role of non-governmental organizations in international relations

As the role of governments as key players in the age of globalization diminished, NGOs and stakeholders gained more opportunities to engage in international affairs. Economic, political, cultural and environmental groups, etc., have expanded their activities to the point that today they play an influential role in international relations. In addition, tourism-related groups have become active,

thereby pursuing their own economic interests and acting in the national interest by promoting their country as a civilized country. The history of the role of these groups does not end with the last few years. But in the twentieth century, after the creation of the United Nations, many fundamental steps have been taken. In its 1950 resolution, the United Nations Socio-Economic Council recognized informal actors as any organization whose founding document did not derive from an international agreement. Therefore, non-governmental organizations are part of civil society, which can be defined by three main criteria: 1. Having a public benefit purpose, 2. Its statute should not be intergovernmental, 3. Performing activities Effective more than two countries.

Given the importance of these organizations in advancing human interests, the United Nations took steps in the 1990s to expand its relations with non-governmental organizations. In a report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations", the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, set out an agenda to change the United Nations' approach to the use of non-governmental organizations, indicating the growing importance of these organizations. In this regard, in 2003, the Secretary-General appointed a delegation headed by the former President of Brazil to further liaise the United Nations with civil society, whose mission was to prepare a report on the following areas:

- Increasing the participation of non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental bodies;
- Establishment of a fund to increase the participation of non-governmental organizations in the developing countries;
- their accreditation in the UN system;
- Promoting communicate between the Secretariat of the Organization and non-governmental organizations;
- Strengthening the relationship between non-governmental organizations at the country level;

This process was followed in UNESCO as well as Article 11, paragraph 4, of the UNESCO Statute on Relations with Other Organizations and Institutions states: "The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization may make appropriate arrangements for consultation and cooperation with non-governmental organizations. This cooperation can also include the appropriate participation of the representatives of these organizations in the advisory committees formed by the common conference" (Beikzadeh, 2004, 543) and (Abolhassan Shirazi, 2017, 24-25).

Organized stakeholders who play an important role in the public policy process have increased the number and volume of their activities since the 1960s. Influencing or lobbying is often the main activity of these groups, but this (illegal action) is not what most people imagine, these groups to by providing information from their political views or a summary of studies, Influence in the legislative

decisions. They may attend a meeting of the Legislative Committee, meet with any members and staff, and ask them to write letters or contact to lawmakers. All these activities usually are carried out with the aim of supporting the political plans (Almasi, 1393, 76-75).

Stakeholders in tourism policy

Government and macro-tourism policies

In this section, we refer to the most important document that is related to the country's macro policies and in line with the orders of the Supreme Leader, namely the Development Vision Document. The important materials of the document related to cultural diplomacy and international relations, and also its approvals regarding the role of non-governmental and stakeholder groups in the economic issues of tourism, are among the topics that are examined in this section. The analysis in this regard shows that the country's macro policies regarding the expansion of tourism and cultural diplomacy in Iran with countries in the international system are realistic and positive.

The resolutions of the meeting dated 4/7/83 of the High Council of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in relation to international affairs are as follows:

1. Presenting the values hidden in the cultural heritage of the country at the national and international level to promote the cultural identity of the society.
2. Raising the level of public culture in the field of cultural heritage and tourism by using the educational, cultural and media capacities of the country.
3. Sustainable development of tourism by respecting the cultural values of society, cultural heritage and environmental capacities in order to obviate the needs of Iranian society, strengthen national unity and harmony, increase international understanding and introduce the face of Islamic Iran.
4. Increasing domestic tourism and achieving a suitable share of the global tourism market by diversifying the Iranian tourism market and using all capacities with the priority of attracting pilgrimage, cultural and natural tourists in order to increase GDP and employment development.
5. Prioritize the development of tourist exchanges with Islamic countries and countries in the field of Iranian culture.

Qualitative goals of cultural heritage and tourism development

- 1- Development of cultural relations and consolidation of the political position of the system.

- 2- Introducing the history and civilization of Iran to the world and creating understanding between nations.
- 3- Strengthening national unity and promoting cultural identity.
- 4- Gaining a suitable share of the international tourism market.

Strategies in the field of tourism

- 1- Creating national belief and determination in the decision-making pillars of the system for the development of tourism and its transfer to society and tourism industry activists.
- 2- Making decisions in accordance with the goals and dignity of the country and being responsive to the level of expectations of society.
- 3- Eliminating the security perspective in dealing with incoming and domestic tourists.
- 4- Deregulation and minimization of government interference.
- 5- Promoting the global code of tourism ethics.
- 6- Legal protection of domestic and foreign investments and providing grounds for attracting these resources.
- 7- Changing the attitude towards Iran in the target markets through appropriate investment in advertising.
- 8- Liberalizing the tourism economy and completing the institutions of this market and reforming its relations.

Future plans

- 1- Determining and creating model tourism areas in different provinces of the country with an international, national, regional and local approach.
- 2- Intending services that can be provided to foreign tourists in non-oil export calculations.
- 3- Expanding domestic and foreign investment and supporting them through loans and facilities.
- 4- Providing the ground for using credit card and Visa card facilities.
- 5- Reviving and promoting the various tourist attractions of the country in the fields of religion, culture, history, nature, sports, medicine and increasing the tourism capacities in the most attractive places of the country.
- 6- Identifying and introducing target markets and strengthening the foundations of friendship and empathy between countries in order to develop tourism.

7- Development and expansion of archeological researches by using technical facilities inside the country and using archeological institutes abroad (Development Vision Document).

Non-governmental interest groups in the field of tourism

This group, which we call “stakeholders”, includes unions and organizations. Although these groups not directly involved in macro-policies in the field of tourism, but their actions, investments and positions, has an impact on determining general tourism policies. Including airlines, leisure shipping lines, railways, travel agencies, accelerators and agents in the travel market, accommodation, restaurants, and meeting and conference centers. It also offers catering services for travelers to recreational-commercial camps and sections of retail stores, grocery stores and gas stations.

The above can be classified into three groups, which are:

A) *Travel and tourism services offices*; Travel and tourism services offices have grown significantly in recent years. These offices include travel agencies, which are divided into three categories: domestic tours, incoming tours and outgoing tours. One of the groups associated with travel and tourism services offices are tour leaders; Organizations that call themselves tour leaders, have specific responsibilities in the tourism industry, they purchase elements such as transportation, accommodation and other services separately and combine them together as a travel package directly or indirectly and offer to customers. Tour leaders are sometimes referred to as the wholesalers of the tourism industry, but this is not always the case, because a wholesaler usually buys goods and services as his own and then divides his high volume into smaller parts without changing the product, sells it to retailers (Ranjbarian and Zahedi, 2006: 82).

B) *Facilities and welfare Possibilities*; From an economic point of view, tourism facilities are considered as superstructures in this sector and these facilities do not attract tourists by themselves, but the existence of such facilities is directly related to the desire to travel and use the destination attractions that is the main goal of tourism. Accommodation facilities include all facilities whose main purpose is to provide accommodation for tourists overnight. But it usually offers other ancillary services such as restaurant, sauna, swimming pool, which are also used by the locals. The market for this industry is made up of a wide range of different customers, including; those who travel for administrative, commercial, educational, or medical, pilgrimage, or other types of tourism. Accommodation facilities available to tourists vary greatly in size, number of rooms and other facilities. This combination is due to creating a balance between the needs of different market segments and supply levels (Ranjbarian and Zahedi, 2006: 100). Accommodation facilities include the following: hotel, apartment hotel, boarding house, airport hotels, leisure hotels, hotel delivery, motels, inns, shrines, beaches, camping, rooms and rental villas (Gay, 2003: 98). And catering services including

restaurant, traditional food, cafeteria, self-service, coffee house (see: Zamani Farahani, 2000: 194-197).

C) *Transportation system*; The transportation system is responsible for transporting passengers, getting them to their destination and returning them. The fundamental role of this system in the tourism industry, especially in terms of infrastructure, including airports, ports, road transport terminals, rail, etc., is undeniable. Transportation includes the following: Land transportation (railways, buses, cars); Air transportation; Water transportation (Kazemi, 1387: 69).

Analysis of findings

The role of tourism in Iran's cultural convergence in the international system

Today, the expansion of relations in various fields between governments at the regional and international levels has led to rapprochement between nations and has provided the basis for cooperation in various dimensions. This has not only changed the internal dimension, also changed the nature of many governments and political societies. Meanwhile, the developments in the tourism industry, which are the result of globalization and extensive communication between different societies and familiarity with other cultures, have led the international system more and more towards the integration and expansion of interactions. Tourism with the expansion of communication networks between societies in various political, economic and cultural fields, at the first blush is one of the important reasons for globalization and on the other hand the expansion of tourism in the world can be one of the results and consequences of global trends. Becoming considered an international system.

In Iran at the beginning of the 21st century, what has hitherto outlined the outlook for tourism in Iran over the past two decades in relation to tourism policy guidelines includes three short-term (2001-2005), medium-term (2006-2010) and long-term (2011-2015):

- Introducing and developing Islamic culture to the world, especially to the countries that have the most relations with Iran and cooperating with these countries in order to strengthen international relations, including;
- Continued use of Iran's sensitive and geopolitical position as a regional center for the transfer of goods, tourism exchange and investment;
- Establishing continuous contact with Iranians living in foreign countries and attracting their cooperation for the transfer of capital and expertise.

Based on the analysis of the above information and data, as well as interviews with tourism and policy experts, we find that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in upstream documents such as the Development Vision Document and Five-Year Development Plans, attaches great importance to the development and use of

tourism for greater convergence with other countries. But the complexity of the issues makes it difficult to implement. Despite the above, our tourism system still faces many problems both externally and domestically, such as: unclear definition of tourist rights, lack of security in the South Asian region, cultural differences, political problems with the propaganda invasion of hegemonic countries, Iranophobia, cruel international sanctions, especially by the United States, historical colonization of Iran by other countries, including Russia and Britain, as well as neo-colonialism in the form of cultural invasion.

The Supreme Leader of the Revolution has attached great importance to the issue of tourism and as the leader of the Islamic Republic, who is responsible for determining the general policies of the system, has emphasized the issue of tourism and its expansion in communicating these policies. The study of his statements indicates the importance and priority of tourism and also encourages officials to pay more attention to this issue and emphasizes the use of economic and non-economic potentials of tourism: the use of economic potential of tourism; Prioritize tourism for provincial development and development of less privileged areas; Use of cultural capacities of tourism; Recommendations for the preservation of cultural heritage; Introducing tourist attractions for foreign and domestic travelers; The need to pay attention to all types of tourism; Take advantage of the opportunity of passing travelers; ... All of them are among the issues that the Supreme Leader of the Revolution has addressed and emphasized in his meetings with officials and executive officials, as well as in his provincial trips. In the five-year development plans, especially in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Development Plans, the role of tourism as well as the role of stakeholders in tourism policy has grown significantly. Above all in international tourism and its promotion, with the aim of international convergence between Iran and countries in the international system, have been passed important laws and regulations. The Development Vision Document emphasizes the strategic goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the direction of cooperation and international peace through tourism. Including the issue of sustainable development of tourism through strengthening national unity and harmony inside and increasing international understanding outside Iran and introducing the face of Islamic Iran to other countries; Achieving an appropriate share of the global tourism market; Development of tourist exchanges with Islamic countries; ...

Conclusion

According to the main question of this research, we were looking for what role can Iran's tourism and tourism industry play in the development of international convergence? To answer this question, while gathering information available in libraries, relevant people were interviewed. The research findings while proving the hypothesis showed that international tourism has a great impact on promoting cultural convergence and deepening relations between governments and nations. When passengers travel to another country, they become acquainted with the customs of the host country, are influenced by their culture, and ultimately cause the spread of culture among nations. Iran is one of the countries under attack by

anti-Islamic propaganda and Iranophobia. Influenced by Iran's policies towards the West, support for Islamic movements and the issue of Iran's nuclear program, Iran's cultural image has taken on a security flavor, resulting in a stagnant tourism. The existence of repeated international and even Security Council sanctions has added to the problems. Iran's use of tourism potential, while achieving economic goals, will enable Iran to improve cultural perceptions. By bringing people from other countries to Iran and showing security and stability in cities and even remote villages, it can be used to improve relations between governments. Also, due to the cultural nature of tourism, it is necessary the presence and activity of stakeholders and the private sector. Therefore, elements of tourism stakeholders such as travel and accommodation agencies, tour leaders and transportation companies, play an important role in promoting cultural diplomacy in order to develop international relations. In Iran, this issue, especially in the last decade, has been considered by the decision makers of the system and the macro policies of the country. Analyzes show that the country's macro-policies regarding the expansion of tourism and cultural diplomacy in Iran with countries in the international system are realistic and positive, and attach great importance to it, but we are facing several in its implementation with difficulties. Therefore, this issue requires careful policy-making as well as government support for the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the field of tourism.

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