

ABSTRACT

While a great deal of research has examined the destination image that influences the tourist's destination choice, the impact of perception toward cultural attributes of the destination solely on such choices remains unclear. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of international tourists toward Iran's culture and the possible relationship between tourists' perception of Iran's culture and their intentions to visit that country. Specifically, the relationships among destination perception, visit intention, and tourist characteristics were explored.

A conceptual framework was proposed and entirely 384 international tourists were surveyed. By conducting the particular qualification rules of valid questionnaires, a total of 295 questionnaires was selected to be used in this research. Overall, the respondents perceived Iran's culture positively. The respondents' perception towards Iran's culture doesn't change by their gender and nationalities whereas the respondents' past visit experience of Iran had a significant impact on their perception. Cultural image was significantly ($p < .05$) predictive of intention to visit Iran. The cultural attribute of Iranian traditional festivals ($\beta = .686$), was found to be a significant contributor amongst other cultural components to the relationship between tourist's perception towards Iran's culture and intention to visit that country. This study also expanded understanding of tourists overall impressions about Iran in order to elicit initial and immediate effect of Iran upon respondents' minds.

Keywords: destination perception, cultural attributes, intention to visit, tourist destination