

**Japan-Iran Tourism Relations:
Opportunities and Limits of promoting Iran's Culture and Heritage
in Japan**

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis which is submitted to the graduate school of Asia Pacific Studies at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University for the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my original work except where due reference is made or acknowledged. The document has not been used for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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8 June 2007

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ABSTRACT

Governments in the 21st century can not be indifferent to the importance of continued economic expansion of the global tourism industry and to increased competition in the international tourism market. However, competition in tourism is different from other industries as the production cannot be exported and tourists are forced to move to the destination as consumers. In this concept, not only the quality and price of tourism products but also the image of the destination in a target market plays a key role in determining the flow of tourists. This thesis analyzed the image of Iran as a destination in current Japanese society, describing how the Iranian tourism industry is suffering from an image problem despite being able to offer a rich culture to the visitor and a tremendous number of cultural heritage attractions in Iran.

Success in a target market without recognizing culturally different travelers is doubtful. Reasons may differ for people from one society to another to leave their own familiar environment in order to visit an unfamiliar or even a strange one, and accordingly a single tourism promotional plan does not always apply for different markets. For Japanese overseas travelers, as this thesis argues, the main (or only) reason to visit Iran would be to study the cultural heritage of Persia and Islamic Iran. Furthermore, cultural tourism makes up a main part of the Japanese international market, which makes tourism promotion at least theoretically possible between the two countries. This study declares that a pragmatic way of tourism promotion for Iran in Japanese market would be to start with the cultural promotion of Persia/Iran in Japan instead of expecting actual visits to Iran from the beginning.

The internal political environment of Iran and its international relations, the geopolitical situation of the region that Iran is a part of, and the unfamiliarity with Iran as a tourist destination in Japan are the main challenges for the Iranian tourism industry in promoting to the Japanese overseas travel market. While the possibility for a change in the political situation exists, it will take time to remove the wall of unfamiliarity and change the image of Iran among the Japanese. As new research in the field, this thesis suggests new ways of promoting Iranian tourism in Japan to be taken by Iranian tourism officials and paves the way for further research.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In recent years the growth of the contribution of Japanese international travelers to the world's travel market has been significant. According to UNWTO, 797 million people traveled out of their own country in 2005. The number of Japanese tourists traveling abroad in 2005 exceeded 17.41 million, the second highest ever behind the 17.82 million travelers in 2000 (JTB report, 2006). In this context, Japanese tourists are distinguished in existing tourism literature as being very important on a world-wide basis, especially for cultural and heritage tourism. A new marketing opportunity in the case of Japanese senior travelers may be significantly increased from 2007, the beginning of retirement of the Japanese baby boomer generation with a strong interest both in domestic and foreign travel (Nita 2006).

The share of different countries and regions of the Japanese international travel market varies according to the preferences of the Japanese travelers. For example, Hawaii has been the most preferred destination during 2005 and 2006 with Australia in second place (JTMC 2006), however the share of the Middle East region in Japan's tourism market is inconsistent with the potential of Middle Eastern countries to attract Japanese tourists. The region, which has been referred by historians as the Fertile Crescent is the cradle of civilizations and the birth place of many of the world's main religions. However, only some countries in the Middle East region have been relatively successful in this context. For example 60,000 Japanese tourists visited Egypt in 2003 and 80,000 to 100,000 Japanese tourists travel to Turkey a year (Daily Yomiuri, 1999), but tourism

in many countries of the region such as Iran, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon has not reached these levels.

The Middle Eastern country of Iran is an important example in this case. According to UNESCO Iran is ranked as one of the ten top countries in the world in terms of its ancient and historical sites. There are a million historical monuments in Iran with more than 12,000 of them registered officially (Mashai, 2005).¹ However, there has been a dramatic change in Iran's social and economic situation since the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the tourism industry is not an exception. For example, in the 1970s some 60 percent of all tourists to Iran were Americans, spending an estimated 1 billion dollars each year but this trade almost disappeared after the revolution (Mideast Mirror, 1998)². In the case of Japanese tourists to Iran, while 24,106 Japanese travelled to Iran a year before the Islamic revolution, a share of almost 0.6% of the overall Japanese international market, but this market segment rapidly declined during the years after the revolution.³ Today, the number of Japanese tourists in Iran is only 3,000 a year.

Japan has a good chance of becoming interested in Iran as a destination because of the Japanese curiosity about cultural and heritage tourism. The factors which exist in the current Iranian society, making it different with other cultural destinations in the region, is the absence of sea, sand, sex and alcohol. However, Japanese senior travelers seem not to be worried about this as much as many western tourists. Though sun and sand and

¹ Esfandiar Rahim Mashai , *Islamic nations prioritized in tourism investment* ,Iran Daily, 28December 2005, <http://iran-daily.com/1384/2462/html/economy.htm> , accessed 12 November 2006.

² Mideast Mirror, January 6, 1998, IRAN; Vol. 12, No. 2, The case for a U.S.-Iran thaw

³ KOKUSAI KANKO SINKOU KAI (international tourism promotion society), KIKAKU CHOUSA BU(project investigation department), Japan, different years

surf holidays are not expected to disappear, they have declined in relative importance as more and more visitors seek challenging educational and/or relatively unique experiences.⁴

In the case of Iran, the wreck of the tourism industry can be attributed to many factors. One of the most important of these is in political relations with the rest of the world. But, there has been almost no political problem between Iran and Japan. In this context, the fact that Japan has remained the major customer of Iranian Oil even after the Iranian revolution brings comparative advantage as well as allowing Iranian tourism policy makers to focus on Japan as a target market.

The main objective of this study is to provide the Iranian tourism industry with the opportunity to revive itself internationally and in Japan. It attempts to take advantage of existing literature on the Japanese overseas travel market as well as the information produced by the author through an extensive field work in Japan during 2003-2006 to have this adopted by Iranian tourism promotional policies for Japan. It is to be noted that the framework of this study is in cultural and heritage tourism promotion. Therefore the objective of this research is more to promote the awareness of Iranian history and culture in Japan than mass tourism marketing itself.

Research problem

How to narrow the gap between Iran's potentials and market realities to attract international tourists is the main problem on which this dissertation focuses. In this

⁴ NWHO, *sustainable tourism and cultural heritage: a review of development assistance and its potential to promote sustainability*, 1999, http://www.nwhf.no/files/File/culture_fulltext.pdf , accessed November 2006

context, Japan is targeted as the major source of international tourists in East Asia. Therefore, each section of this dissertation contributes in some extent to the answer to the following question:

“Why has the tourism industry in Iran not taken off since the Islamic revolution of 1979 and what are the problems of promoting it in Japan and the rest of East Asia?”

Objectives

Although this study focuses on Japanese overseas travelers as the target market for Iranian tourism industry, the results of this research will bring insight into the ways to market Iran in East Asia. The objectives of this study are mainly to provide Iranian tourism policy makers and tourism specialists with up-to-date and detail information on the opportunities and obstacles of promoting Iranian tourism in Japan but many of these could be generalized to promote Iranian tourism in the international climate. The objectives are summarized as follows:

- To define the reasons of the collapse of the Iranian tourism industry after the Islamic revolution of 1979;
- To explain the role of Iran’s international relations in tourism promotion;
- To visualize the image of Iran as a tourist destination in present-day Japan;
- To determine the performance of Iranian tourism authorities in bringing about awareness of Iranian tourist attractions internationally and in Japan;
- To analyze the nature of the limited tourism relations between Iran and Japan which exist at present and discover ways to promote change in this situation.

Methodology

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach. International relations, political science, history, and sociology are the fields in which the arguments are placed. Tourism Promotion, Cultural and heritage tourism and the impact of international relations on tourism are under focus in this research.

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 below.

Primary data

The information produced in this study is based on extensive fieldwork in Japan and Iran during the years between 2004 and 2006. The author stayed mainly in Oita

Prefecture to conduct the research but made two research trips to Tokyo and Tehran firstly in February, 2004 and secondly in August, 2005.

A series of structured, semi structured and open-ended interviews were conducted by author with five different groups which can be mainly classified as travel agencies; tour guides; Japanese tourists in Iran; Iranian tourism officials and others. There are also some distinguished individual sources of information for this research among the interviewees like Inoue Masayuki, the Japanese Director General for International Affairs, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT); Sakiko Kageyama, Secretary General of Japan-Iran Cultural Association⁵; Javad Kazemi, Director of Cultural Affairs of the Iranian Embassy in Tokyo; Abolfazl Mohammadirad, Iran Airline's General Manager for the far east region; Alireza Ayoubi Marketing Manager of Iran Air office in Tokyo (the only conductor of direct flights between Tokyo and Tehran) and Kszumassa Ono, a Japanese specialist in Persian history. Professor Ogata Masakatsu was the unique provider of statistical information on different years about tourism relations between Iran and Japan through his membership of "KOKUSAI KANKO SINKOU KAI" (International Tourism Promotion Society) and his collection of reports from the above mentioned organization.

⁵ 日本イラン 文化交流協会(Nihon-Iran Bunka Kouryu Kyoukai)。Founded on June 1977 under Japan-Iran association, it was named as "Anjomane Farsi" which means the association of Persian language. The present name was adopted on November 2002 when it became independent from Japan-Iran association to present the cultural activities undertaken by association more generally than the old name. About 110 members who are mainly Japanese and a few Iranians gathering 4-5 times a year together as their regular meetings including seminars, dinner parties and excursions all supported by volunteer work of the members. The members share interest in Persian/Iranian history, literature and culture. Lectures are mainly in Japanese but Persian speakers are invited too. The association is located in Tokyo and has a small library on Iranian studies in Japanese.

The total number of travel agencies in Japan that conduct tours to Iran does not exceed 15 and they are mainly located in Tokyo. Consequently, the travel agencies that are selected for this research were located Tokyo and Tehran, except that Sakura Travel Company located in Oita prefecture accepted the role of author's assistant in the field work and in conducting the survey in Oita Prefecture.

Information on the typical Iran /Persia tour which is offered to Japanese tourists was derived through analyzing contents of advertising literature including pamphlets and websites of Japanese travel agencies about Iran. This study attempts to take a comparative view of Iran and some other prospering Middle Eastern destinations such as Egypt and Turkey, in the way that they appear to the Japanese tourist in current tourism advertising literature.

The story of tourism relations between Iran and Japan in early 1990s, which is almost untold in the Iranian press, is based on English versions of Japanese newspapers accessed through the *LexisNexis*⁶ search system, which provides excellent service to access and search the news saving the time and easier to access that was expected by author initially. The main Japanese press sources were: the Asahi Shimbun, Japan corporate News Network (JCNN), The Japan Times, Japanese Business Digest, JCN Newswire, Jiji press Ticker Service, the daily Yomiuri, The Nikkei Weekly (Japan)

⁶ The site is accessible in: www.lexis.com

A survey was conducted by author in Oita Prefecture, Kyushu to provide new and original information on the Japanese image of Iran as tourist destination. The author was supported by the Sakura travel agency of that city in conducting the survey; 459 respondents from different cities in Oita Prefecture took part in the survey and provided unique and reliable information as a source of quantitative data for this study. The quantitative data provided by the survey were entered in a SPSS data base file and analyzed to support the information from other sections of the research.

The section of this thesis on the history of Iran's international relations highlights conspicuous events in Iran-America relations since the Islamic revolution of 1979. The electronic version of three American newspapers: "The New York Times", "The Washington Post" and "Los Angeles Times" have provided the author with the broadcasting literature about Iran in the international climate through the *LexisNexis* search engine.

While in Japan, the author became a member of the Japan-Iran Cultural Association established in 1977, through which correspondence with Japanese having an Iranian/Persian interest was achieved. The author also became a member of the Academic Society of Iranians in Japan (ASIJ) to share the experiences of Iranian students as cultural ambassadors in Japan. While in Iran the author stayed three weeks in the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) office in Tehran to examine the current situation of business tourism relations between Iran and Japan.

Secondary data

This study is based on comprehensive reading of English and Farsi materials. The literature on cultural and heritage tourism in both English and materials is reviewed as well as the tourism literature from different countries including the Middle East about Japanese tourists. Thanks to the number of Japanese tourists around the world there are plenty of research materials, especially journal articles with focus on Japanese travelers which pave the way for research in the field. An extensive reading of Farsi and English materials on the history of Persia/ Iran has also provided the author with the background for this research.

Research Limitations

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.

Thesis Outline

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction and overview of the research and contains a summary of the other chapters. Chapter 2 takes a look at the literature on cultural and heritage tourism. Studies on Japanese overseas travelers, who are on focus in this research, were looked through to bring insight to the search for literature sources. Iran's potential and opportunities to attract Japanese tourists are also considered in this chapter.

Chapter 3 looks at the history of Iran and the ancient Persian civilization in order to examine the existing potential to promote cultural heritage tourism in Iran. Although going in detail through the long history of Persia and Islamic Iran is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this chapter introduces the authentic elements of Iranian culture and civilization which distinguish the nation from other countries of the region, especially

the Arab States of the Middle East. Kingship (Shahanshah) and religion (Zoroastrianism and Islam) are introduced in this chapter as the two basic elements of Iranian culture. It argues that it was the power of culture that could unite Iranians as one nation throughout their history after being invaded by different nations. In sum, the chapter presents the history of Iran as a showcase which represents how cultural heritage and authenticity is enabled to be alive and preserved in interaction with other nations.

Chapter 4 reports on the story of the Iranian tourism industry during the years before and after the Islamic revolution. This chapter shows how the tourism industry in Iran is affected by political issues and international relations. Avoiding being purely a discussion of political issues, this chapter assesses the impact of Iran's international relations on the tourism industry and forms a view of Iran in the current international climate. Iran-US relations have an important position in this chapter. The "2500th anniversary of Persian monarchy" as reported as a singular event prior to the Islamic revolution provides a clear explanation of changes in the political climate of Iran before and after the Islamic revolution and its effect on the tourism industry in Iran. It also focuses on social and economical relations between Iran and Japan after the Islamic revolution in Iran with emphasis on the phenomenon of Iranian workers in Japan. America's attempts at limiting economic relations between Iran and Japan, the Iranian oil industry and Japan (the major customer of Iranian oil) are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 covers the mail part of the extensive field work carried out in Japan. The results of a survey conducted by the author in Oita Prefecture during 2004 and 2005 are

scrutinized to bring insight to the whole research as well as to offset the lack of data in the field. It also peruses and deliberates on the results of interviews with Japanese tourists and Japanese tour guides in Iran in order to pave the way for a comprehensive investigation of the image problem which exists currently amongst the Japanese about Iran. Misinformation and some times disinformation about Iran, its tourist attractions and security as well as a *lack* of information about the country are determined as being the main encumbrances and restraints in promoting Iran as a tourist destination in Japan.

Chapter 6 discusses the remainder of the field work and starts by examining the role of travel agencies as intermediaries or cultural brokers in the tourism industry. It distinguishes the role of travel agents conducting the job of tourism business between Iran and Japan, comparing other travel markets according to the small size and limited market. The chapter places particular attention on the limited tourism relationship that is run by a few travel agencies both in Iran and Japan. It also examines the experiences of travel firms which are undertaking the job and the market situation they face. It contains the author's experiences of interviewing Japanese travelers and tour guides in Iran as well as Japanese travel agencies. The chapter concludes with analysis of the limiting factors in marketing Iran as a tourist destination in today's Japanese society and discusses whether or not the current efforts from Iran are enough to revive this market.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion and incorporates the findings, suggestions and discussions of the study, which are followed by highlights of the efficiency of current Iranian tourism promotion policies and activities in Japan. Further research requirements and

notes on new opportunities to pave the way for tourism promotion between Iran and Japan, resulting from this study are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

ON

CULTURAL TOURISM AND JAPANESE OVERSEAS TRAVELLERS

Introduction

The need to study different cultures and authentic experiences is one of the main ideas which cultural tourism depends on in theory and practice. Tourists from wealthier and developed countries are seeking for new environments to be less effected by western culture and something different from their own environment. As discussed later in this chapter, cultural tourism is practiced mainly by higher educated people in its moral framework, but provides many opportunities for less developed countries to benefit from the tourism industry as well as the chance to experience the enhancement of development within the structure of their own cultural background. In this concept, an understanding of culturally different tourists as well as a comprehensive knowledge of one's own culture is needed to build up a sustainable cultural tourism relationship within which both tourists and hosts benefit.

This chapter focuses on the literature on cultural tourism and Japanese overseas travel market which is one of the world's largest sources of international tourists interested in culture. As the overall aim of this thesis is to find the ways of tourism promotion between Japan and Iran as one of the top ten countries in the world in the terms of its cultural and heritage sites, this chapter provides the literature review background which admits the possibility of attracting Japanese tourists to Iran theoretically, by the means of cultural and heritage tourism.

Cultural and Heritage Tourism

The interaction between culture and tourism has existed throughout the history of tourism but has gained additional importance currently (Klein, 2001). Cultural tourism has also been under consistent focus in the tourism literature. However, the fast growth of cultural and heritage tourism is the new phenomenon of the 21st century. Growing up to fifteen percent per year, cultural tourism has influenced different sectors of the global tourism industry and has come under attention again in the tourism literature (WTO, 2001). In a new book Richards (2007) has collected research from different worldwide geographical locations and a wide range of viewpoints in cultural tourism, in which there is a big debate about the effect of globalization on local authenticity. A big concern in cultural tourism today is whether or not local identity will be replaced by global pastiche or will they have enough power to remain creative while keeping their local enrichment to satisfy cultural visitors.

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.

Towards a definition of culture and cultural tourism

Meethan (2003) argues that one of the reasons defining culture is seen as a problematic approach over time is that the definition can refer both to the way groups distinguish themselves from one another as well as referring to characteristics within those groups. Culture however, can be used as an instrument for different purposes which includes political and economic. In this context, for the purpose of tourism marketing for example, culture is used to label and describe the speciality or unique characteristics of the market such as art and literature, most typically associated with developed economies. However, there is a different approach in the case of less developed countries or regions in the world where cultural tourism tends to be seen on basis of ethnic differences, national identity, values and beliefs which might be different within the domestic tourist market.

Bonink (1992) has reviewed the definitions of cultural tourism in the literature, revealing two main views. In the view of some authors the description of physical attractions such as sites and monuments could define cultural tourism (Fyall, 1998; Gee, 1997). According to others, the desire to visit cultural sites and motivation is under focus in the definition (Poria et al, 2001; Zeppel and Hall, 1991). Jamal and Kim (2005) collected the existing definitions of heritage tourism, which also revealed two main approaches; the descriptive approach, from historic buildings to art works (Yale, 1991)

and the conceptual approach, which explains the desire and the motivation to experience (Zeppel and Hall, 1992, Prentice, 1993; Poria et al, 2001). In most cases however, the term cultural tourism is used as general concept incorporating heritage tourism, art tourism, ethnic tourism, historical tourism and other areas of culture.

Who is a cultural visitor?

Visitor identification of cultural tourists composes a main section of the literature on cultural tourism. MacDonald (1999) reviewed the literature on definition of cultural tourists revealing three different approaches: demographic aspects of cultural tourists, their travel motivation and the characteristics of cultural tourists as moral travellers. Higher cultural capital, higher education and income are for example the typical characteristics that cultural tourists share compared with other travellers. In this context, education is undoubtedly a main component of tourist characteristics in the selection of cultural tourism no matter the geographical origin of the traveller (Bauer, 1996; Richard 1996). However, the positive relation between education and cultural tourism is bilateral, cultural tourism can give an incentive to the desire for education as well (Schouten, 2007).

Moral and Mass Tourism

Butcher (2003) has a new look at cultural tourism as a component which exists under a more comprehensive concept of “moral tourism”. The morality in tourism as Butcher argues is in contrast with “mass tourism”. The different values, goods and behaviour brought by mass tourism are seen as intrusions and tourists themselves are regarded as despoilers (Levenstein, 1998) if they are considered as mass tourists. As Butcher argues,

the destructive influence of mass tourism on the host destination is not limited to the natural environment. In this context, the cultural environment of the host is also under attack by mass tourists who are more willing to impose their own culture on a place rather than accepting a culturally difference experience. In its extremist way it can even be regarded as a form of imperialism (Nash, 1989). In the eyes of those who are convinced of the negative side of mass tourism, the sensuality of mass tourists can not be satisfied even by sun, sand, sea, sex and so on with no moral limit, cultural degradation must be part of the equation to give them satisfaction (Bucher, 2003).

Moral tourism on the contrary is regarded constructive to local cultures (Bucher, 2003). For the moral tourist, the need for learning about the other, the cultural difference is dominating enough to take the trouble to learn about other's language and culture. To respect the host's culture while adopting a cautious approach in contact with new cultures and taking care of one's behaviour respecting the cultural values of the host is assumed necessary in moral tourism in order to learn other cultures and discover the "real" destination.

Tourism, Authenticity and Hybrid Cultures

There has been a dominant approach over the last two decades toward the concepts of authenticity and cultural changes in tourism studies as well as toward the role of tourism in commodification. This assumes that tourism has a tendency to destroy the authenticity of local cultures. It is a problematic and debatable part of the tourism literature. Cohen (1988) believes that the commodification of culture prevents tourists' genuine desire for authentic experience, which is the core purpose of cultural tourism. In contrast, according to Wood (1997) the processes of cultural intervention serve to

demarcate and differentiate between people. In this context, the processes within which cultural changes occur are the systematic conditions for maintaining cultural distinctiveness.

Authenticity is undoubtedly an important part of tourism in general and cultural tourism in particular. Tourists have been always seeking for authentic experiences to enrich their travel experience. In this context, the criteria through which authenticity can be measured have been extensively discussed in the tourism literature. Richards (2007) quoted Taylor (2001), according to whom “authenticity has become the philosopher’s stone for an industry that generally seek to procure other people’s ‘realities’. In tourism, authenticity poses as *objectivism*. It holds the special powers both of distance and of truth”. It is believed that the more a destination has been keeping away from western cultural contacts the more it appears authentic to the eyes of tourists today. However, it is doubtful if cultural and social relations really have a negative impact on authenticity. In his discussion of the impact of tourism on local cultures forcing them to become an imitator of western behaviour, Schouten (2007) reveals that this can be true and untrue at the same time. The use of western technological advances in every day life is a clear example of cultural impact as Schouten mentions: “who would not prefer a cool drink from a fridge over a warm one?”, But cultural identity is also powerful enough to resist the domination of this globalization and cultural commodification.

There is also a need to rethink the role of tourism in cultural changes today by considering the rapid growth of virtual tourism. As Richards (2007) argues, by the means of long-distance travel such as media and internet one can get familiar with other

communities: “the exotic is no longer far away in geographical terms, but on our door step”. The phenomenon of globalisation which provides new conceptual viewpoints for tourists and locals in the new world will possibly bring changes in the way that the role of tourism in cultural changes is thought of. By analysing and rethinking the structure of cultural and social contacts, this new process will provide the platform from which to survey the post modern landscape of tourism; to the Japanese component of this I now turn.

The Japanese Overseas Travel Market

The millions of Japanese travelling abroad every year attract tourism experts from destinations all over the world. More than 17 million Japanese tourists travelled overseas in 2005(JTB, 2006). As a consequence, Japanese tourists have been the subject of numerous research projects. Many studies have examined the behaviour of Japanese tourists in order to understand the psychological motives of individual travellers that influence various travel-related decisions and the level of satisfaction with the destination (Chon, 1987). However, searching for any particular study on Japanese tourists in Iran to be used for this paper was without result.

Regarding the characteristics of Iran as a travel destination, in this section the relevant findings on Japanese tourists by tourism professionals from different destinations are defined to bring insight to the marketing of Iran as a destination in Japan.

Preferred Destinations

Japanese tourists can be considered fairly typical in their preferences for destinations with natural scenery and good beaches as well as cities rich in historical spots and modern culture (Morris, 1990). However, in comparison with other nationalities, they have been found to consider good shopping and “crime free” reputations as extremely important. Morris (1988) and Polunin (1989) also found them to be increasingly leisure and service oriented. In addition, Sheldon and Fox (1988) found that Japanese tourists were strongly influenced by food services in their choice of destinations.

With a rich culture and history, Iran inherited the Persian civilisation and culture. The country is among the top ten countries in the world in terms of historical sites and civilization (Malekzadeh 2006), and Japanese travellers are very interested in visiting historical sites. According to the “Opinion Survey of Overseas Travel Preferences” (JTM, 2006) about 40 percent of the Japanese tourists mentioned visiting historical sites as their preferred purpose of travel. This fact should make it at least theoretically possible to promote Iranian tourism successfully in Japan.

Travel Motivation

Studies have confirmed that the travel-related benefits sought by tourists affect their choice of destination and behaviour at the destination (Woodside, 1976; Crompton, 1977). Cha (1995) studied the travel motivations affected Japanese tourist behaviour and found six distinct “push-factors”; relax, knowledge, adventure, travel bragging,

family and sports. Further, Japanese travellers were segmented into three groups; sports seekers, novelty seekers and family/relaxation seekers.

Concerning Iran as a destination, it's obviously not "family and sports" or "rest and relaxation" that should be expected as the motivation factors for Japanese travellers to visit Iran. However, as an unseen destination there would be many new things for Japanese tourists to discover about Iran due to the lack of awareness about Iran in Japan. Consequently, it is critical for the Iranian tourism industry to take the advantage of Japanese curiosity as a motive to attracting them in a new destination like Iran.

Preferred Activities at Destination

Market segmentation reveals that preferred activities differ with age and social status. Lang, O'Leary and Morrison (1993) segmented female Japanese travellers into 5 distinct clusters, each with their own particular activity preferences. The "Outdoor Sports" grouping showed tremendous interest in water and beach based activities as well as shopping and local food sampling. The "Sightseers" enjoyed sightseeing, sampling local food and short guided excursions. The "Life-Seeing" group preferred activities such as getting to know the host community, sampling local food, attending festivals, shopping and sightseeing in cities. Tourists belonging to the "Activity Combo" cluster had broad interests and participated in many different activities. "Naturalists" had a strong interest in visiting, historical, archaeological and commemorative sites as well as national parks. They also engaged in shopping and sightseeing in cities. Among the above groups, "Naturalists" are considered as the target market for Iran travel by Japanese travel agencies as obvious looking at a Japanese

typical tour itinerary. The main activity arranged for Japanese tourist in Iran is to visit the historical monuments and shopping.

In spite of high demand for “life-seeing” by Japanese tourists in other destinations, the existing full packaged tours to Iran do not meet this group’s desire to know their host community. Japanese tourists will not be able to find much traditional and ethnic food in Iranian restaurants as people cook in their houses. A typical package tour takes Japanese to Iran to visit the place while the tourists are isolated from the ordinary life in Iran. The Iranian tourism industry it appears is not prepared to provide the opportunity for Japanese tourists to experience direct communication with people in Iran.

Japanese tourists in Iran can however enjoy its remarkable natural contrasts throughout the year. As the heritage sites in Iran are mainly located in the countryside, tourists have the chance to experience the natural environment and within the distance of few miles the traveller can experience major changes of seasons. There is also a great difference in vegetation and landscape between the littoral provinces along the Caspian Sea and the dry lands of the central desert as well as the eastern and western provinces. For Japanese tourists who visited the country in former times, Iran’s natural environment itself was attractive as well as the historical sites even though they did not expect it before their trip. However, the Iranian climate in the image of Japanese is mainly like a deserted unwelcoming land which is difficult to explore by travellers.

Travel Mode

One of the best-known travel-related characteristics of Japanese tourists is their propensity to travel in groups on organized package tours and to stay for shorter periods

of time than other international travellers. Independent travel is still only popular among the young and the wealthy. It has been postulated that this propensity to travel in groups is rooted in the collectivism of Japanese society which places great value on togetherness (Pizam, 1997). It may also be that a lack of confidence in communicating in foreign languages leads Japanese tourists to prefer to travel with a tour escort who can mediate between them and the host community (Carlile, 1996). It is also true that the discounted rates obtained by wholesalers for accommodation and other tourist services due to bulk purchasing keeps the prices of tours within the reach of consumers and helps to maintain their popularity (Carlile, 1996).

Japanese tourists on Iran are usually travelling in a group, escorted by an Japanese speaking Iranian tour guide who works for the land operator as well their own tour guide hired by the Japanese travel agency. It is very rare to see Japanese tourists in Iran travelling independently. By travelling with a group in Iran, Japanese tourists seem to be seeking for risk avoiding experiences rather than obtaining a discounted rate from a wholesaler for 'pure independent travel'. Due to the small size of the market, there are only few tour operators among Japanese travel agencies for Iran. Consequently, there is no competition leading to the chance of getting a discounted rate like the popular destinations for Japanese overseas travellers.

Length of Stay

Many studies have found that Japanese tourists tend to stay for shorter periods of time than other international tourists (Nozawa, 1992; Jansen-Verbeke, 1994; Carlile, 1996; Lang, 1993). Jansen-Verbeke (1994) found that Japanese travellers on two-week tours

of Europe usually stayed in one country for an average of only two nights though there is evidence to suggest that this trend does not hold true across all demographic groups. Nozawa (1992) found that elderly Japanese travellers preferred longer stays in single destinations. Possible reasons for short stays include the difficulty of taking long holidays due to long working hours and loyalties to employers (The Economist, 1988; Nozawa, 1992). Nozawa (1992) stated that the shorter stay will remain a characteristic of the Japanese market although longer stays in a single destination may increase in popularity as the expense of multi-destination tours in the market matures.

Japanese tourists in Iran stay longer than other international tourists, especially tourists from the Arab States in the Middle East. The majority of Japanese tourists in Iran are elderly visitors who stay usually one week (Mousavi 2004).

Shopping

Numerous studies have found Japanese tourists to be enthusiastic and also sophisticated shoppers while on trips abroad (Keown, 1989; Nozawa, 1992; Jansen-Verbeke, 1994; Pizam, 1997). Japanese tourists have been found to spend two to five times more in tourist destinations than their counterparts from other countries (USTTA, 1991; Morris, 1990; Bailey, 1991). A strong Yen and high disposable income in the past have certainly been major contributing factors to this tendency but cultural factors also may have played their part. The twin customs of *senbetsu* and *omiyage* have been found to be strong influences on spending in tourist destinations (Graburn, 1983; Keown, 1989; Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Nozawa, 1992; Jansen-Verbeke, 1994). Before going abroad, Japanese travellers are traditionally given a sending-off party where relatives, close

friends and colleagues give money as a present (*senbetsu*) and wish them a pleasant vacation. The tourist is then obliged to reciprocate by buying presents (*omiyage*) of roughly equal value to the money received to bring back home. This kind of gift-buying can account for up to three-quarters of the travellers' overall spending budget (Keown, 1989).

Persian carpets with their worldwide celebrity are particular buys among Iranian souvenirs which also represent Iranian culture. Visiting carpet museums in Tehran is a definite part of the Japanese group tour itinerary. Even though a Persian carpet may be too expensive to be purchased as usual *Omiyage*, elderly Japanese tourists demand them as especial gifts for their children when they get married for example.

Preferred Shopping Items

Japanese tourists tend to buy “authentic” goods associated strongly with the particular destination. These may include such items as fashion goods or perfumes from France or flower bulbs and chinaware from Amsterdam. It is also common for Japanese tourists to draw up a shopping list of specific items and decide on where to buy them before departure (Jansen-Verbeke, 1994). Price has also been found to be a major influence on Japanese tourist shopping behaviour, mainly because of relatively lower prices compared to Japan.

Cultural analysis and marketing implications

The understanding of culturally different tourists has become one of the most important aspects of the modern tourism industry. In order to respond effectively to the needs of tourists seeking a satisfying travel experience, tourist marketers and operators have to be sensitive to the standards and norms accepted within their culture. Since Japan is a major source of international tourism for many countries, it is vitally important that tourist marketers take into account the cultural attributes of Japanese tourists. According to a study by Reisinger in 1998, Japanese tourists are extremely keen on detail, aesthetics, quality and service. They are more demanding and have higher service expectations than other international tourists. Such fastidiousness has deep roots in Japanese culture and manifests itself in a highly developed sense of how services should properly be provided and presented. Without an awareness of the cultural factors behind this, tourist service providers and marketers are unlikely to be as effective as they could be in meeting the needs of Japanese travellers. For example, punctuality is regarded by Japanese society not only as a sign of good manners and respect to others, but also as a measure of professionalism and good performance. Accordingly, tourism service providers should not delay services for Japanese tourists, as this would be an indication of the provider's inability to deliver quality and a sign of incompetence (Heung, 2000).

Japanese travellers are renowned among Iranian tour operators as more demanding tourists. They will stay in 5 star hotels and ride on comfortable equipped buses only. The few Japanese tourists among international tourists in Iran are distinguished people and only some of the prestigious travel agencies in Tehran are operating tours for

Japanese. The travel agencies are careful with the job and they hardly ever remember any complaint from their Japanese counterparts.

Aging and Japanese travel propensity

Aging populations are now a common trend in much of the industrialized world and Japan is no exception. The subject of Japan's "Silver Market" and "Older travellers" has already been taken up by researchers into tourist marketing and as the population ages, it will become an ever more important concern (You, 2000).

One of the most important questions regarding the travel behaviour of older age groups is whether or not the maturing of the population has a negative impact on travel, especially international travel. The assumption is that a progressive loss of energy and mobility will lead to a diminished propensity to travel (You, 2000). However, running counter to this trend are the effects of medical advances and improved diet, housing and public health conditions which could contribute to better mobility, not worse. Moschis (1996) states that the image of the elderly as infirm is exaggerated. It has been found that most elderly people remain active well into their seventies despite their ailments. Furthermore, the elderly are at a stage of life in which travel becomes increasingly possible as they are free from family and work responsibilities. For many seniors, travel is even the primary status symbol in lives characterized by their leisure pursuits (Pederson 1994).

Japan, the world's healthiest nation,⁷ is also the most rapidly aging country in the world.⁸ The mass retirements of baby-boomers beginning in 2007 will be an important phenomenon that will attract different business including the travel industry in Japan. For example, a JTB subsidiary organizes tours to regions such as the Middle East, Africa and Latin America in response to the tendency of seniors to visit countries they have yet to visit.⁹ This enormous customer market of retiring baby-boomers represents a new business potential for the Iranian tourism industry. The new class of tourists with plenty of leisure time in their hand, are usually not seeking for sea, sand, alcohol etc, (which are not available in Iran anyway) will make them much more attractive in comparison to younger generations. Consequently, it's realistic to consider these as a target market for Iranian tourism industry.

Buyer behavior in Japanese travel trade

This section doesn't refer to Japanese tourists to Iran directly, but to the travel industry and tourism management in general. As mentioned in other parts of this thesis, collectivism is an important characteristic in Japanese culture and social network activity is affected by culture. Money and Crofts (2000) studied buyer-seller relationships in the international travel trade. They showed how social network activity operates differently in both West and Japanese cultures, and why these differences

⁷ Usui Chikako, Japan's aging Dilemma? special report No 107, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, 2003, cited in <http://wwics.si.edu/events/docs/ACFE9.pdf> accessed: March 2005, p 19

⁸ Amy, Mc Greedy. The demographic dilemma Japan's aging society, Asian program special report No 107, P1

⁹ Hiroyuki Nitta, Capitalizing on Retirement of Japan's First Baby-Boomers, JETRO Japan Economic Report, April-May 2006, p8, www.jetro.go.jp/en/market/trend/special/pdf/jem0605-1e.pdf, accessed Nov 21 2006.

should be appreciated for a western tourism supplier to be successful in Japanese market. This study came to the conclusion that Japanese use more network activity and referral sources in travel trade.

Money and Crotts (2000) also determined that a key factor for being successful in the Japanese travel market for those who are willing to sell travel service to Japanese is to be patient enough in making a strong relationship with well-placed intermediaries such as trading companies and banks. In the travel market for instance, joint venturing with a famous tour company that has been working as a wholesaler is a way to access the Japanese travel market, and this would be no different for the Iranians.

In a study comparing Korean and Japanese tourists visiting Guam, Iverson (1997) found Koreans to have significantly shorter decision time frames when planning their trips than their Japanese counterparts. The finding was attributed to Hofstede's (1980) characterization of Japanese as highly averse to uncertainty and risk-taking and therefore more likely to rigorously plan their trips than tourists of other nationalities. Demographic factors such as age, marital status and previous travel experience were also found to be related to decision time frames.

The Japanese Travel Life Cycle (JTLC)

One interesting approach to the segmentation of the Japanese overseas travel market is the Japanese Travel Life Cycle (JTLC) proposed by March (2000). His study is based on a concept introduced by Becker (1965) and developed by Wells and Gubar (1966) whose Family Life Cycle (FLC) identified nine stages of family life to classify their

consumptive behaviour. By the 1980s the FLC had been developed into a useful multidimensional market segmentation tool which extended the range of variables used to distinguish the different stages of family life from a simplistic focus on age – previously the primary demographic variable used to distinguish market segments – to include such factors as the presence or absence of dependent children, employment status and amount of discretionary income.

March uses a similar approach to identify eight stages in the JTLC. His approach differs from FLC studies by focusing not on the family but on a range of group distinctions and institutionalized aspects of social behaviour that are particular to Japanese culture and society. Referring to a study by Christopher (1984), he states that the Japanese are, from an early age, obliged to adopt certain culturally ascribed behavioural patterns for particular social situations, whether at school, in the workplace or in interpersonal relationships. These can be used to usefully segment the Japanese travel market and, indeed, must be taken into account since they closely relate to the group behaviour and relative uniformity of Japanese overseas travelers in terms of preferences, activities and expectations.

March (2000) explains the eight stages of the JTLC as: Family Trip (*kazoku ryokô*), School Excursion (*shugaku ryokô*), Graduation Trip (*sotsugyo ryokô*), Overseas Weddings, Honeymoon Travel, In-Company trip (*shokuba ryokô*), and Silver Market. March's work of segmentation of Japanese travel provides a comprehensive understanding for those tourism marketers who are willing take advantage of the Japanese overseas travel market for particular destinations.

In such a risk-averse society as Japan, growth in the family travel segment or *kazoku ryoko* reflects an increasing maturity and experience in the market. It shows that parents with children are becoming ever more confident about traveling to foreign destinations as a family and that foreign travel is becoming an integral part of Japanese people's everyday lives. The family travel sector represents 25% of market share according to 1998 figures published by JTB and accounts for up to 40% of holiday sales in the summer peak period. Hawaii is by a long way the preferred destination for family vacations because of its low cost and because of the special services that hotels offer such as day-care facilities and supervised playgrounds. Families with young children tend to opt for short-haul destinations such as Guam or Saipan.

The tradition of organized school travel for junior and senior high school students has a long history. Funded by parents, the practice dates back to the 1880s when students took trips together as a kind of physical and spiritual training. While domestic *shugaku ryokô* are still more prevalent, an increasing number of schools are opting for foreign destinations. Since Japan's Ministry of Education used to discourage government schools from using air transport for school trips, foreign trips used to be restricted to private schools. This is now gradually changing, with more and more local government education boards giving the "green light" to school trips overseas. One significant benefit for the tour provider is that schools rarely choose a destination only once. The significant costs and time involved in organizing a new destination mean that schools often buy the same package at least two and more commonly three years in a row.

Furthermore, it is often considered beneficial for students to visit a destination that their older peers did the previous year.

After completing their studies and prior to starting full-time employment, it is common for university students to take a “graduation trip” or *sotsugyo ryokô*. Students typically travel with one or more friends and favour a more independent style of travel than the other market segments that March identifies. They tend to book the first couple of nights’ hotel accommodation and then make their own arrangements. Cheap rail travel is often the preferred mode of transport. Among preferred destinations for graduation trips are European cities such as London, Paris and Rome and major U.S. cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York. The average length of a graduation trip in 1995 was eight days (Travel Journal, 1997).

A growing number of young couples are choosing to have their weddings in overseas destinations. According to industry figures, the number of “overseas weddings” doubled in the three-year period to 1996, reaching a total of 40,000 couples with 60% of couples choosing to get married in Hawaii. At a wedding show in Tokyo attended by 1,200 engaged couples, one in seven couples wanted to have their wedding overseas (March, 2000). The main advantages of an overseas wedding are the lower cost, easier arrangements and the heightened romance. By having a wedding abroad, couples can restrict the number of guests to close family and intimate friends. Such ancillary costs as the hire of an expensive wedding hall are thus avoided and expenditure is significantly reduced. In addition, the time, effort and stress associated with organising such an important ceremony within a society in which hierarchy and face are such sensitive

issues are also saved. The overseas wedding sector of the Japanese travel market is expected to grow in the coming years as the second generation of the post-war baby boom reaches a marriageable age and the high cost of domestic weddings continues to encourage couples to seek alternatives.

Since newlyweds spend more on accommodation, meals, tours, and shopping than any other travellers (JTB 1998), they are one of the most lucrative and sought after segments in the Japanese market. “Honeymoon travel” accounts for well over fifty percent of the large wholesalers’ luxury tour package sales and foreign tourism operators devote considerable resources to capturing and maintaining market share. The length of the honeymoon is, on average, relatively short. Most couples prefer to take only six nights/eight days since this allows them to take no more than one week off work. Overseas destinations have been popular with honeymooners since the late 1970s and increased in popularity throughout the eighties. By 1984, all three of the most popular destinations for honeymoons were overseas. Hawaii, Australia and the USA have been competing for the top spot ever since.

The practice of company employees taking vacations together became popular during the mid-1960s and usually consisted of a one or two night visit to a famous hot spring resort. The Japanese government offers tax relief on the spending on these trips so long as companies foot at least half of the bill. The increasing value of the Yen in the 1980s encouraged a growing number of companies to take overseas *shokuba ryokô*. However, the economic downturn in the 1990s has seen a decline in the number of companies offering *shokuba ryokô* with 74 percent of companies sponsoring employee travel in

1996 compared with 90% two years earlier (Nikkei Weekly, February 14, 1997). Despite this, about 7-10% of Japanese overseas travellers report that they are travelling with company colleagues. The top destinations for company travel in 1996 were Hawaii, Hong Kong/Macau and South East Asia followed by Guam/Saipan, Korea and Australia. Most in-company trips lasted only 2 or 3 nights.

Japan's silver market refers to travellers over the age of 60, a market segment which is already being aggressively targeted by Japanese wholesalers and overseas destination marketers alike. In 1995, 1.75 million Japanese over the age of 60 travelled abroad, a 14.2 percent increase on the previous year. In the same year, the number of travellers aged over 50 was 26.8 percent, over one in four Japanese outbound travellers. Older travellers tend to stay longer in destinations and their supposedly high disposable income makes them an attractive sector for tourist marketers. The size and potential of this market warrants them a great deal of attention. The retirement time of baby boomer generation which has already started from 2006 has attracted the attention of tourism marketers.

Conclusion

Japan's overseas travel market, which provides more than 17 million travellers to the global tourism industry today is also a major source of cultural tourists. According to survey studies conducted by Japan Tourism Marketing not less than 40% of Japanese international travellers mentioned visiting historical sites as their preferred purpose of travel during the years between 2001 and 2006 (JTB, 2006).

The current high proportion of senior travellers in the Japanese overseas travel market has contributed to the growth of the cultural tourism section amongst that market. Furthermore, the large number of the Japanese baby boomer generation who will retire every year starting from 2007 will further strengthen the cultural and heritage tourism section within Japanese outbound travel. In response to their strong desire to travel as well as their higher interest to visit historical sites comparing other market segments of Japanese overseas travel market, JTB subsidiary organizes special tours to regions such as Middle East, Africa and Latin America (Nitta, 2006)

There are over 1.2 million historical sites are left from both Persia and Islamic Iran to attract international tourists every year from Iran's neighboring Islamic countries mainly as well as European tourists. However, Japanese tourists are particularly missing in Iran. The Persian language, and the heritage and culture of Iran which distinguishes the country from other Islamic Arab States of the Middle East provide the authenticity which today's cultural tourists are seeking for by their visit to a destination. Throughout the thousands of years of Persian civilization and history, the Iranian people have experienced cultural changes in communication with various nations who visit Iran from Asia, Europe and the Arab peninsula as immigrants, travellers or even invaders . Numerous Silk Road sites remaining in the country tells not only the story of the merchants but also the ideas and culture that have been travelling with them between East and West through Iran. The combination of Persian identity and Islamic Iran today shows how Iranian learned to be tolerant enough to improve their culture through out their history as well as preserving their Persian identity. Modern Persia/Iran is therefore

theoretically rich enough in cultural heritage to attract Japanese cultural tourists, however the gap between potential and market reality is significant.

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CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF PERSIA AND ISLAMIC IRAN

Introduction

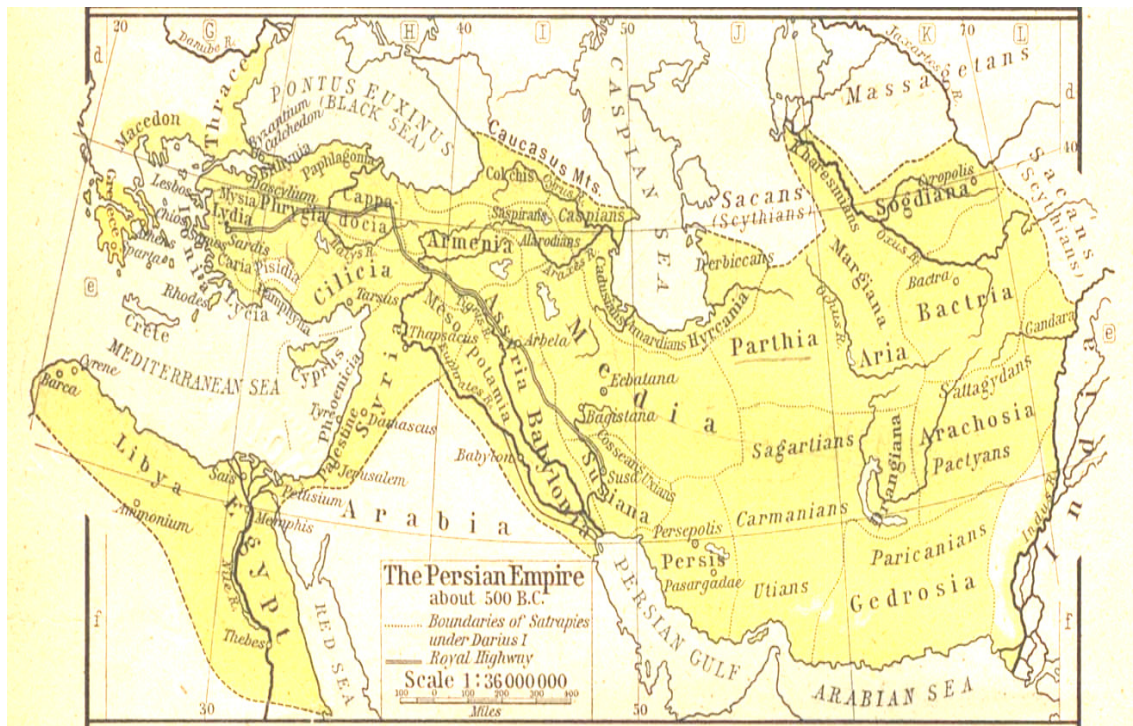
Iran has a long history that is important not just to the country but also to the rest of the world, to which it made important contributions in the past. Persian history is said to have commenced in 559 BC (ITTO, 2001). There is no lack of literature on different aspects of Persian civilization and history such as architecture, administrative knowledge, art and religion which provide detail information in the field. It is impossible to conduct research on tourism in Iran without knowledge of the history of Iran. But to describe the whole history of Persia/Iran is also beyond of the scope of this thesis. Consequently, this chapter presents a brief history of Persia as the cultural heritage of the Iranian people, in order to explain how Persian culture is preserved throughout its long history in spite of changes in the political boundaries and ethnic diversity of the Country. It shows that the authentic cultural elements of ancient Persia are still alive in modern Iran, which makes the place qualified theoretically to attract many cultural tourists.

Persian Identity and the History of Iran

Known as Persia until 1935, Iran inherits the great civilization of the Achaemenid Persian Empire (Figure1) which was the largest that the ancient world had seen to that time, extending from Anatolia and Egypt across western Asia to northern India and Central Asia (Briant, 2002). Iranian/Persian culture and civilization have strongly contributed to the world's art and civilization over the centuries. The peoples who have been living in Iran are many and diversified but at the same time unified under the Persian language and culture. Over the centuries the land of Iran has experienced invasions, by different people from the west, Middle East and Central Asia such as the

Greeks accompanying Alexander, the Arabs, the Turks and the Mongols. However, the conquerors if they stayed lived in Iran without bringing about appreciable racial and ethnic transformation. Furthermore, they were assimilated into Iranian culture. Keeping Persian identity and language over time is the evidence for the proposition that it has been the culture that has unified people in Iran not the race (Benny and Nasr, 1975).

Figure 3.1: Map of Persian Empire 500 BC



Source: The Historical Atlas, W. R. Shepherd, 1923

The culture and civilization of traditional Persia survived until the third century BC in the time of the Sassanids (226-240), the last native Persian rulers. The civilization bequeathed by the Sassanids was based on two elements, a) Zoroastrianism and the importance of the position of Zoroastrian priests and b) the ancient culture of the Achaemenids, the culture of “Shah” (the king) and “Shahanshah” (king of kings). This

culture provided Iran with a foundation that survived Iranian identity crises from the medieval period to the present in spite of insecurity, poverty, war and invasion (Khodadadian, 1999).

The victorious nations in Iran over time like the Greeks, Turks, Mongols and Arabs were influenced by Iranian culture. Persian civilization and culture attracted them and they even contributed to improving the culture regardless of being conquerors of the land. In the Islamic period, Iranian culture had such a deep influence on Arabs that it could enter the court of Umayyah and the Abbasids in Baghdad and Damascus and teach them how to rule (Iqbal, 2003).

Arab Invasion: Persians Adopt Islam

The Arab invasion (650 AD) that made Iran an Islamic country is an important event in its history, which brought a new religion, thoughts and views and put Iranian history into a new stage. Iranians adopted the Islamic calendar and Arabic alphabets, and the Persian language was written in the Arabic alphabet. In the other hand, Iranian cultural elements entered in Islamic religion to such a high extent that it created an Iranian Islamic culture which has heavily influenced the Islamic world during the past 1400 years (Sayedabadi, 2006).

It was the tolerance of the Iranian culture that prevented the country from becoming totally a part of the Arab world by converting to Islam. However, the land of Iran at the time of native Iranian dynasties like the Achaemenids and Sassanids was much bigger than today. It converted to Islam but the Islamic Iran did not become “Arabic Iran” and

created its own Islamic Iranian culture. The ancient Iranian customs, Persian language and the great works of the famous Iranian poet “Ferdowsi” who wrote “*Shahname*” which means “Book of King” (finished around 1000 AD) helped the diversified Iranian nations to keep their Iranian identity. Although Iran in Medieval times experienced division into some small independent regions like “Khorasan” and “Azerbaijan” provisionally, it was again the strength of the Iranian culture and identity that united them as one country to the present (Ferdowsi,1999).

The Arab invasions in different countries in the region were different. In the case of Iran, it took almost 100 years (650-750) for the country to be totally captured by the Arab Moslems. The whole land was captured almost without conflict; bloodshed and fire except for small wars .Even so, a number of Iranians were faithful to Zoroastrianism from different cities like “Fars”, “Jabal”, “Gilan”, and “Deilam” until 950 AD. Before Persian converted to Islam, they were for some fifteen hundred years Zoroastrians or Manichaeen or followers of other Iranian religions. They succeeded in absorbing of the deepest elements of their past into their Islamic culture rather than rejecting it (Benny and Nasr, 1975).

The Samanids

Soon after Iran converted to Islam, two Iranian dynasties, the Tahirids (821-873) and the Saffarids (867-903) came to rule as the vassals of the Abbasids, the Arab government in the capital of Baghdad. Tahirids and Saffarids were Iranian Moslems with their own Iranian Islamic culture who paved the way for the Samanids later to revive ancient Iranian culture once again. At the time of the Samanids (892-999), a

renaissance of ancient Iranian culture colored with Islam took hold in central Asia, and Khorasan (the north eastern province in modern Iran). Samanid kings also used the title of “Shahanshah” (the king of kings) following the royal culture of the Achaemenids (Naji, 2001).

Abbasid civilization and culture is considered as an Arabic Islamic civilization especially because of the language of the Koran but it was totally influenced by Iranian culture. Iranian Pre-Islamic culture became a symbol for the Abbasid court. The Abbasid’s culture was in fact more Iranian than Arabic. Many Iranian scientists, intellectuals and politicians were in the Abbasid court in Baghdad, where they tried to compose a combination of pre-Islamic Iranian culture with Islamic Arab culture. Iranian literature including mythical stories and the Royal literature of the Sassanids was translated to Arabic by the scholars from the beginning of 8th century .Among those Iranian scholars was “Ibn-e Moqaffa” (d.757), the Persian author and translator in Baghdad who was the founder of Arabic prose, even though he was a Persian former Zoroastrian by the name of “Roozbeh”(Frey, 1989). However there are only few Arab scholars who mention the role of Persians in formation of Islamic culture. Among them is Al-Harithy according to whom “the Abbasids in power appropriated Persian language and court administrative systems. Persian art, pottery, philosophy and archaeology were sources of inspiration in Abbasid cultural production”.

The renaissance of ancient Iran entered the Islamic world when the Abbasid caliph’s ideals gradually become the same as those of the Sassanid Persians. The main element of Persian kings, “charisma” or the gift of God to make a king superior to others as well

as enabling him to reign, was translated to “Nur” (the light) in the Islamic world. The light, that enables the caliph to establish governorship of “Allah” and to bring justice for his people.

Iran under the rule of the Turks of Central Asia (Seljuks and Qaznavids)

From the 11th century Iran was penetrated by Turks from Central Asia. They were Sunni Muslims with a nomadic life in their origin and accordingly they brought nomadism to Iran as well. As a result they damaged the agriculture and habitation culture of Iranian villages in northwestern region of Iran (Modern Azerbaijan) where most of them found good pastures and temperate climate to live.

Although the Samanids were defeated by the Turkic dynasties (Seljuks and Qaznavids) in Iran, the conquering Turks were influenced by Persian culture later on and even adopted “Modern Persian” as the official language in their court. “Nizam al-Molk¹⁰” who was the Seljuk’s Persian chief minister (vizier) founded a number of the early schools of the Islamic world called “nezamiyeh” in Khorasan. The theoretical schools founded by the Persian vizier developed later as universities for Islamic studies as well as other sciences including natural science, mathematics, geometry, astronomy, physics and chemistry. The buildings of the Islamic schools were created in the style of Persian architecture from the Parthians (170BC_AD226) with a central courtyard, four verandas and walls decorated by Persian tiles (Tabatabai, 1996).

¹⁰ Nizam al-Molk, vizier (1063–92) under two Seljuk sultans, of Persian descent, he was early educated in administration, serving the Ghaznavids sultans. By 1059 he was chief administrator of Khorasan; in 1063 the Seljuks made him their vizier. Nizam al-Mulk remained in that position throughout the reigns of the two Seljuk sultans: “Alp Arslan” and “Malikshah”. His power peaked under the latter, when he wrote the extensive treatise entitled *Siyasat-nameh*, or “Book of Government.”

The Seljuk administration was totally based on the Sassanids and even their official language was “Modern Persian”. Political stability and the peaceful situation of Iran under “Malik Shah”, the Seljuk Iranian king (r.1072_1092), was accompanied by an economic boom and the splendor of the Silk Road which had several cities of Iran as trade centers. The trade between China, central Asia, Europe and the Saudi Arabian peninsula was through Iran at that time (Kasrai, 1984)

Mongols

The Mongol invasion of the first half of the 13th century (including Tamerlane and his successors) were disastrous for Iran. They destroyed many towns and much Persian art and some of the great Persian cities like Nishapur, Merv and Balkh lost their magnificence. As usual in the history of Persia though, Iran reasserted its national identity again and developed as a distinct political and cultural entity after being invaded, as a result of the influence of Persian culture on the conquerors. A later Mongol ruler, Ghazan Khan (1295-1304), and his famous Iranian vizier, Rashid al-Din¹¹, brought Iran a partial and brief economic revival. Later on, the Mongols lowered taxes for artisans, encouraged agriculture, rebuilt and extended irrigation works, and improved the safety of the trade routes. Tamerlane (d.1405) ordered Iranian artists and architectures to decorate the cities of Samarkand and Bokhara in central Asia in the

¹¹ Persian statesman and historian who was the author of a universal history, “Jame at-tawarikh”, he belonged to a Jewish family of Hamadan but was converted to Islam and as a physician joined the court of the Mongol ruler of Persia, Abagha (1265–82). He became vizier to Ghazan in 1298 and served under his successor Öljeitü.

Persian style, which still exists and attracts tourists to modern-day Uzbekistan (Teymuri, 1999).

Safavids

With the rise of the Safavids in Iran (1499-1736), an Iranian integrated federal government came to rule once again after hundreds of years of invasion. The Safavid state provided both the geographical and societal foundations of modern Iran. The Safavid period, which was the time of the renaissance of Iranian culture that found its position in the modern Islamic world with Shiism, brought Iran into a new situation. The economy of Iran grew up due to the political and commercial contact with Europe. The new Iran was founded as a national country with Persian culture and language. Furthermore, the Safavids established Shiism Islam as an official state religion. Shiite views brought Iran an identity different from its Sunni neighbors and Shiism was the connector which united Iranian Muslims with various ethnicities as a nation (Jafarian, 1992).

Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty entitled himself “Shahanshah”. The amplification of Safavid rule was completed during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629). In wars with Uzbeks (1598-1599), Ottomans (1603-1604) and Mongols of India (1629) he took back the Iranian lands and expanded the borders of Iran again. The country flourished under Shah Abbas in the case of economy, art and architecture. He choose Isfahan city as his capital and made it an architectural showcase as working and living opportunity for artists and architectures from different countries were provided by the state. Different people including Europeans, Turks, Indians and Chinese as well as

Persians were living in Isfahan as a cosmopolitan city and the population of the city reached 600,000. Tolerance to religions was among the characteristics of the Shiite government (the same as under the Achaemenids). Accordingly, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Christians, Hindus and Jewish people were given their respectful social position in the city of Isfahan (Rashad, 2002).

The power of religion was consolidated as pious foundations belonging to the holy Shiite sites were established through out the country during the 18th century. The holy cities of Karbala and Najaf (in modern Iraq) were among the numerous religious sites at that time that became rich and powerful religious centers. Shiite sites which were mainly the sanctuaries or tombs of people from Imam Ali's lineage were managed by Shia priests.

The "treaty of peace and frontiers" between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, in 1639 however, saw Iran lose the area which is now modern Iraq (Vizier, 2001). This treaty separated the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf from the other main religious centers in Iran. Later on, the two holy cities of Mashhad and Qum in Iran were founded as centers for Shiite Clergy to replace the Iraqi sites, which increased the political and social power of the Shiite clergy in Iran.

Afshar and Zand

The power of the Mullahs in Iran was thereby raised to such a high extent that even Nadir Shah (r.1736–49) the founder of the Afshar dynasty, who is generally regarded as one of the greatest of all of the rulers of Persia could not reduce it. He tried to join Iran

and the Ottoman Empire together by unifying the Shia and Sunni, which however led to much disappointment in Shiite Iran, and the plan failed (Shabani, 2002).

Karim Khan, the founder of the Zand dynasty reigned in south of Iran (1750-79) under the title of “Vakil E Mardom”, which means the representative of people. As the first Iranian King after almost 700 years of the rule of Turks and Mongols, he promoted Shiism and made Shiraz his capital beautiful with Persian architecture. The last ruler of Zand dynasty was overthrown by the Turks of the Qajar dynasty in 1794.

Qajar and Pahlavi

“Aga Muhammad Khan”, founder of the “Qajar” dynasty came to rule in 1794 and became Shah of Persia. Although he was vigorous and able, resisted a Russian invasion and himself invaded (1795) Georgia, his successors were not strong enough to protect the country from Russia and Britain and these Countries imposed their political desires on Iran. During the 19th century, Iran was facing Russian and British encroachments seeking their colonial interests. Although the country kept its independency, Persia lost some parts of its territory such as the present-day State of Azerbaijan¹² in 1813 and Persian Armenia¹³ in 1828.

¹² The Treaty of Gulistan (1813): signed by Russia and Iran (Persia) at Gulistan, a village in what is now Azerbaijan Province. It ended the Russo-Persian war that had begun in 1804. Persia ceded the khanates forming the present-day state of Azerbaijan and renounced its claim on Georgia and Dagestan (Nasiri, 1987)

¹³ By treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828, agreement signed by Russia and Persia at the village of Torkaman, (East Azerbaijan province, today Iran). It concluded the Russo-Persian war that had begun in 1825 and forced Persia to cede part of Persian Armenia to Russia and to grant extraterritorial rights (Nasiri, 1987).

Figure 3.2: Map of Modern Iran



Source: World Atlas and MapQuest

In spite of resistance from the people, western reforms were subsequently imposed on the nation even though with difficulties and causing a Shiite reaction against the King and royal family continuing into the 20th century. The “Tobacco strike” of 1891 is an example of such oppositions by Iranian Shiite Mullahs ¹⁴(Mirbagheri, 2004).

The political power of the Shiite clergy continued to increase during the 20th century to its highest extent in 1979, when the Islamic revolution ended the rule of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979) and created the Islamic republic of Iran under the rule of

¹⁴ When the agreement between the Qajar king Nasir al-deen Shah and the British company named “Imperial Tobacco Corporation of Persia” was signed to delegate the production and trade of tobacco to the UK government but monopolized by the company, Ayatollah Shirazi declared the use of tobacco forbidden throughout the country. Therefore, the Iranian people laid aside tobacco and abolished the agreement in 1892 by the power of an ayatollah’s verdict.

Ayatollah Khomeini. More detail on the Pahlavi era of Iran is provided in other parts of this dissertation under the headings of tourism and politics in Iran.

Shiism

From 1501 to the present, Iran has been the center for Shia Islam in the world, with Shiite Moslems making up almost 90% of the Iranian population at present. Located in the region regarded as the birth place of the world's main religions, the combination of Shiism and Persian culture has brought a strong national identity for ethnically diversified Iranians and has unified the country. Accordingly, the role of Iranian culture and Shiism in fostering national identity and protecting the country from being colonized by the European powers in the second half of the 18th century is respected by historians. In this context the Islamic revolution of 1979 as a national movement against American and British imperialism in Iran and the western oriented modernization policy of the Pahlavi regime is a clear example. With the motto "Independence, liberty, Islamic Republic", the people brought the Shia Clergy to rule (Razavi, 1997; Keddie, 2003).

The word "Shia" means "party". It refers to a member of the branch of Islam that regards Ali (Ali Ibn Abu Talib) and his descendants as the legitimate successors to Muhammad and also rejects the first three caliphs. Ali was the cousin of Muhammad, and his son-in-law. He left Medina, the city of Mohammad in Saudi Arabia and went to Kufa city (in modern Iraq) where he was murdered. His tomb in Najaf city is a holy Shia site for Iranian pilgrims. Iranian Shia Moslems believe in Ali and eleven of his successors, which is the most popular branch of Shiism called *Isna-ashari* (the believers of 12 Shiite Imam). While the tomb of all Shia Imams are respected as holy pilgrim

sites for Shia Moslems, only one is located Iran and the rest are in Iraq and Saudi Arabia which supports a tight religious tourism between the countries (Kazemi,2001).

The Umayyah Dynasty (650-750) ruled the Arab world from Damascus before the Abbasids (750-1258). These two Arab dynasties were the enemies of Ali and his descendants. They used to proscribe Ali's successors and accordingly many of these migrated to Iran from Syria and Iraq between 650 and 1250. They lived in Iran until they died and the places where they are buried in Iran have become holy pilgrim sites known as *Imamzadeh* which means the person's ancestor is from the family of Prophet Mohammad. Today 8000 to 10,000 *Imamzadeh* remain from the family of Ali in Iran (ITTO, 2001). The holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad city for example is the destination for almost 20 million pilgrim tourists every year who are mainly domestic tourists from different parts of the country. Therefore, it is rational to value the role of Shiite sites and religious tourism within the popularity of Shiism in Iran.

Today, about 15 percent of the Islamic world is composed of Shiite Moslems and the majority of them are in Iran. For Shiite people, only Ali can be Mohammed's successor and caliph. They believe that Ali was the first one who converted to Islam after Mohamed and also regard him as a "Hero" from the Bani-Hashem tribe (the same tribe as prophet Mohammed came from). Shiites believe also that the Succession of Ali was declared by Mohammed in his last pilgrim trip in "Chumm"¹⁵ on the way back to

¹⁵ This place is historically famous for an event in which Shiite Muslims believe Mohammad to have verified the appointment of Ali as his successor, during a sermon. Ghadir Khumm (Pond at Khumm) is in fact the name of the site that lies between the holy Muslim cities of Mecca and Medina where the event transpired. Here is a place on the Trade route between Syria and Yemen where travelers could replenish their resources of water in the most arid places of Arabia between Mecca and Medina.

Medina from Mecca and accordingly people celebrate this day every year in Iran as well as around the world.

Persian literature

A number of cuneiform inscriptions have preserved the “Old Persian” that was the language of the Achaemenid Persians. The ancient language was later developed into “Middle Persian” after the fall of the Achaemenids and was also named “Pahlavi” language. “Modern Persian” is a language that represents the Islamic Iranian culture; it’s also the foundation of Iranian national identity with a deep influence on surrounding areas. The “Modern Persian”¹⁶ which was written in Arabic alphabets at the time of the Samanids is the foundation of Iranian Islamic culture (Ministry of Culture, 1965).

The birth place of “Modern Persian” literature was Bukhara, (11th century) the capital city of the Samanids in Central Asia (modern Uzbekistan), where it could develop and grow without competition with Arabic in the Samanid court. The first great literary writer of the Modern Persian language who composed poems was Rudaki (d.940-950). Later on, geography, natural science, medicine, mathematics, geometry and astronomy texts were written in Modern Persian in addition to literature (prose and poem) (Rashad, 2002).

The history books of *Balami* and *Shahnameh* (The Epic of Kings) are among the most famous feats of Persian literature. Balami, written by a Minister in the Samanid Court outlines the history of Iran from early times up to the 10th century. The book was

¹⁶ Modern Persian also called “Farsi” is the member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family. It is the official language of modern Iran and most closely related to Middle and Old Persian, former languages of the region of Fars (Persia) in southwestern Iran.

regarded officially as the royal history book until 1500 at the time of the rule of Mongols and their successors in Iran. The book *Shahnameh*, composed by the Iranian poet “Ferdowsi” (d.1020) and containing more than 50,000 distinct epic Persian poems, is also amongst the most important samples of Iranian literature and has universal renown. *Shahnameh* contains Iranian pre-Islamic mythical stories of Achaemenids, Parthians and Sassanids which contributed to the revival of the Iranian identity of the new Muslim Iranians. The book, finished around 1010, helped Iranians to preserve Persian/Iranian culture, language and national identity as well as preventing them from converting to Arabic culture in spite of converting to Islam. Some experts believe that one of the main reasons that the Modern Persian language today is more or less the same language as Ferdowsi's Era more than 1000 years ago, lies in such works (Sakhifar,1998).

Conclusion

The land of Iran has experienced the flow of different nations in the form of migration, invasion and war. Different races and tribes including Turks, Mongols, Afghans and Arabs have ruled the country as well as the Persians themselves. However, no people who have come into contact with Persia throughout its history could remain indifferent to Persian culture.

The rich religious environment of Persian history represents a remarkable sense of tolerance combined with a strong religious life. Persia has been a heaven for religious minorities over time and they have been free to practice their religious life in Persia within its confines. Nestorians for example, who had separated from the main Christian

church over doctrinal questions, were allowed to establish their churches in Persia, along with Jewish communities. Finally, in the eastern lands of the Persian Empire, Buddhism appeared and through these areas the message of Buddha traveled to China. However, Persian culture has remained dominant in its role of imposing unity upon the variety of ideas, forms and ideologies entering its borders from the East and the West each time and has succeeded in creating a new and profound Persian identity (Benny and Nasr, 1975).

The spread of Islam into Persia was a gradual process which took almost a hundred years. Persia did not convert to Islam because of the fear of the Arab forces but a profound spiritual need. The new religion enabled Persians to contribute to Islamic civilization as well as to preserve their own cultural identity. For that, the Islamic Iran was not in contrast with the ancient Persian civilization but rather the combination of Persian culture and Islam has gifted Persia a distinctive identity among the other Islamic Arab countries in the region.

Today the ignorance of Persia in the formation of Islamic civilization by the Arabic world is a fact in spite of its almost entirely Muslim population. There are a few Arab scholars such as Al-Harithy (2004) who appreciate the role of Persia in the region and its contribution to Islamic culture. According to Al-Harithy exchanges between Persia and the Arab world have enriched artistic production and development in the region at large - the whole of the Arab world has been influenced by Persian military, political, artistic and scientific endeavors. Among those historians who realize and confess this fact is Richard Nelson Frey, a well known scholar in Central Asian Studies, according

to whom “Arabs no longer understand the role of Iran and the Persian language in the formation of Islamic culture. Perhaps they wish to forget the past, but in so doing they remove the bases of their own spiritual, moral and cultural being...without the heritage of the past and a healthy respect for it...there is little chance for stability and proper growth” (Frey, 1989, 236). That this ignorance has significant consequences for regional and international tourism based on the role of Iran in the region is also not in doubt. This thesis explores this matter in later chapters.

If a tourist visits the Mausoleum of Timur in Samarqand in modern Uzbekistan or the Sultaniya dome in Cairo for example, he or she can find that their features must have a common source from the northeastern provinces of Persia (Abouseif, 1989). The reason can be easily traced in the history of Persia and Egypt in the 14th century. Timur hired Persian architectures to decorate the city of Samarqand. In Egypt, Sultan Al-Nasir came to leave an impact of Persian architecture on buildings in Cairo through his diplomatic relations with the Ilkhanids of Persia. According to Al-Harthy, Persian architectural features in Cairo reflect the taste of the court figures and the desire for the expression of their wealth and power through luxurious materials and distinct forms expressed in an imperial style. It is also the same in the case of Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate of the Abbasids, in whose court Persian viziers and advisors took prominent roles. The buildings of that city were the first and greatest physical magnification of Persian ideological influence on the Arab Caliphate, for in Persian royal culture the buildings were a sign of kingship (Al-Harthy, 2004).

What is left today after thousands years of Persian history is a number of historical sites and other intangible cultural heritage of Persia and Islamic Iran. According to the Iran Cultural and Heritage Organization (ICHO) there are over 1.2 Million Cultural features such as historical sites, monuments and museums through out the country. Furthermore, it is also pointed out that some 12,000 cultural resources have been inventoried, documented, and registered in ICHO's database, and the documentation of new sites is proceeding rapidly. Consequently, it is not surprising that Iran is ranked as one of the ten top countries in the world in terms of its ancient and historical sites, according to UNESCO (Mashai, 2005). However, the current situation of the Iranian tourism industry suggests a big gap between the potential and market realities.

While the well documented history of Persia and the existence of numerous sites from different periods in modern Iran theoretically support the country's potential to attract cultural tourists, it raises the question why the actual number of tourists visiting these sites does not match with the potential. If historical sites influenced by Persian architecture in Cairo can attract cultural tourists to Egypt or the floral design at the tomb in the Taj Mahal can interest them, why then is there a barrier(s) to visits to Isfahan city in Iran which is the showcase of Persian Architecture and Islamic art? The remainder of this thesis is an attempt to find out the reasons for this, and to propose solutions in respect of at least the Japanese tourism market.

CHAPTER 4
TOURISM AND POLITICS IN IRAN

Introduction

Government involvement is a fact in tourism and the industry can not survive without it especially in the modern world. It is only governments within the political boundaries of each country who are able to bring the political stability, safety and the legal and financial bases that tourism requires (Elliot, 1997). In the case of Iran, political issues and international relations have been playing a fundamental role in the tourism industry. In this concept, the Iran-America conflict which has also been influencing Iran's international relations especially with American allies including Japan, is the main issue at the present time.

Iran's political regime changed in 1979 at the time of the revolution from a monarchy to an Islamic republic. Although the polity of Iran has not been separate from its religion through out history, changing the monarchy or *Shahanshah* to the Republic was a turning point in the history of Iran. For Iran, it was the second time the country's name was to be changed when, the term "The Islamic Republic of" was added to the former name of the country "Iran" by the revolutionary regime in 1979. The first change was in fact in 1935 when Reza Shah requested other countries to use "Iran" in terms of official matters instead of "Persia", which was the former name of the country. Today, not only does Persia not exist as a country name in the world, but also the relationship between Iran and Persia is also growing pale in the international community and specially in Japan. The author's experience interviewing Japanese people revealed that for many people in Japan Persia is a part of the Arab world and does not have any relation with modern Iran.

It was not only the change of the name; the Islamic revolution was also a fundamental change in Iran's international relations with the west as well as a revolution in ideologies and cultural values in the country. The revolution was a historical turning point in the crisis of western-Centric project of moderation followed by Shah of Iran (Mahdavi, 2004). There have been little efforts from Iran since 1979 to introduce the Islamic revolution to the world and accordingly the way that western and American media have been misrepresenting Islamic Iran to the international community has brought an image problem for the country especially as a tourist destination. In this context, the image of Iran in Japan is a vivid example.

Iran's tourism industry has experienced turbulent times during last three decades. The Islamic revolution in 1979; the tragic 8 year war with Iraq (1989-1988), wars in Iran's neighboring countries of Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq, and recently the nuclear issue of Iran and the story of U.N. sanctions which is on going, are among remarkable political problems and challenges for the Iranian tourism industry. From the time when the Islamic Revolution in Iran ended the symbolic relation between the United States and the Pahlavi regime, the U.S government did not hesitate to go to any lengths in order to limit Iran's international relations, and this has obviously been negatively effecting Iran's tourism industry as well. Since 1979, U.S. has blocked Iranian assets in American banks, imposed numerous sanctions against Iran, supported Saddam Hussein during his invasion on Iran, shot down an Iranian passenger airplane over the Persian Gulf and pushed other countries to limit their economic relations with Iran. Furthermore, the U.S. has allocated a special budget recently in order to bring American democracy to Iran (Fayazmanesh, 2003).

Today, Washington's policy of endless war against Iran that is waged through sanctions, coups, invasions, bombings or sabotage, is still in effect. However, the U.S policy is putting America itself in isolation as well. The number of international tourist arrivals in Iran recently has been growing especially from the Islamic world and Iran's neighbouring countries and Iran is finding its new position in the Islamic world. Furthermore, Iran has experienced relatively stable relations with Japan compared to the west in the past two decades even though Japanese tourists are missing in Iran compared with the years before the Islamic revolution. The political issues discussed in this chapter are selected more in order to provide the reader with a background of the political environment within in which the Iranian Tourism industry must perform, than to discuss the political events themselves.

Tourism and Governments

International tourism on today's scale would be quite impossible without international cooperation. Governments intervene and encourage tourism through a complex structure of governmental and officially organized organizations (Jeffries, 2001:114). However, they are also able to put barriers on tourism by imposing roles and regulations according to their policies and certain objectives. Furthermore, it is only national governments that can negotiate and make agreements on issues such as travel and tourism between other countries. Governments have power and it is usually the political, cultural or economical factors upon which they may decide how to use the power that are important for tourism. For instance, by 1992 Japan had visa agreements with 50 other countries from which nationals did not need a visa to enter Japan for tourism which was

called the visa waiver program or the visa agreement. However, the agreement with Pakistan, Iran and Bangladesh was suspended in the early 1990s because of the increase in the number of Muslim workers in Japan (Itoh, 1992).

The contribution of tourism to national economies is one of the main reasons that the industry is regarded favorably by governments. However the way and level of contribution may differ from country to another. While for Thailand for example, tourism is the largest single foreign currency earner (replacing rice exports in 1983), Japan has used the tourism industry to reduce its foreign exchange transfers. The Japanese government has used its tourism management agency, the Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO), to encourage Japanese to travel abroad in pursuing this economic policy (Elliot, 1997).

Governments see tourism also as a job creation industry which can provide work for people with variety of ability and specialties. Indeed, the rate of unemployment in most countries is a main political consideration and can affect the popularity and electoral chances of governments, which brings more attention to job creation industries by governments and policy makers. In the case of Iran, as an oil productive country with a current unemployment problem, the role of tourism is considered by the government as a job creating industry more than for those other advantages the industry can bring such as earning foreign currency or spreading cultural messages. The reality is that the majority of the younger generation in Iran, which composes almost 70 percent of the population is in need of employment, and the relatively labor intensive nature of

tourism has made the Iranian government recently more willing to increase investment in tourism (Iran Center of Statistics 2002).

Tourism policy and planning

The massive growth of tourism, the involvement of governments and the perceived negative impacts of tourism in developing countries helped bring about an increase in activity in tourism policy analysis specially in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hall and Jenkins, 2004). Tourism policy has become a high priority of governments in developed and developing countries; it is influenced by the economical and social characteristics of each society and varies over places and times.

There are also many non-tourism specified organizations involved in tourism, such as the customs office, police and immigration as well as many others in charge of security, sanitation and public transportation for example which require public sector action to provide with a regulatory framework of tourism through which they can communicate and meet the needs of the growing tourism industry. Furthermore, the interest of governments in the potential economic benefits of tourism has provided the main driving force for tourism planning (Hall, Jenkins and Kearsley, 1997). Hall (1997) quotes Getz in defining tourism planning as “a process based on research and evaluation which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality”.

Gunn (1976) believes that those who make development and management decisions for tourism are grouped in three very important and interdependent groups of the business

sector, nonprofit sector and governmental sector. There is a basic difference between tourism and other industries from a business point of view, which makes it doubtful if the tourism sector fits the definition of industry as Gunn argued: “the distribution system moves markets to the products in the tourism sector. This is the complete opposite of industries manufacturing products that are distributed to the markets”. Furthermore, tourism development has much greater social and cultural scope than industrial development. Often neglected as prime actors in tourism, the role of voluntary and non profit organizations in the growth of tourism development is not appreciated by tourism planners. Gunn quotes Knechtel (1985) according to whom: “because the goal is less for profit than for ideologies, many cultural benefits can accrue from nonprofit tourism development”. Finally, tourism planning and promotion and marketing have been accepted as roles of government in a great many countries. Governments often own and manage the main tourism infrastructure at a national level, implement law and regulations and also manage tourism as a part of the policy of international relations. In this context, government is the main action sector of tourism planning in each country.

Iran’s National Tourism Plan

The Tourism Plan for the Islamic Republic of Iran is examined in this section in order to explain the government’s attitude toward tourism, which aspects the country expects to benefit from tourism, and how the country is willing to support the tourism industry and develop it. The first draft of Iran’s Tourism Development Master Plan was prepared in 2001. It was formulated under the sponsorship of Iran’s Tourism Supreme Council with the support of the UNDP and the World Tourism Organization (WTO). While to discuss all aspects of this Plan is out of the scope of this research, this part of the thesis has a

new look at the plan in order to explain the attitude of the Iranian government toward the tourism industry, with emphasis on Iran's outbound tourism. Furthermore, the extent to which Iran's tourism plan is able to attract Japanese overseas travellers to Iranian heritage tourism is under focus here.

The formulation of the Tourism Master Plan in Iran, a decade after the turbulent times of the 1980s, as a national project implies both economic and social stability in the country and the situation within which Iran is prepared to host foreign tourists. The infrastructure that was damaged by the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s was reconstructed in the 1990s and allowed the country to revive its tourism and hospitality service. However, the tourism industry in Iran is now challenged with the issues of international relations and the resulting image problem.

Objectives of the Plan

The overall development objectives of the tourism sector are to contribute to the strengthening of Iran's ties with other countries as part of its 'dialogue of nations' strategy, generate much needed employment for the youth and unemployed, provide economic opportunities in rural areas, increase the country's foreign exchange earnings, help to raise the level of social welfare, and most importantly, ensure that the development of tourism is sustainable from an environmental and socio-cultural point of view (INTP, 2001).

To improve Iran's international relations as mentioned above is considered as the first development objective of the tourism industry as a part of the so called policy of

“dialogue of nations”. The dialogue among civilizations which is called a strategy in Iran’s tourism plan is a theory of international relations proposed by Mohammad Khatami, former President of Iran. It became famous when the term “the Dialogue among Civilizations” was adopted by United Nations to name 2001 the year of the dialogue among civilizations. While stable international relations are considered as a condition in which tourism can grow, it is questionable if tourism itself could contribute to the strengthening of Iran’s ties with other countries and solve the problems of Iran’s international relations given the implacable opposition from America to this happening.

Economic Benefits

Study of the economic impact of tourism on Iran’s economy proposed by Iran’s tourism national plan indicates that its total effects are still relatively modest. For example, the contribution of tourism to GDP and employment is estimated at around 3.3 percent, the contribution to imports about 14 percent, the contribution to government revenue about 0.15 percent, and the contribution to non-oil exports about 14.58 percent (INTP, 2001). These numbers reflect the small scale of the industry, weak backward and forward linkages with other industries, and a structure that is in transition from the public to the private sector. Although data on the concentration of the economic impact of tourism in Iran is not available, a review of the concentration of where tourists go in the country suggests that these impacts are highly concentrated in a handful of locations. Overall, the existing database on the impact of tourism is limited and inadequate, making it difficult to manage the economic impacts of tourism along desirable lines.

Overall, tourism in Iran is on the path of development even though the industry is facing serious challenges amongst which is the negative attitude toward Iran as a destination in international community. It is also the case that the tourism industry was neglected in Iran during the 1980s and the community's attitude toward tourism and its potential developmental effects on Iran must be improved. In this context, political stability plays a fundamental role in tourism development as Richer (1999) reveals; all the attractions in the world cannot bring tourists to Iran without political peace.

The Current Situation and Prospects of the Iranian Tourism Industry

The tourism plan for Iran examines the current situation of tourism industry in detail. Through an interdisciplinary approach, the plan reviewed many tourism-related documents, mounted field trips to virtually all parts of Iran to survey and evaluates tourism resources, facilities, services, infrastructure, human resources, and tourism education and training institutions. Furthermore, to enrich the source of information for the plan discussions were held with a range of national and provincial government officials, as well as the private sector (ITTO, 2001).

Cultural and heritage tourism undoubtedly is Iran's major tourism potential. The historical monuments including the world heritage sites inherited from Persia and Islamic Iran, the Silk Road, the diverse ethnic communities and villages of Iran and the rich intangible living culture are seen as Iran's main potentials for the develop cultural and heritage tourism. In addition to its rich cultural heritage, Iran possesses a rich and diverse set of natural tourism assets. The range of climates, protected areas and national parks, hot and cold mineral springs and therapeutic mud, are the potentials for the

development of ecotourism in Iran. However, according to the Tourism Master Plan the use of sustainable management practices including effective conservation practices, interpretation and signage is limited and overall management capabilities remain weak.

The image problem of Iran is a reality that is almost missing in the evaluation of the national tourism plan in the current situation. A comprehensive picture of attitudes toward Iran as a destination target market is necessary in order to make a feasible developmental tourism plan. The author's search for any kind of studies which illustrate the image of Iran in other countries was without result, therefore the survey study conducted for this thesis, which shows the case of Japan, is the only one in the field. Nevertheless, the political turbulence and conflicts within Iran and between it and its neighbors, as well as regional conflicts are mentioned by the plan as the main threats facing Iran's tourism.

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.

Iran's National Tourism Plan and Japan's Overseas Travel Market

Japanese overseas travel is considered in Iran's tourism plan as the largest tourist generating market for Iran in Asia. The plan accepts that the negative influence of the western media coverage of Iran over the past 25 years has impacted to a degree on the consumers of all major markets as well as on those of the leading ASEAN outbound tourist markets. However, this impact has not been as damaging as that in respect of the European and North American markets. The first draft of the tourism plan was prepared in the Khatami administration, former reformist president of Iran, according to it there is more "openness" among Asians than Europeans to the reformist changes underway under President Khatami, particularly in Japan where there is an assiduous appetite both on the part of the travel trade and the traveling public for information on Iran's tourist

attractions and facilities”. However, the current situation under the new Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is very different.

Marketing strategies mentioned in the Iran National Tourism Plan to be implemented in Japan are categorized in both the short and long term. However, the author’s observations and experience of interviewing Japanese who are supposed to be aware of Iranian tourism marketing activities revealed that unlike regions like the Middle East and even Europe, actually none of the marketing plans in Japan have been implemented. The plan has seen the potential for short term cultural tourism relationships between Japan and Iran emphasizing concentrating on marketing and promotional activities in Japan in different sections. For tourism promotion in the long term, the plan has decided to establish a market representation system in Japan. However, not only is there no detailed explanation about the representation system available in the plan, but such a system does not exist yet anyway.

The Tourism Industry of Iran: An Outlook

Travel and tourism is not new to Iran, as a country through which for years the Silk Road used to connect East and West, but is only quite recently that effective tourism planning and management has been practiced. The travel and tourism industry in Iran provided 9% of total employment in a high job-demanding young society of Iran, which has highlighted the importance of tourism for the Iranian government. Iran’s tourism industry achieved an unprecedented number of tourist arrivals in 2005-6 with over 2 million inbound tourists. However, the industry is negatively affected by the political environment of Iran and its international relations (Euromonitor, 2007).

Nevertheless, the importance of the history of Iran and its cultural heritage in tourism promotion has been considered more seriously by Iranian government in recent times. For instance, the merging of recently the Iran Touring and Tourism Organization (ITTO) and the Iran Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) in 2004, which created the Iran Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization (ICHTO) is evidence of emphasis on the role of Iran's cultural heritage in tourism promotion by the Government. Furthermore, Iranian tourism officials admit that tourism promotion for Iran will be nothing more than cultural tourism, because Iran is not to develop mass tourism. The current social and cultural situation of the country does not allow mass tourism to be practiced as it does in many other tourist destinations.

Changing the world's attitude toward Iran as a destination is included in the marketing strategies of ICHO in an aggressive advertising campaign on international TV channels (IRIB, 2007). Some 10 Million US\$ was allocated in 2006 by ICHO to advertise Iranian tourism in the international media. The BBC, Al-Arabia, Al-Jazeera, and MBC are TV channels that have already started broadcasting Iranian tourism advertisements and EuroNews TV is going to start in July 2007. In an effort to counter the propaganda peddled by western channels and provide the world with the truth as Iranian officials declared, an English speaking Iranian TV channel called "Presstv" was recently launched (July 2007). The channel is available internationally and will advertise Iran's tourist attractions as well as broadcasting the news. However, the new Iranian channel is addressed mainly to the West, not to Japan and Iranian Tourist attractions are yet to be advertised in Japanese TV channels (NHK for example).

In cooperation with Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to facilitate tourism in Iran, ICHO has implemented a week-long entry visa facility which is currently issued to foreign tourists at Iran's main airports. Visitors from all countries except Israel are eligible to receive their visa to enter Iran at the airport. This policy of opening the doors also shows the government's willingness to promote tourism.

Religious tourism and pilgrimage are inseparable parts of the tourism industry of Iran. The holy sites of Iran are important landmarks in attracting domestic religious tourists as well as Arab tourists from across the region. Over 5 million domestic tourists visit the holy sites of Iran, amongst which the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, Iran's holiest city, is remarkable. Most international religious tourists in Iran are from Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon. Though Mashhad is the main destination of foreign religious tourists, they show also interest in other cities. Visitors from Saudi Arabia and UAE who are relatively high spending tourists in the region are targeted currently by Iranian tourism promotional activities. The tourism relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is bilateral, in which Saudi tourists rank highest among international visitors in Iran, and Iran provides more than 20% of the 3 million religious tourists on Minor hajj (Umrah) to Saudi Arabia in return. However, religious tourism between Iran and its neighbors is not easily sustainable and is affected negatively by the political situation. Continuation of the civil war in Iraq recently has led to conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims for instance. Though initiated by the American invasion, a new wave of Shia-Sunni conflicts seems to be spreading out through the region bringing up new political problems for the Shia state of Iran with its neighboring Sunni States of Saudi Arabia

and Dubai. Accordingly, Iranian Shiite pilgrims have found it uncomfortable to visit Mecca recently and Iranian tourists are complaining about not being treated respectfully by Dubai airport staff. In response to not aggressive manner of Saudi officials to Iranians in June 2007, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, a senior Shia cleric, declared: “Going on minor hajj in such conditions undermines Shia Muslims' dignity and if the Saudi hajj officials do not change their attitude toward Iranian pilgrims, the Shia leadership will boycott minor hajj” (IQNA, 2007). Thus the ongoing problem in Iraq is negatively affecting the regional political and social situation and will not change to a better one without a reliable solution to that problem.

Facilities for Tourism

Tourism facilities, accommodation, transportation and travel retail infrastructure need to be developed in order to meet the demands of Iran national tourism promotion plan. However, tourism facilities in Iran are not the only factor responsible for the existing gap between potential and market realities, because the capacity of existing facilities is not properly used by the tourism industry currently. The overall hotel occupancy rates in the country for example stand at a feeble 39%. However, this average does not represent all the seasons and demand often exceeds supply in some parts of the country at certain times of the year.

The size of the country necessitates the use of domestic flights in Iran in addition to other means of travel. There are thirty airports in active use across Iran, eight of which have international terminals. The airports in the western provinces of Iran that share borders with Iraq were damaged during the Iran-Iraq war but resumed operations

quickly in 1988. The construction of Tehran's new airport (Imam Khomeini International Airport) is an additional major project. A substantial section of the airport is currently underway, with capacity of 7 million passengers per year. However, there is no hope for serious development in the aviation industry of Iran as a result of American sanctions, which restrict the purchase of planes to those with less than 10% of U.S made components.

The most important dilemma facing the travel market of Iran though is the large number of travel agencies that have appeared around the country during the past few years. Though the existence of a travel agency itself is to help the travel industry, the rapid growth of the number of travel agencies in Iran has a different scenario. The majority of travel agencies that have mushroomed throughout the country can not even afford their internal expenses and have turned into loss-making entities (Euromonitor, 2007). The travel agencies that dominant Iran's inbound tourism market are that handful with their roots in governmental foundations. The rest function as dealers in obtaining traveler visas for Iranian tourists, mainly pilgrims. However, there is no room for the majority of travel agencies in Iran to undertake international contacts and marketing.

Tourism and International Relations in Iran

The political relationship between countries and the policies of nations towards foreign nationals traveling to, from and within their countries is an important factor for contemporary Tourism (Hall, 1997). Positive political relations may encourage tourism relations between countries. Regional agreements, facilities on visa and other travel documentations, foreign investment and commercial activities are all aspects of foreign policy that effects directly on human relations and tourism. In this context, Iran's

international relations and their effect on tourism is a typical example. A sizable army of American technicians, engineers, teachers, and military men on training missions were in Iran in 1970s as a result of Iran's strong political relation with the United States. The tourism relation stopped in 1979 when the Islamic revolution and the hostage crises cut the relations between the two governments. Accordingly, the crowds of 70,000 Americans in Iran disappeared and were replaced with Russians (Time, 1979; Kermani, 2005).

Pre-revolutionary Iran

The Iranian senior generation still remember the time during which the country was ruled by an Iranian monarch, 'Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi'. The Shah came to power after foreign pressure forced his father to abdicate in 1941. He was in fact restored to his throne again by a CIA-organized military coup after a 6 day exile in 1953 when Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq called for the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran. The greatest source of Iran's wealth, the oil and gas that was controlled formerly at every step by Western companies, particularly U.S. and British corporations, became the national property of the Iranian people.

The coup reinstated the Shah to his throne but also returned the administrators, executives, technicians and engineers from U.S and British oil companies to rule the Iranian oil industry through thousands of contracts and sub-contracts. It was the increase of oil prices in the 1970s that strengthened the Iranian economy and attracted western investors especially from the U.S and Britain. Oil revenues increased from almost over one billion U.S dollars a year at the beginning of the decade to 21 billion by the late

1970s. In the mid `70s, the growth rate of Iranian economy shot up to an unbelievable 41% per year. It allowed the Shah to pursue his policy of western-centric modernisation (Mahdavi, 2004).

The ties between Iran and America continued to tighten in 1970s even though Iran damaged the U.S. economy by leading the quadrupling of world oil prices in 1973-74. The huge oil revenue and strong relations with the U.S. made Shah aspire to be a dominant actor in the region through purchasing the world's most advanced technological and military equipment including nuclear reactors from France and Germany, steel mills from the Soviet Union and telecommunication systems from the U.S. The Shah also set out to build one of the world's foremost military machines from British and American weapons. As a result, a large number of engineers and business men from America and Europe were in Iran on business and training missions and tourism (Time 1979) during this period.

The Iranian government appeared very active in international relations, especially with the west and U.S. in 1970s however it did not pay attention much to its position among its own people. The goal of the Shah was to make Iran a modern westernized country through tight relations with America. President Nixon gave the Shah carte blanche to buy all the American weapons he desired. However, his military power could not protect him from his own people. Times (1979) quotes President Jimmy Carter who told the Shah in 1977: "Iran is the island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world" just two years before Iranian students closed up the American embassy in Tehran and brought about the hostage crises. The problem behind all this political

instability was the modernization project being pursued by the Iranian government without any attempt to let the country try and accommodate modernity within the context of its own historical and cultural experiences (Mahdavi, 2004).

The 2500th Anniversary of Foundation of Persian Empire: Cultural Heritage advertisement or Power Legitimation?

In a symbolic action devised by the Shah of Iran in 1971, representatives from 69 countries including nine Kings, five Queens, 13 Princes, eight Princesses, 16 Presidents, three Premiers and many other heads of State poured into Iran to attend the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. The event which was described by the Shah as “the most wonderful thing the world has ever seen” cost about 100 million U.S Dollars to bring a sign to the rest of the world that Iran was again a Nation equal to all the others and much finer than many (Kadivar 2002). The Shah visited the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargade near Persepolis and began the ceremony officially:

“Oh Cyrus, great king, king of kings, Achaemenian king, King of the land of Iran”, the Shah continued, “I, the Shahanshah of Iran, offer thee salutations from myself and from my nation. Rest in peace, for we are awake and we will always stay awake” (Time, 1979).

The term “Shahanshah” which means “king of kings” in Persian, was first used by Cyrus the Great in 539 BC when he captured the city of Babylon, naming himself “King of Babylonia” and “King of Kings”. It is worthy of mention that the Pahlavi dynasty was not even founded when Mohammad Reza Shah was born. The anniversary is an

important event in the history of Iran's international relations even though it was an attempt by the Iranian king to legitimate his power given back to him by an American coup. Nevertheless, it does indicate that image of both Persia and Islamic Iran have high potential to be used as a base for cultural and heritage tourism. However, it seems that neither the symbolic relation of pre-revolutionary Iran with America as a staunch U.S ally nor the leading position of Islamic Iran in today's Islamic world can bring the political stability which is needed to develop a sustainable tourism for Iran.

The Islamic revolution: a turning point in Iran's international relations and Tourism

Political confliction, war, coup and revolutions, even if they are relatively small, serve to damage not only tourist infrastructures but also the long term image of a destination (Hall, 1997). The overt connection between tourism and political violence is clearly a phenomenon of the late twentieth century. In this context, Iran has experienced all the above mentioned political instabilities in the last three decades, which has not only damaged tourism infrastructures but also brought an image problem for the country in the international community. The Islamic revolution of 1979 was a turning point in Iran's politics and international relations. The movement which was against American imperialism in the country by the Iranian people, not only changed the political regime but also the social and cultural values of the Iranian people.

The flow of international tourists in Iran was however stopped by the Islamic revolution due to security and political concerns. In 1980 for example there was no sign of the thousands of Americans who used to live and work in Iran prior to the revolution. Some

of the 24,000 Japanese tourists who visited Iran in 1978 also disappeared after the revolution or during the next tree decades.

Wars and security concerns

Although the revolution had its negative impact on the tourism industry and the image of Iran as a destination, the wars that Iran has been facing with both at both domestic and regional level have damaged the tourism industry even more. A year after the Islamic revolution the country was faced by the Iraqi invasion (1980-1988). That long disastrous war put the economy under strain and production was disrupted by the departure of engineers and lack of resources. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed. However, the war initiated by Iraq unified the Iranian people around the revolutionary regime. Saddam Hussein was not only a national enemy in the eyes of Iranians but also a religious one equipped by the West to bring down the Islamic revolution (Khosrokhavar, 2004). Unfortunately for tourism, although the war is finished today it has left large areas of the natural environment on Iran's western side along the borders with Iraq full of land mines, which makes it difficult for tourists to visit the rich heritage sites of the region and even impossible for local people to move back to their living environment.

Political unrests and wars can affect regional tourism as well as the particular destination in which the violence has actually occurred. In this context, the Middle East in which Iran is located is a typical case. The Gulf war (1991) not only affected tourism in the neighbor country of Iran but also resulted in a downtrend in tourist visitation in number of East Asian nations, because of a negative perception in tourists generating

regions such as Japan to travel abroad at that time fearing the possibility of terrorist attack (Hall,1996).

War in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda was again to keep the image of the region in which Iran is located as being unsafe or even dangerous to travel as the birth place of terrorists groups who were responsible for the September 11, 2001 events in America. Although Iran in fact helped the Americans to overcome Al-Qaeda/Taliban in Afghanistan, this did not satisfy President Bush. In his televised speech on January 2002, President George W. Bush promised an epoch of Terror War to go after terrorists and he also included those countries making weapons for mass destruction in his definition of terrorists groups by claiming that Iraq, Iran and North Korea made up an “Axis of Evil” aiming to threaten “World Peace” (Kellner, 2002). Soon after the Afghanistan war, the Bush administration was still proud enough to follow its own policy of war by attacking Iraq in search for what it called “the weapons of mass destruction”. As we now know this was at best a mistake and at worst a complete fabrication, but changed the country into a suitable place for terrorist attacks and forced the Iraqis to the level of one of the very poorest countries in the world, with adverse consequences for heritage tourism in the region.

The United States has imposed major sanctions against Iran since the 1979 revolution ended relations between the U.S and the Shah of Iran. Starting with the freeze of the Iranian government’s assets, numerous sanctions have been enacted against Iran during last three decades. However, while the aim of the U.S and its regional allies to wreck or at least weaken Iran’s economy by imposing sanctions has generally failed they have

been effective in damaging the image of Iran in the international community. “Iranian misbehavior”, “inept thuggishness” of Iranian authorities, “Iran as a problematic country”, “aggressive foreign policy behavior” of Iran, “unacceptable Iranian behavior”, “rogue” state, “Terrorist” State are some sample expressions used in the U.S congress when a case against Iran must be ratified (Fayazmanesh, 2002). In this context, it is not irrelevant to mention that the United States was also named “the Great Satan” by Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic revolution of Iran. Subsequently, the “nuclear issue” of Iran has created a new atmosphere for the United States and its regional allies to concentrate on new sanctions against Iran, but at an international level using the power of the UN and the Security Council. In fact, the U.S. is already engaged in a war on Iran. Ever-tightening sanctions, from both the U.S. and U.N., restrict trade and the ordering of equipment, spare parts and supplies. This affects the country’s ability to develop its tourism trade with the rest of the world just as much as it affects other industries.

Media and the Real Iran

The real Iran today is different to how the international media represents the country. What Iranians have achieved by the revolution is rarely mentioned in the media. According to the World Bank Iran has made the most progress in eliminating gender disparities in education among countries in the region. In its report of country brief, the World Bank admits that Iran has exceeded the social gains of other countries in the Middle East. Iran received the UN Population Award in 2007 for human progress and development and improvement of health procedures, particularly in respect of adolescent health, reproductive health and family planning (UN News Center, 2007).

The number of university students in 2004 was six times more than in 1979. Millions of scientists, engineers, technicians, administrators, military officers, teachers, civil servants and doctors have been trained. There are currently 2.2 million college students in Iran. Today, 55 Iranian pharmaceutical companies produce 96 percent of the medicines on the market in Iran, which allows a national insurance system to reimburse drug expenses without paying exorbitant fees to European and American suppliers (Flounders, 2006).

While 63,000 of Iran's 66,000 villages had no piped water and the country was dependent on importing agricultural products to feed its people in 1979, the country is going to export a surplus of wheat from 2007 (Time,1979; Iran News Agency, 2007). Although the revolution made all these outcomes possible the focus of media coverage on Iran is to describe it as a radical religious country in a state of medieval backwardness. Today, the problem with the tourism promotion of Iran is the way that the country is made to appear to the world but this is not the real Iran..

The social situation of women in Iran after the Islamic revolution has also been under focus recently, which has much contributed to the image problem for the country. In this context, there has been a full coverage about news on implementing the law of Islamic veil by the media which is compulsory for all women in Iran including foreigners according to the Islamic Republic constitution (BBC News, 2004; MSNBC, 2007; amongst many others). However, it is never mentioned that more than half the university students in Iran are women, or that more than a third of the doctors, 60

percent of civil servants and 80 percent of all teachers in Iran are women for example (Flounders, 2006).

Japan-Iran Tourism Relations

Japan's inbound tourism experienced a dramatic increase in the number of Iranians to the country from 1985 to 1992 coincident with the Japanese "Bubble Economy". The case of Iranian tourists in Japan was a combination of work and tourism activity. However, the Iranians who over stayed their three months tourist visas were more interested in seeking work than in sightseeing in Japan. The accelerating trend of Iranian workers to Japan in the early 1990s however led to suspension of the visa waiver agreement between the two countries. The socioeconomic situation of both home and host countries, during the time of the Iranian diaspora in Tokyo is therefore the key factor to explain this phenomenon.

Iran became a favorite travel destination in the late 1970s for Japanese and western tourists. However, the flow of Japanese tourist arrivals to the country had stopped by the time of the Islamic revolution and has never reached the former numbers until now. While only about 4 million Japanese used to travel in those days, Iran attracted a high proportion of the Japanese overseas market compared with the other countries in the Middle East Region. According to the International Tourism Promotion Society of Japan, 24,106 Japanese tourists visited Iran in 1978 which was more than three times larger than the number of Japanese tourists in Turkey at the same time for example. Today, more than 17 million Japanese travel overseas and only about 3000 visit Iran, while the number of Japanese tourists visiting Turkey is about 80,000 (more than 25

times larger than the share of Iran in Japanese overseas travel). More detail about Japanese travelers in Iran and their current situation is provided in Chapter 6.

Non-institutionalized “Working Tourists”

The tourism literature describing the situation where work and touristic activities are combined is under focus in this section in order to explain the rise of the Iranian diaspora in Japan as an example of interaction between work and tourism. The study of tourism has contained many attempts toward a definition of tourism over the years. However, there has been no conclusion as tourism itself has been changing with changes in types of global movement. The first global attempt to formally define tourism was in 1937, when the Committee of Statistical Experts of the League of Nations defined an international tourist as “anyone visiting a country other than his/her usual residence for more than 24 hours, excluding workers, migrants, commuters, students...”(Smith, 2004). Later on tourism was defined so that it contained more areas of human movement. Finally, people traveling for business or professional purposes were included as tourists by the World Tourism Organization in the 1990s (WTO, 1993).

The tourism literature also contains some cases in which work and travel activities are combined, however, there are only a few references for this context. For instance, Stebbins (1979) refers to “business travel” as a work oriented form of tourism and Hall, Williams and Lew (2004) emphasize that there is a need to appreciate the relationships of leisure, recreation and tourism along with other social practices. The term ‘non-institutionalized working tourists’ was used by Uriely (2001) to express the combination of work and tourism. In this context, the expressions such as: drifters, wanderers, long-

term budget travelers, backpackers and even nomads are among various terms “the non-institutionalized working tourists” are known by, in the literature.

In the case of Japan, the number of newcomers started to increase in the 1970s with women coming for service jobs in the entertainment and sex industry (Onishi, 2003). In the 1980s Japanese economic growth led to an increase of demand for labor that was met by foreign workers (Douglass and Robert, 2000). While there were 782,910 registered foreigners in the 1980s, the number had increased to 1 million by 1993. Consequently, the immigration law was revised (in 1991) to deal with the increasing number of foreigners in Japan. Nonetheless, it was only the decline of the Japanese economy which slowed down labor demand and ended the flow of foreign workers to Japan. Japan suspended visa-exempt agreements with Pakistan and Bangladesh, due to the same reasons as in the case of Iran (Itoh, 1992). However, the majority of newcomers did not leave the country and some of them have married Japanese nationals, legalized their status and settled down in Japan. Some others have over stayed their visas and continue to stay in Japan without legal status (Onishi, 2003).

The Rise of the Iranian Diaspora in Japan

Iranian workers in Japan and the socioeconomic situation in both in Iran and the host country under which the rise of ‘Iranian Diaspora’ in Japan shaped up as a phenomenon of the early 1990s are discussed in this section. Today, it is more than a decade since the time of this phenomenon and the crowd of Iranians in Tokyo has largely disappeared. It was difficult therefore to gain direct access to those who were to be the subject of this section. Therefore, this study examines the literature on the story of Iranian workers in

the Japanese press of early 1990s as well as that from other sources as a surrogate for face-to-face contact.

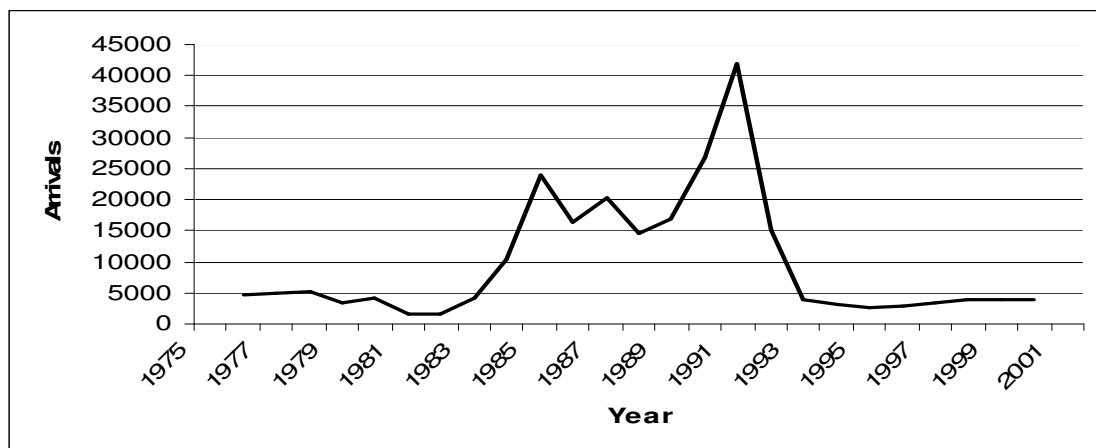
There are believed to be some 3 million Iranians living outside Iran, many choosing to live outside their home country following the Revolution of 1978. The principal Iranian communities are in the USA, France, the UK, Australia and Canada (ITTO, 2001). They are mainly Iranians who moved out of the country with their property because they were worried about the political changes at the time of the Islamic revolution. However, the case of Japan's Iranians of the early 1990s is different from the bulk of overseas Iranians elsewhere because of the fundamental changes in Iran during the 1980s in comparison with the 1970s. The Iranian economy experienced high growth and exceptional prosperity in the 1970s. However, the situation changed a decade later. Iran's oil revenue soared from just over 1 billion U.S dollar a year at the beginning of the decade to 21 billion by the late 1970s. In the mid-70s the growth rate of the Iranian economy shot up to an unbelievable 41% per year (Time, 1979). However, the disastrous war with Iraq during the 1980s (1980-1988) left the country in a difficult economic situation, especially with respect to unemployment. Consequently, the crowd of Iranian tourists who visited Japan actually intended to work provisionally.

The visa waiver program that existed between Iran and Japan for 19 years (1974-1992), was suspended due to an unfortunate event during the influx of foreign labor from Iran to Japan. Under an agreement reached between representatives of the two countries, Japan decided to end its policy of waiving visa requirements for short-term Iranian visitors. Iran also reinstated its short-term tourist-visa requirement for Japanese visitors

on the same date (April 15, 1992). Although the suspension of the visa waiver program was regarded as temporary and the two countries didn't decide how long the policy change should last, it is still effective 15 years later (Itoh, 2001).

The trend of Iranian arrivals to Japan during the years of the visa waiver program between the two countries as outlined below shows a drastic increase of Iranian tourists to Japan between 1985 and the early 1990s (Figure 4.1). The economic situation in both countries at that time could be one of the main reasons behind this. On the one hand, the Iraqi invasion of Iran with the support of the U.S left Iranian society with economic problems and a high rate of unemployment in the 1980s. On the other hand, the economic growth of Japan at the same time (the bubble economy) and a high demand for labour attracted many Iranians and encouraged them to take the advantage of the visa waiver program that existed between the two countries at that time. They could easily enter Japan for tourism for up to three months with no visa requirement, but stay on to work illegally.

Figure 4.1: Iranian arrivals to Japan



Source: Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO)

According to statistics from the Tokyo Municipal Government, Tokyo's 546 Iranians comprised roughly 80 percent of the city's total number of Middle Eastern residents by 1992, excluding approximately 300 Israelis living in Tokyo (Arnold, 1992). However the number of Iranians who came to Tokyo with only a three month tourist visa status and stayed on to work is not directly comparable with those who are mentioned in the statistics officially as Tokyo's Iranian residents. According to Japanese diplomatic sources, at least 10,000-12,000 Iranians were a key source of manual labor in small and medium sized Japanese factories, construction sites and hospitals in 1992 (Robinson, G. & Holland, L., 1992). Since the majority of them were in Tokyo, sooner or later, people in Tokyo would be faced with the phenomenon of the rise of the Iranian diaspora in that city.

At that time, Japan's neighboring countries of Taiwan and Korea were usually the main sources of tourist arrivals to Japan, followed by the U.S.A and Hong Kong (Table 4.1). Surprisingly, Iran had appeared in the list of the 15 top nationalities who provided annual tourist arrivals to Japan in the early 1990s. Iran ranked 12, with 26.7 thousands in 1990 and with 41.9 thousands in 1991, Iran was the 8th main source of tourists to Japan one year later. It was then that the suspension of the visa waiver program in 1992 cut the number of Iranian newcomers to Japan and accordingly Iran rapidly disappeared from the list (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Annual Tourist Arrivals in Japan by Top15 Nationalities (Unit: Thousands)

Rank	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994	
1	Taiwan	496.9	Taiwan	565.9	Taiwan	622.7	Taiwan	582.0	Taiwan	562.1
2	Korea	428.2	Korea	504.1	Korea	502.9	Korea	473.3	Korea	511.8
3	U.S.A	299.8	U.S.A	290.0	U.S.A	298.0	U.S.A	272.3	U.S.A	258.8
4	Hog Kong	113.1	Hog Kong	114.4	Hog Kong	236.0	Hog Kong	113.4	Hog Kong	109.4
5	Brazil	49.5	Thailand	69.0	Thailand	58.6	Canada	45.9	Canada	45.8
6	Canada	40.7	Brazil	64.2	Canada	43.7	U.K	39.2	U.K	45.7
7	Thailand	40.4	Malaysia	50.9	Brazil	36.3	Thailand	35.3	Australia	31.6
8	Malaysia	36.8	Iran	41.9	U.K	35.9	Australia	30.4	Brazil	31.4
9	U.K	32.7	Canada	37.3	Malaysia	35.7	Brazil	27.8	Brazil	27.9
10	Singapore	28.5	U.K	34.8	china	29.1	Germany	26.9	Thailand	25.5
11	Australia	27.6	Singapore	27.1	Australia	28.4	China	26.5	China	24.6
12	Iran	26.7	Australia	25.1	Germany	27.6	Malaysia	23.7	Malaysia	24.5
13	Philippines	26.7	China	24.9	Singapore	25.4	Singapore	23.3	France	23.4
14	Germany	24.2	Germany	24.1	Philippines	20.7	France	21.9	Philippine	22.0
15	China	23.2	Philippines	23.6	France	20.5	Philippines	19.9	Malaysia	20.5

Source: Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO), 1999.

Table 4.1 also shows the significance of the number of Iranians who came to Japan among the other nationalities. It is obvious that the tourism relations between countries cannot usually change so radically and in the case of Iranians in Japan tourism was combined with work and was stopped by force as an agreement between officials of the

two countries. The following sections will examine the different aspects of the Iranian diaspora as a social phenomenon of the early 1990s in Tokyo.

Japan's Iranians: Negotiating Cultural Complexity within the Modern Nation State

The information provided here addresses Japan's Iranians experience within the economic, cultural and legal frameworks of their host society, with particular emphasis on civil rights. In the case of Iranians in Japan, the trip and work for the majority was non-institutionalized and accordingly they faced unexpected problems, especially the newcomers. However, the guest's problems were also challenging for the host society as well.

The first administrative study of this problem was conducted in November 1991 by Tokyo City and Taito-ku (ward). This was of living conditions at Ueno Park and the Tokyo Metropolitan government and Taito ward office questioned foreigners who were mainly Iranians. They found that they were Iranians between 20 to 30 years old who were seeking jobs in Tokyo and slept in the park to save accommodation costs while they had no job (Sasaki, 1991). The study was carried out at the same time as about 30 Ueno Park neighbors compiled and delivered a petition to the Tokyo metropolitan government and ward office in October 1991, complaining that they were afraid of the foreigners and demanding that measures be taken.

Thanks to the shortage of labor in Japan, the majority of this influx of thousands of Iranians found illegal jobs. However, the flow of newcomers created a more competitive

environment for non-Japanese speaking workers (Rai, 1991), and the downturn of the Japanese economy in the early 1990s reduced the demand for labor and soon left the foreign workers without jobs. There was no social support for them obviously because the majority was working illegally in Japan. Negative social attitudes and mixed treatment by Japanese authorities adversely affected their attitudes toward the Japanese people.

The term “nomads” as mentioned above is used to describe the situation in which work and tourism combine (Ureily, 2001). In this context, it is not surprising that Emiko Okada, Professor of Farsi literature at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies used the same term to express his ideas in trying to explain the reason for the massive gathering of Iranians in Yoyogi park: “Iranians used to lead a nomadic life in the desert, where it was difficult to get any information. Thus, they value gatherings with family and friends in which they can exchange information”. However, the nomadic way of life that was once introduced to Iran from Central Asia does not exist in modern Iran anymore except for few people in rural areas who attract tourists interested in authentic experiences (Chapter 3).

By the end of the “Bubble Economy” in 1993 in Japan, an increasing number of foreign workers had become victims, suddenly finding themselves without a job or money and the Iranians were not an exception. "The government and politicians have been very slow trying to solve these problems," said Mizuho Matsuda, the director of telephone consulting service for foreigners from the Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union (Wada, 1993).

The actions to deal with the crowd of unemployed foreign workers in Tokyo such as the erection of fences at Yoyogi Park by the Tokyo Metropolitan government, were considered infringements of the human right of Iranian workers in Japan by Japanese lawyer Kazuyuki Azusawa, author of the book, "When Foreign Migrant Workers Are Tried in Court", he expressed:

"I suspect that the MPD and the metropolitan government cooperated to erect the fence. They aimed point-blank at Iranians. It is regretful that Japan employed the Iranians as an inexpensive labor force when the economy was booming and threw them away when the economy is bad," Azusawa said (Oyama, 1993).

It was a big challenge for the Tokyo metropolitan police department though to cope with the problem of many Iranians gathering in Yoyogi Park every Sunday. For instance, a Metropolitan Police Department official said, "We need to show there are rules in this country and those who do not observe the rules are punished" in reaction to the problem (Oyama, 1993).

Faces of the Diaspora: the Dilemma of Perception and Representation

This section discusses how modern Iran was represented to Japanese society by the Iranian diaspora after a decade of decline in tourism relations between the two countries. Iran was fast becoming a favorite tourist destination in the Middle East for Japanese in the late 1970s. However, the flow of Japanese tourists to Iran stopped by the time of the

Islamic revolution in 1979. According to the Japan International Tourism Promotion Society 24,000 Japanese tourists visited Iran in 1978, the year before the Islamic revolution. Again, it was the Iran-Iraq war that worried international tourists in Iran and the Japanese were not an exception. As a result, Iran's cultural and heritage tourism could not access the Japanese travel market during the 1980s. The latest information on Japanese attitudes toward Iran illustrates that the Japanese image of Iran is now that of an Islamic, oil producing, country from which Japan imports oil. For people in Tokyo, Iran also represent the country from which many workers came to Japan and stayed illegally but they rarely think of Iran as a tourist destination or refer to its Persian heritage background (Vafadari, 2006).

For a decade after the Islamic revolution of 1979, there was almost no advertisement or tourism marketing to introduce Iran as a tourist destination to the Japanese. Iran was invaded by the Iraqi regime in 1982 and obviously there was no room to think about tourism during that time even though the war was over in 1988 and had left the country with unemployment and other economic problems. It was then that the crowd of Iranian workers in Tokyo in the early 1990s that attracted people in Japan. During 1990-1993 the Japanese people were in touch with the story of Iranian workers who had entered Japan at the time of the bubble economy and were left unemployed after economic downturns. Furthermore, the Iranians congregated in 'Ueno' and 'Yoyogi' in huge numbers and their related problems were reflected in the Japanese media and newspapers at that time. No tourism to Iran was likely under these conditions of adverse publicity for that country.

The Little Iran: Narrative of Iranians gathering in Tokyo's Ueno and Yoyogi Park

Many people in Tokyo still remember the early 1990s when they happened to meet Iranians in Ueno or Yoyogi on Sundays. A crowd of 8,000 Iranians in the park on Sundays in central Tokyo was not some thing to be ignored not only by people living in the neighborhood but also by anyone who approached near the cultural centers of Ueno and Yoyogi to spend a Sunday holiday time. Many Japanese considered those Iranians intruders on their peaceful Sunday. They could not ignore them and most Japanese did not understand the reason why those Iranians needed to get together every Sunday. Undoubtedly, they were afraid of the number of Iranians, and did not know how to interact with them (The Daily Yomiuri, 1993).

The reports in Japanese newspapers of the time contain various topics about the Iranians in Yoyogi and Ueno which created a negative image. Damaging trees and the natural environment of the park (Oyama, 1993), selling altered or forged telephone cards (Omoya, 1993; Wada, 1993), and even selling drugs (Waki, 1994) were unfortunate news about Japan's Iranians broadcast by the Japanese press of the early 1990s. For instance, while only 31 Iranians were charged in criminal cases in 1989, not related to visa problems, the figures rose to 356 case in 1992 according to the Japan National Police Agency (Itoh, 1992). The rise of the Iranian diaspora was fast, encouraged by the economic situation in both countries to meet Japan's labor demand, as well as to provide jobs for Iranian workers who could not be employed by the war-damaged economy of Iran. Therefore, the social and cultural conflicts that happened in the formation of the Iranian diaspora were not out of all expectation.

The Role of the Iranian Diaspora in Political Conflict

The fact that Japan has remained the major customer for Iranian oil since the 1970s could be regarded as the main reason behind the relatively stable political relationship between the two countries. Furthermore, Japan forged close commercial links with Iran even after the Islamic revolution in Iran despite concern by Tokyo's main ally, the United States, because Japan is almost entirely dependent on imported energy to fuel its massive economy (Urabe, 2006).

Tokyo and Tehran had visa-exempt arrangements from 1974 to 1992. The agreement was made between the two countries soon after the first oil crisis. The intention by Japan was to promote mutual tourism with the oil-rich country, as well as to help maintain a reliable petroleum source (Itoh, 1992). As displayed in Figure 4.1, when the first signals of a massive increase in the number of Iranians in Japan started in 1985, the Immigration Control Bureau of the Justice Ministry of Japan reported that the number of Iranian tourists who have arrived in Japan since the beginning of the year was nearly three times higher than the year before (Asahi News, 1985). This was the beginning of the period for both Japanese and Iranian governments in which they reconsidered the tourism relations between the two countries. The second peak happened in 1991 which led to the suspension of the Japan-Iran visa waiver program. Japan's Justice Ministry released figures that showed that about 60,000 Iranians entered Japan during the 27 month from January 1989 to March 1991, including 9000 in the first three months of 1991 (Rai,1991). However, the number of Iranians arriving in Japan fell dramatically when Japan and Iran suspended the visa agreement (Sari, 1992).

Conclusion

Political problems and violence are seen as real barriers to tourism market development no matter where they happen. Coups, revolutions, wars and crime can physically destroy natural and cultural resources and prevent the development of tourism and deter potential tourists to disturbed areas (Hall, 1994). Unfavorable international relations also create severe restrictions on travel between adversarial countries. Consequently, a favorable peaceable image is an essential requirement of any tourism destination (Buckey, 1993).

People want to feel safe while traveling abroad, and if their safety is in question, fewer people will travel, or they will choose alternative safer destinations. Political problems damage destination images and preclude the successful development of the tourism industry in such destinations. Furthermore, this image problem may last even long after the political unrest. The tourism industry in Iran has been influenced by political instability from both domestic sources and Iran's contiguous countries. In the domestic arena, Iran experienced the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) which destroyed tourism services, infrastructures and attractions. At the international level, Iran has been more recently facing political conflict with the U.S which has resulted in the imposition of numerous sanctions on Iran's economy as well as the mass propaganda against the country by western and American media introducing Iran as a threat to world peace. Furthermore, the regional conflicts in Kuwait or the so called "Gulf War" (1991), the Afghanistan war (2001) and the Iraq war (2003 onward) has affected the tourism industry of Iran even when the confrontations in those countries did not actually spill across the borders of Iran.

The structure of the tourism industry in Iran is government controlled and owned, especially in operating inbound tourism and the private sector has lesser room to play any role in the field. The public sector has played a substantial role in the tourism industry of Iran both before and after the Islamic revolution, not only in policy, planning and management but also in retail operational level. For instance, the Iranian government once owned 70% of all the hotel beds in Iran through the Pahlavi Foundation established by the Shah of Iran as his own property (Graham, 1978). Subsequently, the ownership of the hotel sector, specially 4 to 5 star hotels has been transferred to a handful of quasi-public sector foundations or corporations belonging to the revolutionary government after the Islamic revolution (INTP, 2001). However, the smaller and lower grade hotels that tend to be owned by the private sector are used mainly by domestic tourists not international travelers.

The tourism management system in the Islamic republic is still young with a long and challenging way ahead. The National Tourism Plan for the Islamic republic of Iran was approved in 2002 by the Khatami administration to follow his policy of the “dialogue among civilizations”. The approval of this plan came a decade after the Iran-Iraq war during which Iran experienced relevantly political stability and enough time to reconstruct damaged infrastructures. The active policy of tourism promotion in its current form was followed by Iranian tourism officials from 2002. In its first stage the new marketing policy targeted the Islamic world as well as the overseas Iranians who are estimated to be 3 millions and who mainly left the country after the Islamic revolution. The policy was successful and the number of Iran’s international tourists

arrivals has increased twofold to 2 million in during the 4 years to 2006 in spite of political problems and regional conflicts. However, these international tourists were mainly Muslims of neighboring countries in pilgrim trips to Shiite sites within Iran; the share of East Asian countries including Japan for example remains at less than 5% of total arrivals to Iran.

Japan is mentioned as a target market for the promotion of Iran's cultural and heritage tourism, to be concentrated on both short and long term in the Iran National Tourism Plan. However, this study has revealed that there has been almost no effort by Iranian tourism officials to bring more understanding and knowledge about Iranian cultural and heritage attractions to Japan. In this context, the unfamiliarity with the destination and its tourist attractions as well as the lack of information and promotional activities about Iran in Japanese society has left enough opportunity for western media especially American sources to damage the image of Iran with almost every-day news covering Iran's political problems with the West and the United States. Recently, the nuclear program of Iran has provided a unique topic for these media to continue the job. Furthermore, the rapid rise and decline of the Iranian labor class diaspora in Japan also contributed to the image problem for Iran among Japanese, especially those who live in the capital city of Tokyo.

Thus while Iran has experienced a rather stable political relation with Japan even during the years after the Islamic revolution, the role of Japan as the main customer for Iranian oil has been much more important than the few number of Japanese tourists who visit Iran every year. In this context the strong tie between Japan and America also exists as a

determinant factor in political relations between Iran and Japan and a positive deterrent to Japanese tourism to Iran.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENT-DAY JAPAN AND ATTITUDES TOWARD IRAN: A SURVEY STUDY CONDUCTED IN OITA PREFECTURE (2005-6)

Part One: Introduction

Through interaction with ordinary Japanese people within their society for the purpose of conducting this research on Japanese tourists to Iran, several hypotheses were developed regarding their understanding of Iran as a nation and a culture. The overall research hypothesis under which all other hypotheses may be classified as subordinate is that Japanese people, on the whole, have a lack of knowledge about Iran that a) often leads to misunderstanding about the true nature of Iran and b) often results in negative perceptions of the country. The researcher of Iran as a tourist destination in Japan confronts these misunderstandings and negative perceptions as obstacles to portraying Iran as an attractive tourist destination. This Chapter discusses those perceptions and the resulting limitations on an Iranian tourism based on Japanese overseas travellers through reference to comprehensive surveys carried out for the wider study.

A questionnaire was designed for the purpose of gathering statistical data regarding the perceptions and awareness of Iran in Japan. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, 3 open and 9 multiple-choice, drawn from an initial 30. The questions were selected bearing in mind areas of particular interest to the Japanese. Research by others into the Japanese tourism market has shown that food, weather and language are particularly important factors to Japanese overseas travellers. A sample group of 10 native Japanese speakers tested the questionnaire and confirmed that it was easy to understand and not too time-consuming. Also of importance for the particular emphasis of this study was that the questionnaire was stimulating and aroused interest in the subject matter. For this purpose, certain comparisons were drawn with Japan in order both to provide a familiar point of reference and to evoke representations of a tangible rather than abstract entity. The questionnaire was tested in Oita Prefecture and the second part of this chapter is based on those results.

Research Problem and Hypotheses

As noted above, through interacting with Japanese within their society with the purpose of conducting this research, several hypotheses were developed regarding their understanding of Iran as a nation and a culture. The overall research hypothesis under which all others may be classified as subordinate is that do Japanese people, on the whole, have a lack of knowledge about Iran that a) often leads to misunderstanding about the true nature of Iran and b) often results in negative perceptions.

Sub-Hypotheses

Three sub-hypotheses were considered in addition to the overall hypothesis:

- a) Do “Iran” and “Persia” mean quite different things to Japanese people?
- b) Is Iran culturally misunderstood as being part of the Arabic world by Japanese people because perceptions of the true Iranian culture are absent? and
- c) Does the dry weather of Iran misrepresent the various climates of the country which brings an image of Iran as being a desert nation?

Iran and Persia

As mentioned above, a number of other sub-hypotheses were reached, each regarding a specific area of knowledge of Iran held by the Japanese. One of the most important of these concerns a significant gulf between perceptions of and attitudes toward “Iran” and those regarding “Persia”. This is perhaps understandable given that Iran’s 20th century history is so distinctively marked by events that have asserted its identity as “Iran” as opposed to its

former identity as “Persia”, specifically, Reza Shah’s formal decision¹⁷ to rename the country in 1934 and the revolution of 1979, which saw Iran become the “Islamic Republic of Iran”.

It has been observed on numerous occasions that initial responses to the introduction of Iran as a topic of conversation are, on the whole, negative. Reactions are often characterised by fear and concerns for safety. Proximity to Iraq is often an important contributing factor as is a perceived lawlessness. Compared to “Persia”, “Iran” rarely elicits responses concerned with cultural or artistic heritage and instead is most commonly associated with region-wide or domestic political issues including the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, the Islamic revolution and Iran’s international relations. “Persia”, however, generally elicits a very different set of reactions, most often concerning the Persian cat and the Persian carpet and the story of “Thousand and One Nights”. It thus became an important research question to ask whether or not “Iran” and “Persia” mean quite different things to Japanese people and why the two names have almost diametrically opposed emotive values.

Iran and Arab Culture

A very common misconception regarding Iran encountered among Japanese people is that Iranians speak Arabic as their first language. The reality is that the Persian language (Farsi) is entirely distinct from Arabic, with a different set of phonetics and a different, although closely related, written script. Arabic is taught in Iranian schools as the language of the Koran but the language is not in general use in Iran except in the relatively small ethnically Arab areas of the Persian Gulf region. A less commonly expressed but equally symptomatic misconstruing of Iranian culture with Arab culture is the idea that Iranian men are able to and often do take up to four wives. Although Islamic law technically allows this form of polygamy and it is

¹⁷ Comprehensive information on the history of Iran, applicable in the History-oriented tourism industry of Iran is provided in a separate section of this research.

acceptable and indeed common in countries such as Saudi Arabia, in Iran, social, cultural and legal restraints make the practice almost non-existent.

It is hypothesised that mistakes such as these have at their root a deeper misunderstanding of Persian and Islamic culture than they might suggest if taken at face value. It would seem that when clear perceptions of what Iranian culture actually consists of are absent, stereotypical representations of Arab culture arrive to fill the vacuum. This in turn suggests a strong tendency to associate Iran with the Arab lands to its West rather than the Asian lands to its East, when in reality it is at once part of both, with distinctive and unique cultural characteristics of its own.

Iran's Climate

Another commonly encountered misconception is the belief that Iran's climate is primarily hot and its terrain predominantly desert. The size of Iran and its consequent climatic and geographical variety are often not appreciated. Iran, which covers an area of 1,648,000 square kilometres, has climates ranging from temperate in the north to sub-tropical in the south. Most of the country experiences four distinct seasons, summers and winters having high and low temperatures comparable with those of Japan. Mountainous regions with long winter seasons and heavy snowfall make Iran an ideal destination for winter sports. Although Iran does have two major deserts, the Dasht-e Kavir and the Dasht-e Lut, it is clearly a mistake to define the entire country as a desert nation (Kiani, 2001).

One consequence of this strong association of Iran with the desert and heat is an image of Iran as a barren and inhospitable land with little to offer. The desert commonly carries with it connotations of vast featureless expanses, accessible only to the bravest adventurer – certainly not an attractive proposition to the average tourist. Those with little knowledge of Iran will

not, of course, be aware that even the desert cities of Yazd and Kashan, two of Iran's most rewarding tourist destinations, are both easily and comfortably visited during the spring and autumn, and will therefore, in associating Iran with the desert tend to see the country as an empty wasteland. It thus became a hypothesis for this study that there is a lack of information on Iran's various climates as a tourist destination and the dry climate of Iran in the image of Japanese people represents the entire weather of the country as a desert nation.

Ordinary life in Iran

Japanese perception of ordinary life in Iran as a developing country is not far from the reality, unlike the other concepts mentioned above like culture, history and climate. As a nation with a relatively high experience of international travelling, Japanese people are aware of the strength of their own economy which makes their trip possible. Interactions with Japanese people suggest that Iran as a tourist destination is not an exception in the Japanese mind in this case. A high interest to know about ordinary life in Iran was particularly experienced through interaction with Japanese in this study.

METHODOLOGY: The Questionnaire and the Research Procedures

Questions 1 and 2: Representations

The first two questions, on initial images of Iran & Persia were deliberately placed at the beginning of the questionnaire in order that responses were not coloured by perceptions gleaned from the content of other questions. The purpose of these two open questions was to elicit raw representations of Persia and Iran in order that they could be contrasted. Experience had suggested that perceptions of Iran and perceptions of Persia amongst Japanese were different and the first two questions aimed at either confirming or disproving this. It was

important that the questionnaire be given with little or no introduction of the topic in order to ensure that these responses were not externally influenced.

Question 3: World Map

To ascertain the respondent's knowledge of the geographical location of Iran, this question asked the respondent to point to Iran on the world map. In addition, to find out the percentage of true and false answers, the map provided the chance to class the incorrect answers to analyse the image of geographical location among those who gave a wrong answer.

Questions 4 and 5: Population & Size

As discussed above, the use of comparisons with Japan served the twin purposes of facilitating thought and fostering the perception of Iran as a tangible entity. The land of Iran is four times bigger than Japan, but the population of Iran is almost half that of Japan (Najafkhani, 2002). The respondents were asked to guess these two relationships in the survey.

Question 6: Climate

Though deserts dominate large areas of the central plateau, Iran is a country with varied climates and agricultural regions. These different regions have given rise to many varied ways of life still practiced by tribal groupings and nomadic peoples. This variety in ways of life and culture due to climate is potentially a major attraction to foreign visitors to Iran (Beny and Nasr, 1975). Question 6 aimed to ascertain the respondent's awareness of climate of Iran.

Question 7: Food

Food is a primary incentive to travel to foreign countries for Japanese people. Staple foods are also an interesting indicator of cultural life. A contrast can be drawn here between

predominantly bread-eating European peoples and predominantly rice-eating Asians. That both rice and bread are equally well represented in Iran may be a product of its geographical and cultural centrality between West and East. Question 7 tries to find out the respondents' perceptions of the staple food in Iran.

Question 8: Demographic situation

The demographic makeup of Iran is not only interesting in itself but contrasts strongly with that of Japan. The fact that the majority of people in Iran are under 30 makes the demographic view of society some how different for Japanese tourists as representatives of an aged society. Question 8 examines respondents' attentiveness to this fact.

Question 9: Salary

To ascertain respondents' perceptions of wages and wealth in Iran, they were asked by this question to guess the average wage of a salaryman in Iran. Japanese tourists are usually aware of the strength of the Yen compared with the currencies of other developing countries and the question asks respondents how much the average Iranian salaried worker is paid in Japanese Yen.

Question 10: Language

Language is an important indicator of cultural history and Iran is greatly misunderstood in this matter. Iran is often confused with the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East – particularly Iraq. This question was especially important in order to confirm the existence of this widespread misunderstanding and also to dispel it. Hindi, Arabic, and English are the other responses basically offered, not the correct answer that is the Persian language “Farsi”.

Question 11: The relationship between Iran and Persia

This question was, in one sense, a follow up to the open response questions at the head of the questionnaire. In the case of this question it may be that the data gathered from responses is not as important as the educative function that the question serves. Disparate perceptions of Iran and Persia were brought together if not at the time of response then certainly when the correct answers were revealed to the respondents.

Question 12: Would you like to visit Iran?

It cannot be said that those who responded positively to this question would certainly visit Iran. Conversely, of those who answered this question in the negative, a significant proportion would perhaps never have considered foreign travel in any case. Thus, this question is more indicative of a positive or negative attitude to the idea of travelling to Iran, or perhaps a general level of interest in Iran, than it is of actual overseas travel behaviour. For similar reasons, the reasons why the respondents answered in the positive or negative may reflect general attitudes to and enthusiasm for the idea of overseas travel in general.

The relationship of the questions to the research hypotheses is given in Table 5.1.1.

Table 5.1.1: Sub-Hypotheses regarding knowledge of Iran held by the Japanese

Number	Sub-Hypotheses	Question Number
1	“Iran” and “Persia” mean quite different things to Japanese people	1 , 2
2	Iran is culturally misclassified with Arabic world by Japanese people and perceptions of Iranian culture are absent.	3 , 10 , 11
3	The dry weather of Iran represents the various climates of the country which brings an image of Iran as a desert nation.	5 , 6
—	Questions on “Salary”, “food”, and “population” of Iran and “travel interest to Iran”. (No specific hypotheses)	4 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 12

Source: the survey, conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture

Sampling and Analytical Method

There are no strict rules to define the target population of this type of research and the researcher must rely on logic and judgment. In this study the population is defined in two main groups according to the objectives of the study, using the experiences of Japanese whose profession is tourism business with Iran, and the information from the literature on international Japanese tourists.

There are two main groups in the population for this research. The first group contained Japanese high school students who are considered as potential tourists for the future of Iranian tourism industry and have almost no actual place in the tourism relationship between Iran and Japan during their high school student life. The second group was composed of Japanese people in four different age levels from university student to the retired (over 60) that have been already visited Iran.

Sample size

“Stratified sampling” was used to find the respondents to this survey as a probability method that is superior to random sampling because it reduces sampling error. A stratum is a subset of the population that shares at least one common characteristic. Examples of strata in the survey sample are: “high school students”, “university students”, “Middle Aged” and “The retired”. The relevant strata and their actual representation in the population were identified from the results of initial studies prior to the survey, and random sampling was then used to select an adequate number of subjects from each stratum.

The following standard formulas¹⁸ designed for determining sample sizes were used in this research to testify if the sample size is large enough to be reasonably confident that each stratum represents the population:

$$n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{\Delta^2} \quad n_0 = \frac{1.645^2 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.15^2} = 30.25$$

$z = 1.645$ (value for 90 percent confidence interval)

$p = 0.5$ (estimate for unknown participation level of 50 percent)

$\Delta = 0.15$ (15 percent precision level)¹⁹

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}} \quad n = \frac{30.25}{1 + \frac{30.25}{N}} = \text{Sample Size}$$

N = Number of entities in population to be sampled.

$n_0 = 30.25$

n = Number of samples needed

¹⁸ Larry N. Stephens, “Determining the Number of Samples to Take or Surveys to Conduct”

California Integrated Waste Management Board, cited in

<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LGLibrary/DSG/AppendixJ.htm> last retrieved March, 2006.

¹⁹ Due to the nature of the desired information from the survey 15% precision level is considered appropriate.

Table 5.1.2: Survey Population, actual and minimum sample size of each stratum

Age	Population	Sample Size	Minimum number of samples needed
16-19	37,958	234	31
19-25	95,099	65	31
26-40	211,754	41	31
41-60	332,915	80	31
60+	153,663	35	31
Total	831,389	455	155

Source: Oita Prefecture office, statistics and population research²⁰, 2005

Sample Stratification

The respondents to the questionnaire were classified into five groups, these being; high school students, university students, the middle aged (divided in two), and the retired.

High School Students

The youngest respondents to take part in the survey were students in their second or third year of high school (16-18 years old). With regards to tourism marketing, they can be considered as “seeds” from which fully-fledged consumers of travel products may grow. Though they cannot be considered directly as a potential market, it is important for tourist marketers to study the extent to which and how they form opinions and attitudes towards foreign countries at this stage of their lives and how persistent these representations continue to be in later life.

The history of Persia/Iran is taught as part of the standard high school world history syllabus.

²⁰ The information on population of different stratum in Oita prefecture are received from the following sources

- Toukei de miru Oita-ken no Sugata [The Shape of Oita Prefecture represented by its Statistics] cited in :<http://www.pref.oita.jp/10800/> last retrieved: Jun 2006-03-13
- Ryudou Jinkou Tyousa Heisei 17-nen Nenpou;(The Annual Report of Floating Population Research in 2005) cited in:<http://www.pref.oita.jp/10800/> last retrieved: Jun 2006-03-13

Their government approved textbook, entitled “World History”, covers the Ancient Persian Empire in some depth as well as the modern history of Iran up to the time of the Islamic Revolution, including as part of this chapter a photograph of Ayatollah Khomeini. It was therefore considered revealing to assess the extent to which their classroom learning informed their overall representations of Iran.

Before a given group of high school students was approached to complete the questionnaire, it was established, through meetings with their history teachers or coordinators responsible for the school curriculum that they had already studied in class the parts of their world history textbook covering Ancient Persia and modern Iran. The survey was then conducted during a subsequent world history lesson in the form of a quiz followed by a classroom discussion of the correct answers as well as other relevant information regarding Iran.

In comparison with other demographic groups, high school students are relatively easy to access and communicate with. World history and geography lessons are of course, by their very nature, directed towards the transmission of information regarding different countries, and foreign language lessons, particularly English, are often given an international emphasis, the widespread access to native foreign language speakers through the JET programme being an important manifestation of this trend. In addition, Japanese schoolteachers are usually enthusiastic to have foreign visitors make presentations or lead discussions in order to provide students with alternative stimuli and relief from the regularity of their daily lessons. Schoolchildren also often take part in international cultural exchange events promoted by local authorities, educational institutions and NGOs.

University Students

The second group were university students (19-25years old), both undergraduate and graduate students from private and public universities in Oita Prefecture. The survey was conducted among this group through their university teachers asking their cooperation in the research as well as by direct contact with the students. As mentioned before in the review of literature for this research it is common for university students to take a “graduation trip” or *sotsugyo ryokô* after completing their studies and prior to starting full-time employment and they are regarded as an important group in Japanese travel market. The university students are also relatively easy to access and communicate with. Direct contact with this group is possible more easily than high school students.

The Middle-Aged

The third group contained mostly young office workers from 26 to 40 years old. The survey within this group as well as the fourth group (41-60 years old) was conducted in different places in Oita Prefecture²¹. Access to this group was through recommendation and with preparation in advance. Compared with other groups the people in this group seem to be very busy and show less interest in a survey about Iran. The survey with this group was conducted through a respected mediator and in small groups each time making sure that the respondent had enough patience and will to express his/her ideas without hesitation.

The Retired

The retired refers to travellers over the age of 60 in this survey .This group of Japanese travellers that are also called “silver market” by tourism researchers, compose a market segment which is already being aggressively targeted by overseas destination marketers. They

²¹ Questionnaires collected from this group are mainly collected from: Oita Baptist Church, Staff of Tokiwa department store in Oita, Sakura travel company in Oita city, Shoushinge No Kai Temple in Oita city, Staff of Mirai shinkin Bank Oujinaka branch in Oita city, local communities in nearby towns in Oita prefecture including: Kitsuki, Onoya and Mie town. Beppu Baptist church and a meeting with Construction Company owners in Oita conducted by Sakura travel company

tend to stay longer in destinations and their supposedly high disposable income and free time makes them an attractive market segment for tourist destinations. Access to this group for conducting the survey was provided by Japanese mediators belonging to this group, in places such as the local public hall and also in religious groups in the church and temple. People in this group are relatively easy to access and communicate due to their high demand for cultural information about other nations, and their free time.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the survey were collected in a database and analysed by SPSS²² software. From the total of 459 respondents in this survey 51% were aged 16-18, and the rest as shown in Table 5.1.3 are university students or older .

Table 5.1.3: Classification of the respondents according to their Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16-18	234	51.0	51.4	51.4
	19-25	65	14.2	14.3	65.7
	26-40	41	8.9	9.0	74.7
	41-60	80	17.4	17.6	92.3
	60+	35	7.6	7.7	100.0
	Total	455	99.1	100.0	
Missing	99	4	.9		
Total		459	100.0		

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

There were 44.0% Male and 55.3% Female among the respondents as classified in Table 5.1.4

²² Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Table 5.1.4: classification of respondents according to their sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	202	44.0	44.3	44.3
	Female	254	55.3	55.7	100.0
	Total	456	99.3	100.0	
Missing		3	.7		
Total		459	100.0		

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The information collected from the free questions is divided and classified as shown in Table 5.1.5. This brings the possibility to look for relations between variables within the same question as well as those from other questions.

Table 5.1.5: Classification of data and the number of variables

Category	Data	Variables	
Free questions	Question1:Image of Iran	30	
	Question2:Image of Persia	21	
	Question 12: Travel interest Reasoning	Positive:	12
		Negative:	16
Multiple choice	Questions 3 to 11	10	
Personal data	Age and Sex	2	
		Total: 91	

Although the survey produced data and information in large quantity, the results of free questions in the survey are analysed individually to avoid any possible misunderstandings of a mass data production effort. Therefore the statistical methods on changing qualitative data to pure quantitative ones are not applicable and accordingly descriptive analyses are applied to test the hypotheses.

Part Two: Initial Research Findings

Open Elicitation Questions Regarding the Names "Iran" and "Persia"

The first two questions were designed to address the divergence between psychological representations elicited by the name “Persia” and those elicited by the name “Iran.” Though the two names refer to the same geographical and historical entity, experience had suggested that perceptions associated with them were widely divergent. The name "Persia" was first applied to the land of Iran by the Ancient Greeks to refer to the empire whose administrative centre was the Pars region (present-day Fars). From that time onwards this became the name by which foreigners generally knew the nation which had always been referred to as "Iran" by its inhabitants. The name "Iran" was only adopted by the rest of the world when Reza Shah Pahlavi demanded, in 1935, that the name "Persia" be dropped. It is still common to hear "Persia" or, more usually, "Persian", used in the context of the arts and culture of Iran. The language of Iran is often referred to by foreigners as "Persian", as opposed to "Farsi", by which it is known by Iranians. The word "Persian" is also indelibly linked with two of Iran's best known cultural exports, cats and carpets.

The two questions were framed as follows:

1. When you think of Iran, what comes to mind? (Please write as many words as you want)
2. When you think of Persia, what comes to mind? (Please write as many words as you want)

The purpose of these two open questions was to elicit raw representations associated with the two names in order that responses could be contrasted. It was of particular importance that these two initial questions be presented with little or no introduction of the topic in order to

ensure that responses were influenced to the least possible extent by external factors and that responses were not influenced by any information gleaned from subsequent questions. The bracketed instruction to the question was also important as it encouraged respondents to be as forthcoming or as reticent as their knowledge or enthusiasm for the topic dictated. The responses, which were classified qualitatively and subsequently measured quantitatively indicate not only the types of representations elicited by the two stimulus words but also the relative strengths of each according to how frequently the response was observed.

Analysis of the responses to questions 1 & 2

The information derived from the images of people in Oita Prefecture from both concepts of “Iran” and “Persia” is analysed as follows:

Representations and Symbols

Petroleum

“The oil and gas industry in Iran is almost as old as the country itself. As far back as 3,500 BC, hydrocarbons played a key role in the region - tar was used in construction, shipbuilding, and ornamental works by the early Sumerians, and natural gas fires were a source of religious inspiration (Karagiannis, 2006).”

Oil has been Iran’s primary industry and number one export since the 1920s. According to the most recent estimate by the Oil and Gas Journal, Iran is home to the second-largest pool of untapped petroleum in the world, an estimated 125.8 billion barrels, and it is not just oil that Iran possesses in great abundance, but also natural gas (Oil & Gas Journal, 2003). Japan is currently a major importer of Iranian oil. About 16% of the crude oil imported by Japan every year comes from Iran making it Japan’s third biggest supplier. Even though Iran’s biggest oil

customer became also the first country to reduce its import of Iranian Oil because of Iran's nuclear dispute with the west, the supply of oil is too big to be replaced easily because of political relations (Cirola, 2006).

It is therefore no surprise that one of the most commonly elicited responses to the opening two questions was "oil." However, the frequency of the response differed widely according to the two different stimuli. Of the sample, 110 respondents mentioned oil in response to the name "Iran", amounting to 24% of the total, whereas only 14 respondents mentioned the same in response to the name "Persia", amounting to 3.1% of the total. These findings show that though the awareness of Iran as a major supplier of world oil is strong in Japanese society, this awareness is not strongly linked to the idea of Persia.

Table 5.2.1: Oil in image of Iran compared with Persia in the same group

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Total
Oil		%	
In the Image of Iran	110	24.0	459
In the Image of Persia	14	3.1	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Oil was mentioned by a far higher proportion of respondents in those age groups aged 26 and above. It is likely that this reflects the fact that a greater proportion of respondents in these age groups who pay energy bills compared with the students who took part in the survey. These respondents are therefore more likely to be aware of world events that influence the price of oil and thus may subsequently be more aware of the role that Iran plays as a major energy supplier (Table 5.2.1).

Table 5.2.2: The expression of “Oil” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	9.4	26.1	43.9	45	40
Persia	0.8	4.6	9.7	5	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

That the name “Persia” is not strongly linked with Iran’s current role as an energy supplier is not surprising since it is, and has for a long time been, by its modern name that the country has been referred to in the media. However, this rather simple finding points to a larger and more significant point about the psychological representations that are associated with the old and new names of the country. The results of this survey repeatedly show that the name “Persia” is far more strongly associated in the minds of Japanese with Iran’s cultural past, and the name “Iran” with the country’s more recent history and current role in world politics.

Persian carpets

The art of making carpets was probably developed in Anatolia or central Asia about a thousand years ago (Azadi, 1977). In Iran, carpet weaving is one of the most widespread handicrafts practiced and is by far the most famous abroad. Persian carpets are renowned for their richness of colour, variety of pattern and quality of workmanship (Heshmati, 2002). They constitute one of the most positively influential symbols of Iranian culture that exists in the international consciousness.

Respondents mentioned Persian carpets in response to both “Iran” and “Persia” but to radically different extents (Table 5.2.3). A total of only 16 respondents mentioned Persian

carpets as a response to “Iran”, constituting 3.5% of the entire group. In comparison, the same response was observed 167 times as a response to “Persia”, constituting 36.4% of the total number of respondents.

Table 5.2.3: Persian Carpet in image of Iran compare with Persia in the same group

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Total
Persian Carpet		%	
In the Image of Iran	16	3.5	459
In the Image of Persia	167	36.4	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

As was expected, the response "Persian carpet" was observed most frequently among the older age groups and less among high school students (Table 5.2.4). It occurred most frequently amongst adults between the ages of 41 and 60 in response to question 2. It was also this age group that recorded the highest percentage of such responses to question 1. The next highest incidence for both questions was observed in the 26-40 year old age group. University students and the retired age group also recorded high frequencies of the response for question 2 but both recorded a frequency of zero in response to question 1.

Table 5.2.4: The expression of “carpet” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
“Iran”	1.2	0	7.3	12.5	0
“Persia”	13.5	50.7	56	62	45.1

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The high occurrence of "carpet" as a response to question 2 shows how significant the extent of awareness of the idea is in Japanese society but when we contrast this with the marked absence of the same response to question 1, we can justifiably infer that one of the highest profile features of Iranian culture is not being strongly associated with the nation itself but with the obsolete, though still highly emotive, "Persia".

That this highly positive response was primarily elicited by the name "Persia" may not be surprising since it is common usage to refer to Iranian-produced, hand-woven carpets as "Persian carpets." However, the fact that it was so much less frequently observed in response to "Iran" can be taken as evidence that the Persian carpet and the modern nation of Iran are not strongly-linked in the minds of most Japanese, presenting, at the same time, both a problem and an opportunity for Iranian tourism marketers. The widespread awareness of the Persian carpet has the potential to be a tool for the promotion of Iran in the Japanese market but it is clear that there is a long way to go until this potential is realised.

This finding can be considered as particularly important given the highly souvenir-oriented behaviour of Japanese tourists. It has already been discussed that one of the important ways in which Japanese tourists communicate their travel experiences with others is through gift-buying. It is widely considered important by Japanese tourists to buy appropriate *omiyage* to bring back home to function both as a show of respect to those they consider themselves as indebted to and also as a representative symbol of their experiences. Such a cultural demand can naturally be used to the advantage of promoting Iran in the Japanese market. Promotion of such a high-profile national product as the Persian carpet must be considered as part of any strategy to introduce Iran as a tourist destination in Japan.

Pistachio

As the world's biggest producer of Pistachios, Iran made 58% of total world production in 2003 (WHT, 2004). Agriculture is a part of Iranian history and culture. The irrigation system which is used in dry areas known as "Qanat" as mentioned above shows how Iranians brought the water from kilometers away from their towns for drinking and agricultural use.

Only a few the respondents mentioned Pistachios as one of famous agricultural productions of Iran (Table 5.2.5). Iran ranks first in the world in terms of pistachio production and harvested area but it does not enjoy such a high position in global marketing due to exporting challenges.²³ This result suggests that here is a possibility of advertising Iran with its unique agricultural production like Pistachio and the world's most expensive spice, "Saffron".²⁴ Iranian saffron and pistachio are mostly exported to industrialized countries including Japan however no one referred to the Iranian saffron that he/she probably has used many times.

Comparing the high percentage of Persian carpet knowledge in the image of Japanese people with this very low level of knowledge about other Iran's famous food productions such as pistachio and saffron shows the opportunity of using these topics in cultural exchange events in Japan. The high attention to foods and desire to taste other countries food by Japanese would be a big help in this issue.

²³ According the World Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) affiliated to the United Nations, the pistachio production in the world stood at 548,759 metric tones (MTs) in 2002, Iran ranking first with a production of 300,000 MTs. The U.S. with a production of 127,010 MTs, Turkey with 40,000 MTs, Syria with 39,208 MTs, and China with 26,000 MTs took other places after Iran. The pistachio gardens in Iran's rival country, the U.S. occupies a total area of 44,000 hectares vs. 280000 hectares in Iran.

²⁴ Iran is also the world's top producer of Saffron. It supplies more than 80 percent of the world's demand with a plantation area of about 36,724 to 41,325 hectares and an annual production of 150 to 170 tons. FAO report, 2002

Table 5.2.5: The expression of “Pistachio” as an image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	0	0	2.4	1..2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005.

Persian Cat

The significance of Persian Cats in the Japanese image of Iran is surprisingly high as shown in Table 5.2.6. As the results of the survey show there is a strong image of the cat in all the groups even those over 60 years old.

Table 5.2.6: The expression of “Persian Cat” as an image of Persia

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Persia	41	33.8	36.5	38.7	20

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The existence of this image within Japanese society is a fact, whether it can be assumed as an advantage for the Iranian tourism industry or not. The Persian cat is more famous in Japan than Iran itself. What is obvious is that “Persian cat” is an image which is really strong and has come from the beautiful pure-race cat that may not be found easily even in Iran any more. The factor that should be analyzed is to find the reasons for the creation of this strong image to help other Persian characters with more deep cultural issues become as well known as the

Persian cat. If the Persian cat can be so famous among the Japanese, there are much more interesting issues from Persia with more cultural and heritage value to be offered to the world.

It is of course very attractive for Japanese tourists in Iran to visit a Persian cat exhibition. The Japanese would love to take photos with beautiful Persian cats in the country of origin of the species and the photos taken by them would be good advertisements for Iran tours in Japan.

Safety and Security concerns

War, Iraq and Other Related Issues

"Is there a civil war in Iran?"

"Is there a war in Iran like there is in Iraq?"

"The whole region is at war now isn't it?"

These questions and others similar to them are often asked of Iranians by Japanese of all age groups in the course of conversations about Iran. Behind these questions may be a number of factors, not least of which is the quite natural sympathy that the questioned feel for natives of a country that they believe to be in danger. In addition however, when talking about Iran as a potential tourist destination, the perceived possibility of threats to individual security is understandably a major source of concern, whatever the truth of the matter may be. Iran is currently not involved in any major international or domestic conflicts that tourists need be specifically concerned about but it is clear even from this anecdotal evidence that there is a strong perception of Iran as a country at war.

Prior to the Islamic revolution of 1979, the number of Japanese visitors to Iran had been

increasing steadily for several years²⁵. The revolution was followed by an 8-year conflict with Iraq which lasted from 1980 to 1988. The war was a costly one in terms of human lives and the devastating effect it had on the economies and infrastructures of both countries. Just three years after the hostilities between Iran and Iraq came to an end, the whole region was rocked by the American intervention following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. With the end of the Gulf War, a period of relative stability began which lasted through to the end of the 1990s. This period of peace, which saw a small increase in the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran, lasted until the September 11 terrorist attacks of 2001 brought conflict to the region once more. This time, the war was across Iran's eastern border in Afghanistan. War in the east was closely followed by war in the west. The unresolved conflict in Iraq is still casting a shadow over the region.

Though none of these events since the end of the Iran-Iraq war have involved Iran directly, they have without question had a strong influence on perceptions regarding the country and this effect can clearly be discerned from the frequent mention of "war" in response to the first two questions of this survey. Nearly one third of all respondents mentioned war in response to either question 1 or 2, the vast majority of whom, 29.2% of the entire sample, mentioned it in response to question 1. The number of respondents mentioning war in response to question 2 was less than a tenth of that number (Table 5.2.7).

Table 5.2.7: War in the image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue: war	Frequency	Percent %	Total
In the Image of Iran	134	29.2	459
In the Image of Persia	11	2.4	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

²⁵ The number of Japanese tourists visited Iran was acceleration in the years before Islamic revolution in 1979 reaching 24 thousand tourist, it has started with 4 thousand a couple of years after the revolution.

The distribution of this response according to age groups is also revealing. The age group most likely to mention war was high school students (Table 5.2.8).

Table 5.2.8: The expression of “War” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19-25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	52.6	23	46.3	36.2	25.7
Persia	4	3.1	0	2.5	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

In addition to those mentioning war, a significant number of respondents also mentioned “Iraq” as part of their image of Iran. It is highly significant that mention of “Iraq” was completely absent in response to question 2. As mentioned above, Iran’s 8-year war with Iraq has made an indelible mark on its recent history and continues to link the two countries in the minds of those who have knowledge of them. This and the close proximity of the more recent conflict in Iraq were undoubtedly significant factors in producing this result. The coincidence of the two results was also significantly high. 31% of respondents who mentioned "War" also mentioned "Iraq" and 54% of those who mentioned "Iraq" also mentioned "War". This has been compounded by the recent high profile of events in Iraq in the news media. Repeated exposure to coverage of events in Iraq must certainly have gone a long way to ensuring that that nation has stayed in the forefront of the Japanese public consciousness. It would therefore be highly surprising if this factor had not played some role in producing the abovementioned result.

Another factor which almost certainly contributed to this result was the confusion between the names of the two countries that was observed by the author on numerous occasions. In both

the English and the Japanese language, Iran and Iraq have very similar sounding and similarly spelt names although in both their respective native languages, Farsi and Arabic, this similarity does not exist. The author observed many instances in which conversations about Iran were confused by this issue. In many instances it was necessary to restate explicitly that the subject of conversation was Iran and not Iraq after the confusion was noticed.

Once again, this finding shows a wide divergence in the images of Iran and Persia that are held by the Japanese and again it is again clear that the name “Iran” carries the burden of the current and recent troubles that have plagued the country and region while the name “Persia” has emerged unscathed. Small but significant numbers of respondents also mentioned “Danger” (4%), “The Nuclear Issue” (3.5%) and “Anti-US or Terrorism” (1.5%) in response to question 1 while they were again absent in response to question 2. With safety such a high priority for travellers, this strongly negative perception of Iran as country in the midst of a region in conflict and even the false perception that it is a country which is itself at war, cannot fail to have a detrimental effect on the Iranian tourism industry.

The Middle East Region

The Middle East, the geographic region where Europe, Africa and Asia meet (Encyclopedia Britanica, 2006), is called “*chutou*” in Japanese. The region is the cradle of civilizations (Alavi and Yasin, 2000) and also the birth place of three world religions. However, the region is hosting the clash of civilizations at present (Gilpin, 2005). The Middle East today is almost entirely Moslem, Sunni 85%, and Shia are the two major stands of Islam and Iran is the only Shia Islamic republic (Sori, 2005). The entire region is suffering from this new phenomenon even for those countries which are not located directly in the crises as what is the case with Iraq and Afghanistan for example.

Only 3.5 percent of the respondents in the survey mentioned Iran as a Middle Eastern country in their Image. Although Iran is an Islamic country that shares the same religion with the other countries in the region, there are characteristics that make Iran different from the majority of Arab people in Middle East, such as the Persian language and culture, the Persian calendar and the majority of Shia Muslims in Iran.

Table 5.2.9: Middle East in image of Iran compare with Persia at the same group

Issue	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Middle East		%	
In the Image of Iran	16	3.5	459
In the Image of Persia	1	0.2	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The proportion of answers which represent Iran as a Middle Eastern country (15.3%) is among university students much higher than the other groups specially middle age and elderly people. It may be as a result of consideration of Iran as a Middle East country in academia more recently than earlier.

The Nuclear Issue

It is quite often that we have seen a news item about Iran’s Nuclear Issue in the headlines of main newspapers in the world in recent times. This issue has a negative impact on Iran’s tourism industry, bringing worries for a possible new conflict in the region between Iran and America²⁶. However, Iran’s new President has invited foreign tourists to visit Iran’s nuclear facilities (Malekzadeh, 2006). The nuclear issue is still a major political challenge of Iran’s international relations, on 23 December 2006 the UN Security Council voted to impose

²⁶ Bahrami Nasab, travel agency owner and tourism expert, Tehran, 13 November 2006, personal correspondence with the author

sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend uranium enrichment and Iran immediately rejected the resolution (CNN World, 2006).

The nuclear issue has also influenced the Japan-Iran Oil business. In July 2003, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi urged a Japanese consortium to carefully consider whether to sign a contract for an oil development project in Iran from various standpoints, including nuclear non-proliferation (Jiji press, 2007). In November 2006, the story was on the cut of Japan's concession to 10 percent after the Japanese INPEX Company had acquired a 75 percent stake in the 2 billion dollar Azadegan project in February 2004 (Hiroshi, 2006).

As the results of the present survey show, the nuclear issue of Iran is considered as a provisional issue and it has not become in the people's mind an Image of that country. As shown in Table 5.2.10 only 3.3% of respondents wrote about the nuclear issue in their image expression. The fact that is to be considered is that the nuclear issue may have become more serious and important since the time of survey, Oct 2005, and it may differ at the moment as a result of the decision of the members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to report Iran to the security council of the United Nation. The U.N Security Council, on July 2006, ordered Iran to suspend uranium enrichment which is refused by Iran. The argument is still on going and August 31, 2007 is the due date for Iran to accept the order or face new sanctions.

Table 5.2.10: Nuclear Program in image of Iran compare with Persia at the same group

Issue	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Nuclear Program		%	
In the Image of Iran	15	3.3	459
In the Image of Persia	1	0.2	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The mater of the nuclear issue is considered by those more than 60 years old first (11.4%) and the university students after them (6.1%). Maybe they have more time and interest to follow the news and to remember it in their image as a result (Table 5.2.11).

Table 5.2.11: The expression of the “Nuclear problem” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	0.8	6.1	4.8	3.7	11.4
Persia	0	0	0	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Iraq

Iran and Iraq are seen as being very similar in the English-speaking world though they are totally different in the original pronunciation of Iran in Farsi and Iraq in Arabic. There were many cases observed by the author that show that Japanese mistake the name of Iran with Iraq quite often. Table 5.2.12 shows the percentage of those who wrote Iraq as their image of Iran. Although the names are similar, the high rate of confusion of the two names shows a lack of knowledge about Iran amongst Japanese that doesn’t help them to differentiate Iran from its neighbour. The name of Iraq is repeated the by mass media every day in the news about the situation after the war. Unfortunately, because of the awful situation of Iraq at present, it brings a poor image of Iran when it is confused with Iraq in the Japanese people’s mind. There is no problem with security in Iran as mentioned by Japanese travel agents that are conducting Iran tours in Japan, but the fact is that the two countries are neighbours and both are far from Japan. Its natural that the current situation of Iraq makes people nervous about Iran as well.

Table 5.2.12: The expression of “Iraq” as an image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	12.8	16.9	26.8	28.7	17.1

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Danger

It is a fact that Iran is located in the region of the world that is considered dangerous at the time because of recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. People are faced almost every day by news about Middle East including Israel and Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq which makes them nervous about the region. The overall average of those who mentioned “danger” in their image of Iran was high. However, the image of “danger” expressed by high school students was at a level of 6.8%, much less than this in other groups as displayed in Table 5.2.13.

To analyze the idea of danger, the complete image on how they feel danger expressed in this group was separately assessed. Do they mean Iran is dangerous because of its location? Is it a misconception of name between Iran and Iraq? Or any other information that shows their idea of danger. It was found that 15% of the respondents mentioned Iraq in their image of Iran too, so that may represent a misunderstanding of the country with Iraq. Also 26% of them mentioned “war” in their image expression, which shows they are concerned about the conflict which is on going in the region and Iran appears as a dangerous place in their mind because of this fact.

Table 5.2.13: The expression of “Danger” as an image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	6.8	1.5	2.4	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Poverty

There were a few cases who referred to “poverty” in their image of Iran (Table 5.2.14) and they were mostly high school students. The data show that within this small group 20% have considered Iran as a desert land in their image and 13% of them expressed cultural misunderstanding about Iran that shows they considered Iran to be some where in Africa.

Table 5.2.14: The expression of “Poverty” as an image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	5.1	0	0	2.5	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Political issues

Ayatollah Khomeini

The hard-line Islamic cleric Ayatollah Khomeini was the single most important figure in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Under his leadership, the Pahlavi monarchy was put to an end and Iran was officially renamed an Islamic Republic. February 11th, the day on which

Khomeini returned to Iranian soil after his long period of exile, is still celebrated in Iran as a national holiday. 17 years after his death, the face of Khomeini can be seen in photographs in offices and public places of all kinds (often alongside photographs of his successor, Ayatollah Khamenei), on bank notes and even on large murals on public buildings.

Among the respondents to this survey, 6% mentioned Khomeini in their image of Iran and only one respondent mentioned him as part of their image of Persia.

Table 5.2.15: Ayatollah Khomeini in Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Ayatollah Khomeini		%	
In the Image of Iran	28	6.1	459
In the Image of Persia	1	0.2	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

One surprising finding was that none of the high school students who took part in the survey mentioned his name in response to either question despite having been taught about the Islamic revolution as part of their world history syllabus. The official high school world history textbook even features a photograph of the Ayatollah alongside information concerning the revolution. This may be evidence of a lack of “penetration” of information taught in world history lessons. Mention of Ayatollah Khomeini was most frequent in the 41-60 year old age group. This is the age group in which we begin to find those old enough to have been adults at the time of the Iranian revolution. However, it is questionable whether any conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the age breakdown shown in table 5.2.15 since the total number of positive responses was too small.

Table 5.2.16: The expression of “Khomeini” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	0	1.5	9.7	25	8.5
Persia	0	0	0	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Pahlavi Dynasty, the ruler of Iran before Islamic revolution of 1979

On average 2.8% of respondents recognised the Pahlavi dynasty in their Image of Iran and only one person remembered the Iranian former ruler in her Image of Persia. (Table 5.2.17)

Table 5.2.17: Pahlavi dynasty in the Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percentage %	Total
Pahlavi dynasty			
In the Image of Iran	13	2.8	495
In the Image of Persia	1	0.2	495

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

None of the students wrote about the former regime even though the high school students are supposed to read about them in their text books. Among the older people between 41 and 60 there were 11.2% who wrote about the “Shah” or King of Iran before the Islamic revolution. They still remember some efforts of the regime to introduce Ancient Persian History and culture to the world²⁷.

²⁷ Talking with some of the respondents after the survey, they mentioned the story of changing the calendar to Persian calendar by shah. The former Iranian king made some efforts to declare his administration as the descendent of the great Achaemenid dynasty by reforming the country’s calendar. The Iran an calendar year was briefly changed in commemoration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire in 1971. The event was hold in Persepolis on the remains of Achaemenid

Table 5.2.18: The expression of “Pahlavi Dynasty” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	0	0	2.4	11.2	8.5
Persia	0	0	0	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Anti -US Country and Terrorism

The relationship between Iran and America is the worst since the time of the Islamic revolution In Iran. The two governments have had no official relations since 1979. Anti-Americanism used to be intrinsic to Iran's national ideology. This is no longer as true as it was but the feeling has once again grown, particularly since George Bush included the country in his “axis of evil”. Iran’s nuclear issue is the main topic for the conflictt between the two countries and America didn’t hesitate to make it a big issue and call for support from European countries and also Russia and China.

The matter did not appear as big in the survey as was expected however. The highest percentage of respondents who mentioned Iran as an Anti-American country was the 9.3% among people over 60. Few people mentioned “Terrorism” in their image which is 5% at its highest among people between 41 and 60 (Table 5.2.19).

palace. The year was changed from 1350 Hejrieh Shamsi to 2530 Melli (national). Its also worthy of mention that the number of Japanese tourists to Iran was growing rapidly a few years before the revolution and it reduced as radically after the event. According to Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) more than 42 thousand Japanese tourists visited Iran one year before the revolution.

Table 5.2.19: The expression of “Anti-U.S” and Terrorism as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Issue	High school students 16-18, %	University students 19-25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Anti-US	.4	0	0	3.7	9.3
Terrorism	2.5	4.6	0	5	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Tehran

As general information, the capital city of a country is usually expected to be remembered by others. Tehran, the capital of Iran does not seem to be as popular or at least it was not mentioned by the respondents seriously. Within the high school students group for example no one wrote the name of capital city of Iran (Table 5.2.20).

Table 5.2.20: The expression of “Tehran” as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16-18, %	University students 19-25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	0	3.1	9.7	6	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Islamic Revolution

More than 27 years has past since of the Islamic revolution in Iran and only few people mentioned the revolution in their Image of the country. It was mentioned by middle aged people between 26 and 40 which ranked the highest at 7.3% but almost none of the high school and university students mentioned it. The important fact for the Iranian tourist

marketer to be aware of in this issue is Japan's defeat in World War II, which had a profound and lasting effect on national attitudes toward war, the armed forces, and military involvement in politics. All military leaders were removed from positions of influence in the State.

The trauma of defeat produced strong pacifist sentiments that found expression in the United States-fostered 1947 constitution, which, under Article 9, forever renounces war as an instrument for settling international dispute and declares that Japan will never again maintain "land, sea, or air forces or other war potential"²⁸. The current Prime Minister has however declared his desire to change the constitution by modifying or removing Article 9.

Having this background of the history of Japan it is necessary to communicate to the Japanese especially the case of related issues in the Islamic revolution in Iran, such as the conflict between Iran and America which continues up to the present day.

Table 5.2.21: The expression of "Islamic Revolution" as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+
Iran	0	1.5	7.3	3.7	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

²⁸ The exact limit of Article 9 is a controversial issue in Japan, but it has been interpreted as allowing for self-defense forces. The Japanese military is severely limited by Article 9 of the Japanese constitution which states: "The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes" and that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."

Iranian immigrants in Japan and other Political Issues

Other political issues were mentioned by a small proportion mostly of middle aged and elderly people. The cases were different for each respondent and are a reflection of what they read in a newspaper or saw once in the media about Iran as a country in the Middle East and its relation with Arabic countries located in its neighborhood. Some of them have mentioned some domestic issues like the population of Tehran and the income gap in Iran. These are assumed as the reaction of different people to the news they get from media or their personal interest and are not significant issues to be considered in this study (Table 5.2.22).

Table 5.2.22: The expression of “Political Issues and Iranian immigrants in Japan” as an Image of Iran

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Political Issues ²⁹	0	3	7.3	6.2	2.8
Iranians in Japan	0	0	4.8	3.7	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The issue of Iranians in Japan mentioned by respondents is important enough to be considered as a matter to influence the image of Iran in Japan. The average number of Iranian tourists visiting Japan that had remained constant over time³⁰ changed drastically in a period of 10 years between 1983 and 1992 (Table 5.2.23). All the travellers are regarded as tourists but considering the background of the situation of Iran in that period and the cost of Japan tours it

²⁹ The political issues mentioned by respondents are mainly Iran’s international relations, anti-Americanism, and recent Iranian Nuclear issues.

³⁰ Japan National Tourism Organization JNTO, visitor arrivals by nationality, different years

seems to have been immigration more than tourism. Iran was suffering from the war with Iraq in that time and many Iranians came to Japan to seek jobs as result of unemployment in their home country. They have stayed in main cities like Tokyo and Osaka where they can find job more easily and for all of the people who took part in the survey the author was the only Iranian they had seen before from Oita City.

The increase in the number of Iranian travellers to Japan during the period 1983-1992 was such a big amount that it brought Iran into the list of the top 15 nations providing tourist arrivals to Japan. The country ranked 12 in 1990 and 8 in 1991. The pilot study in Tokyo found out that the proportion of Iranian immigrates as an Image of Iran amongst Japanese in Tokyo was much more than in Oita Prefecture³¹

Table 5.2.23: Average number of tourist arrivals in Japan from Iran

Period	1978-1982	1983-1987	1988-1992	1993-1997
Iranians in Japan	3154	15001	25407	3219

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization, different years

Religion

Islamic country

Referring to the religious issues like “Islamic country” by 114 respondents (25.1%) as an Image of Iran shows the high consideration of Iran among Japanese people as a religious country. As it appears in the official name of the country “Islamic Republic of Iran” it is quite natural to reach such big proportion in the answers, but this contrasts with the image of the

³¹ The same questionnaire was delivered to the members of Catholic Church and local people with recommendation of Mr Furuyama Akio who is a native Chiba citizen and a Japanese writer. The result of this pilot study in the case of Iranian immigrants in Japan is different from the others. The result shows that people in Tokyo have more strong idea of Iranian immigrants as they are more familiar with the Issue.

same group about Persia which shows only 16 answers (3.5%) mentioned the religion in their image description.

What is important here is to take advantage out of the existing image of Iran as an Islamic or religious country. To bring more information and insight is absolutely possible in such a society like Japan which is very interested to know about other cultures and people. A more profound consideration of the exact words and explanation to break down the specific responses to make it clear exactly what religious images the respondents had in mind shows that 11% of those mentioned “religion” in their image of Iran mentioned “Khomeini” also, 9% have the image of “Hijab”, and 8% said “Middle East”. Correlating respondents who mentioned religion with those who would (45%) or would not (53%) like to visit Iran also gives no significant idea of any differences with religion. To understand how Islamic Iran is different from the Islamic Arab world in the region may be considered as an important subject of tourism promotional activities for Japanese people who are interested to know about Iran.

Using the experience of Japanese tourists in Iran who were surprised to see that an Islamic country with more than 90% of Shiite Moslems was once ruled by Zoroastrian kings and that a minority of Zoroastrians are still living freely in Iran, respected by Moslems practicing their religion and that Zoroastrian fire temples are open to every body including international tourists, implies that there is a unique opportunity to attract Japanese by providing them with the related information from the history of Iran and Persia, both in Iran as a tourist or in Japan as a topic for cultural activity. The important point of this survey finding is to find out why Persia as a representative name of ancient Iran doesn't bring out the same image of religion even though Persian kings used to call themselves “the representative of God”. How to make a balance between the two is one of the key points in marketing Iran in Japan as a tourist destination (Table 24).

Table 5.2.24: Religion in the Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Total
Religion		%	
In the Image of Iran	115	25.1	459
In the Image of Persia	16	0.35	459

Source: the survey conducted by for this research Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Tables 5.2.24 and 5.2.25 show the importance of informing people about this fact in any kind of cultural activities planned by Iranian tourism officials to market Iran as a tours destination in Japan.

Table 5.2.25: The expression of “Religion” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18	University students 19- 25	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60	Retired people 60+
Iran	15.3 %	40 %	17 %	40 %	37.1 %
Persia	.8 %	1.5 %	2.4 %	13 %	2.8 %

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Hijab / Chador

Hijab is an Islamic way of dressing for females over the age of 9. The belief, though it is expressed differently in different Islamic countries culturally and ideologically, is to cover the body except the hands and face in order not to show them to men except the family and some relatives who are allowed by Islam. Hijab can be different in appearance. Chador which also means “tent” in Farsi is the most popular Hijab in Iran; black cloth covers the whole body from the head to the feet. The cloth has been changing slightly during the years after the Islamic revolution and is more colorful and not so restrictive as it used to be before.

Hijab is compulsory for females, even foreigners and international visitors. While it's considered as a restriction and bore, it is also expressed as a cultural practice in the trip. However, there is no complaining about it because every body knows about it before they visit the place. According to some travel agents which operate Persian tours, Japanese don't have a problem with the Hijab and they are prepared to practice it before the trip. The result of this survey shows that the issue of Hijab is more considered by people over 40 and only few of the students (Table 5.2.26).

Table 5.2.26: The expression of “Hijab” as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	2.9	1.5	0	8.1	12.9

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Turban and Beard

Some social and cultural values were changed right after the Islamic revolution. The clearest sample is the official dress for men. Iranians didn't use neckties for example, considering these as a symbol of western culture adopted by the former regime. They also would prefer not to shave every day as they had to before.

Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme leader of Iran in 1979. Such a big change in Iran was published to the world showing his simple dressing as the custom for the graduates of the Islamic school in Iran. The two Iranian former presidents and Iran's current supreme leader

“Ayatollah Khamemei” have the same dressing in their official meeting as Iranian governors. These facts are expressed by some of the respondents as found in Table 5.2.27.

Table 5.2.27: The expression of “Turban” as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Issue	High school students 16-18, %	University students 19-25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Beard	0.4	1.5	2.4	1.2	5.7
Turban	2.1	3	0	2.5	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Climate and Environment

Desert

“It’s too hot, No river, dry and hot climate”

“The sand storm is very strong”

The images of the desert in responses to the survey represent a negative attitude to the place as a country with rough weather and no vegetation, which will make the trip difficult and not enjoyable. They also think of Iran as an empty land with nothing to see this (12.6%). This image doesn’t exist for “Persia” in such a large proportion, as the finding of the survey shows. There are only 3 cases that have the image of desert about Persia (0.7%) of the total answers, and these answers mentioned caravan and camel which shows a positive attitude toward the desert in their image.

Located between the Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf in the south, and having two long mountain ranges, Iran has a collections of various climates and of course a hot and

dry area in the central part of Iran. The Iranian desert is one of the country's most favourite tourist destinations for international tourists. The dry area is also the birth place of an irrigation system called "Qanat"³² or "Kariz", invented by ancient Iranians and then spread to other cultures, especially along the Silk Road.

Through the medium of a big article in a local news paper in Oita city³³ about the "Qanat" irrigation system including detailed information about the current situation of "Qanat" in Iran, the potential of this irrigation system to attract Japanese tourists is obvious. What is necessary to be considered is to use this kind of attraction to introduce a new face to the desert area in Iran to help with changing Japanese attitudes toward the region as a tourist attraction.

Table 5.2.28: Desert in the Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Desert		%	
In the Image of Iran	58	12.6	459
In the Image of Persia	3	0.7	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

It's not possible or even necessary to change people's ideas and image in short time only with advertisements. What is important here is to find a way of looking at the existing situation in a different way to take some advantage from it. There is a strong desire in the Japanese image of Iran as a desert land and there are various cultural and environmental attractions in the Iranian desert area that could be used as a subject of cultural exchange activity which can

³² "Qanat" is a sloping tunnel that brings water from an underground source in a range of hills down to a dry plain at the foot of these hills. Its advantage over an open air aqueduct is that less water is lost by evaporation on its way from the hill to the plain.

³³ Oita Godou Shimboon, Jun, 3, 2005, evening paper Page9: In this article the Qanat system itself and its importance for the place are explained. The author explains how hot and dry is the region and how the native people are still using the water system for irrigation in this dry area. An Iranian person who is in charge of keeping and maintenance the system is interviewed and his personal memories of working for the system have made the article more attractive. It is also discussed how this system is in harmony with the local environment and provides drinking and agriculture water without using electricity or other sources of energy but just the gravity. It ends with the news about opening an international center for Qanat by UNESCO in Yazd city and Iranian governmental support for maintenance the system.

bring a new image of the desert for the Japanese, instead of teaching them that Iran is not only the desert. Fortunately, the job is started by Japanese curiosity as we see in the article about Qanat in “Oita Godou shimbun” the biggest newspaper in Oita city. They found the irrigation system of Yazd city in Iran interesting enough to explain it in a big article which brings hope for similar kind of activities to bring more knowledge of Iran in Japan.

Table 5.2.29: The expression of “Desert” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+, %
Iran	14.1	9.2	4.8	17	5.7
Persia	0.8	0	0	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Earthquake

As happens in many countries in the world, Iran is faced with natural disasters like earthquakes from time to time (Table 30). The recent huge quake called a national tragedy by President Mohammad Khatami in December 2003 killed more than 20 thousand people. A 16th century citadel (Bam) that was on UNESCO’s list of world heritage was flattened.

Table 5.2.30: Earthquakes in the Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percent %	Total
Quake			
In the Image of Iran	3	.7	495
In the Image of Persia	1	.2	495

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Japan was one of the first countries in helping people who remained without housing after the earthquake. The event was mentioned by a few people aged between 41 and 60. They may have been one of those who helped Iranian people through humanitarian activities to collect money in Oita Prefecture at that time (Table 5.2.31).³⁴

Table 5.2.31: The expression of “Quake” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	0	1.5	4.8	0	0
Persia	0	0	0	1.2	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

The History of Iran

Persia and its historical sites in the “Image of Iran”

To bring more understanding of Iran as a tourist destination is what this study is seeking to do. What is regarded as the strong potential of Iran to attract international tourists and Japanese overseas travellers in particular is the ancient history of Iran as one of the most important civilizations in the ancient world and the numerous historical sites that are spread out all over the country representing different periods of history. Without knowing these facts about Iran the tourism industry will not be able to persuade Japanese overseas travellers who travel abroad in large groups to engage in cultural and heritage tours to Iran.

³⁴ In cooperation, some students of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University joined to help Iranian people of the flattered city. They put donation boxes in train stations and some department stores to collect peoples help. The detail of the event can be found in the university records

The historical attractions of Iran/Persia are not an advantage in attracting travellers from Japan unless they know about them. The results of this survey show that only a few Japanese people consider Iran in this way. None of university students mentioned Persia in their Image of Iran and only 1.5% pointed to the historical sites. Among people between 41 and 60 who are considered the best customers for heritage cultural tours, 10% referred to Persia in their Image of Iran, which ranked as the highest proportion, and only 3.7% remembered the historical sites in the same group (Table 5.2.32).

Table 5.2.32: The expression of “Persia” and “Historical Sites” as an image of Iran

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Persia	0.4	0	2.4	10	2.8
Historical sites	1.2	1.5	2.4	3.7	2.9

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Ancient History in the image of “Persia”

Ancient history is the framework that can introduce Iran and attract travellers to visit what has remained in the land that is the cradle of civilization and used to be one of the biggest empires in the world. It is very old but advanced and can attract historians, archaeologists and geographers as well as ordinary people. As the results of different images of this survey show, the more Japanese people know about the history of Iran, they find it more interesting and try to express their findings to others through media and direct contacts as a part of Japanese collectivist culture.³⁵

³⁵ The particular interests like the influence of Zoroastrianism in Buddhism as a religious issue referred by a cultural exchange program organizer, the advanced administration and taxation system of the Achaemenid dynasty referred by a

The results of the survey show that Japanese people between 41 and 60 appeared to have more knowledge about the history of ancient Iran, as 23.7% of them mentioned a part of the ancient history in their Image of Iran (Table 5.2.33). According to Iranian tour operators, their Japanese customers for Persia tour are mostly from the same age group³⁶. The average of those who mentioned history in their Image of Iran was relatively low amongst the other groups. It will necessitate much more effort and planning to bring more knowledge and understanding to them. Japanese society at present is very interested to know about other peoples, this fact brings opportunity for Iran’s tourism industry to benefit from cultural advertising too.

Table 5.2.33: The expression of “Ancient History” as an image of Persia

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Persia	6.8	7.6	4.8	23.7	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Cultural Elements

The Silk Road

There is no lack of information on the subject of the history of trade along the collection of land and sea routes that are known collectively as “The Silk Road.” The great influence this trade had on philosophy and religion as well as art and culture is well documented and indeed well known by Japanese overseas travellers. Iran played an integral part in this trade, being

history teacher and the old irrigation system in Iranian desert area mentioned by a geography teacher are the clear evidence of this fact observed by the author in Oita Prefecture.

³⁶ Interview with Mr Rafii, tour organizer of AITO , Iran’s biggest governmental travel agent

located centrally between Europe and the Arab lands to the West and China in the East. The remains of caravanserais can still be seen on many of the routes spanning the barren expanses connecting the cities of Iran. A small number of these historical caravanserais have been rebuilt with great care and are open to tourists as hotels and restaurants³⁷. According to the results of interviews with Japanese tour operators in this research, Japanese tourists who visit Iran are particularly interested in the remains of the Silk Road.

According to the results of this survey however, neither Iran nor Persia elicited images of the Silk Road to any significant degree. Although the number of respondents who refer to the Silk Road as part of their Image of “Persia” (16 respondents, 3.5% of total sample) is more than those who mentioned it as part of their Image of Iran (3 respondents, 0.7% of total sample), the numbers themselves are far fewer than might be expected for a country that played such an important part in the Silk Road trade. It is clear from these findings that the potential of Iran’s Silk Road related heritage to attract tourists is far from being tapped.

Table 5.2.34: Silk Road in image of Iran compare with Persia at the same group

Issue	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Silk Road		%	
In the Image of Iran	3	0.7	459
In the Image of Persia	16	3.5	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Cultural Misunderstanding

There are some answers which showed that the respondent thought Iran was another country by referring to their cultural issues like foods, way of eating and dressing, dance etc. The

³⁷ As an example, Abbasi Hotel in Isfahan city which a 5 star Hotel reconstruction of a caravanserai that was built about 300 years ago, The hotel attracts most of international tourists as a combination of a historical site and a modern service oriented hotel

country is mistaken with India in most cases replying KARI as food or SARI as dress. The average of answers which showed such cultural misunderstandings in the image of Iran and Persia is almost the same as shown in Table 5.2.35.

Table 5.2.35: Cultural Misunderstanding in the Image of Iran compared with Persia

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Total
Cultural Misunderstanding		%	
In the Image of Iran	19	4.1	459
In the Image of Persia	17	3.7	459

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Cultural misunderstandings are not only a negative point in the case of tourism marketing but also can be a motive to learn more. The correct information about the country for those who did not have a right image of the place can attract them to learn more and is a good opportunity for tourism marketer to interest people with the new image. This fact was experienced by the author during the survey work. The cultural misunderstandings exist about both Persia and Iran in different groups as shown in Table 5.2.36.

Table 5.2.36: The expression of “Cultural misunderstandings” among the different groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	5.1	1.5	0	3.7	9.3
Persia	5.1	4.6	0	1.2	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Soccer

The football teams of Japan and Iran are continuing to lead in Asia. According to the FIFA world football ranking for February 2006 Iran is ranked second after Japan, which is the leader in Asia. Japan's soccer team visited Tehran in March 2005, they were watched by a crowd of 110,000 (only 300 of them were Japanese supporters).³⁸ As can be seen in Table 5.2.37, the Iranian football team has attracted more than 22% of Japanese high school and university students and also people under 41, but only 5% of people between 41 and 60, and no one over 60.³⁹ Many of the respondents mentioned the name of Iranian Football players in their Image of Iran and a few of the players are quite popular in the sample group that the survey was conducted amongst.

Table 5.2.37: The expression of “Soccer” as an Image of Iran among the respondents

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	22	24	24.3	5	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Art, Tradition and culture in the image of Iran

A more deep-seated consideration of the exact words that are classified under “Art, tradition and culture” in this survey shows a relatively high proportion of “Arabian Nights⁴⁰” or

³⁸ The news can be found in many newspapers inside Iran including other international papers like BBC Sport FOOTBALL, Nov, 30, 2005.

³⁹ The Iran football team has many players who play for European famous teams including Bayern in Germany.

⁴⁰ “Thousand and One Nights” or Arabian Nights, series of anonymous stories in Arabic, considered as an entity to be among the classics of world literature. The cohesive plot device concerns the efforts of Scheherezade, or Sheherazade, to keep her husband, King Shahryar (or Schriyar), from killing her by entertaining him with a tale a night for 1,001 nights. The best known of these stories are those of Ali Baba, Sinbad the Sailor and Aladdin. Although many of the stories are set in India, their origins are unknown and have been the subject of intensive scholarly investigation. The present form of *Thousand and One Nights* is thought to be native to Persia or one of the Arabic-speaking countries, but includes stories from a number of different countries and no doubt reflects diverse source material. Cited in: *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Columbia University Press*

“Thousand and One Nights” recognition among other cultural issues like Persian calligraphy, Persian dance, Persian language, traditional music and the music of Persian Bazaar in the respondent’s Image of Persia. The “Arabian night” was the only issue shared under “Persia” and “Iran” in this category but in three cases only. Considering the exact words under this category for the Image of Iran, some again mentioned the name of famous Iranian soccer players but the other comments were very general, suggesting that this was not a very significant idea.

Table 5.2.38: The expression of related issues to Art, Tradition and Culture as an Image of Iran

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Art, Tradition and culture	1.8	3	2.4	7.5	5.7

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Art, Culture, Tradition and Persian Bazaar in the Image of “Persia”

Different elements of Iranian art, tradition and culture were mentioned in the image of Persia by middle age, elderly and retired people in the survey as can be found in Table 5.2.39. The highest proportion is among respondents more than 60 years old (31.4%). The image is relevantly high among the 41 to 60 group (17.5%) too. A very low level of knowledge about this issue was found within students, especially the university students with only 3%.

Iranian calligraphy, Persian dance, Persian architecture, literature and traditional dresses are the main points of the images in this issue. The story of 1001 nights is mentioned by many of retired people over 60 in their Image of Persia. They also mentioned the Persian bazaar and

the music of the Persian bazaar at a relevantly high proportion of 20%. According to the results of the survey in this part, university students should gain particular attention for any plan to promote the culture and tradition of Iran. The academic environment of university and easy access to a group of students at the same time and place helps to hold the cultural activities more effectively in front of this group.

Table 5.2.39: “Art, Culture, Tradition and Persian Bazaar” in the Image of Persia

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Art, culture & tradition	4.2	3	12.1	17.5	31.4
Persian bazaar	0.4	1.5	9.7	13.7	20

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Undefined Positive Issues

Persia for some of the respondents represented a good image and they tried to express their positive image in different words. What is interesting here is their way of showing the image and the worlds they used like: gorgeous place, brave and polite people, powerful and strong, magic land, Pegasus, gold and jewellery and beautiful people. These kinds of feelings which exist in Japanese society about Persia are good signs with a potential for cultural activities and marketing. This group of people can be found more easily in cultural activities and events and should be considered as mediators to attract others too. Table 5.2.40 shows the percentage of these kind of impressions among different groups in the survey.

Table 5.2.40: “Undefined Positive issues” in the Image of Persia

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Persia	4.7	1.5	4.8	6.2	2.8

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Lack of information about Iran and “Persia”

Some of the respondents left the question about their image blank. Having no image about the country is assumed to be because of lack of information and knowledge about Iran or Persia. The average percentage of blank answers for Persia was twice as much than the percentage of those for Iran (5.2.41). As Persia is the old name of Iran and the country has not been called Persia officially since 1937 this result is to be expected.

Table 5.2.41: Having no idea of “Iran” compared with “Persia”

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Total
Blank		%	
In the Image of Iran	37	8.1	495
In the Image of Persia	85	18.5	495

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Among the different groups in the survey, the high school students gave the biggest number of blank response to the question of their image. If we assume the same trend in Japanese society, as they grow up there will be different sources that the students will get information from about Iran and Persia, which will help to build up their image. The difference in the percentage of blank answers between high school and university students is shown in Table 5.2.42.

Table 5.2.42: Having no idea of “Iran” comparing with “Persia” among the groups

Class Image Of:	High school students 16- 18, %	University students 19- 25, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 26-40, %	Ordinary people with different jobs 41-60, %	Retired people 60+ , %
Iran	11.5	3	7.3	3.7	5.7
Persia	27.7	7.6	9.7	5	17.1

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 2005

Iran and Its geographical location on the map

Question 3 of the survey asked the respondents to point to Iran by making an “X” mark in a blank world map which shows only the borders of all countries in the world. The blank map provides us with the opportunity to find out a respondent’s raw image of the geographical location of Iran not coloured by information from the questionnaire.

The important point in the results from this question is that in addition to the right answer, the wrong replies can also be classified in certain groups to come up with general ideas of misconceptions about the location of Iran. All answers were classified in 8 categories: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Arabic countries, Asia, Europe, Africa and Americas (Table 5.2.43). Iraq and Afghanistan are considered in separate groups to be emphasized. The current situation of these two countries, which are facing war and security problems at the moment, increases the importance of the issue of how people in Japan can distinguish Iran from its neighbouring countries both in east and west.

All Middle Eastern countries except Iraq are classified as Arabic countries. The countries in Asia located to the east of Iran including Pakistan and countries in Asia Minor except Afghanistan are considered as Asian.

Table 5.2.43: Japanese image of the geographical location of “Iran” %

Iran	Iraq	Afghanistan	Arabic	Asia	Europe	Africa	Americas	Blank
28.8	16.1	4.6	10.9	12.4	5.4	7.0	0.2	14.6

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

The result of this question shows that Iran is vastly misunderstood along with Iraq among Japanese people. Iran is even mispronounced by the Japanese as observed in the interaction with people conducted for this study in Oita City. This maybe because the influence of facing “Iraq” almost every day in the Media and news at present. The similarity between the English names of “Iran” and “Iraq” seems to be another reason for the mispronunciation even though the two pronunciations are totally different in Persian and Arabic. Iran has more similarities with Afghanistan in the case of language and culture than Iraq as Afghans speak a Persian language too. Afghanistan is also a neighbour of Iran and facing war and security problems, but there is no significant confusion between the two countries for the Japanese as exists in the case of Iraq.

As mentioned by many of the respondents, taking part in this study was the first time for them to think about Iran as a country and nation. The result of this part of the survey gives us confidence to say that the lack of information about Iran in Japan results in misconceptions about the country and the absence of a reliable source of information on Iran has even resulted in disinformation by the media in Japan.

A relevantly high confusion between Iran and Iraq among all different age groups in the survey exists as can be found in Table 5.2.44. Japanese high school student have various images about the location of Iran, 13.9% among this group thought Iran was located somewhere in Africa. University students more than other groups confused Iran with Iraq and other Arabic Middle Eastern countries. Almost half the people gave the wrong answer to this question.

Table 5.2.44: The image of the geographical location of Iran among Japanese people with different ages

	Iran	Iraq	Afghanistan	Arabic	Asia	Europe	Africa	America
16-18	24.2	17.0	9.2	8.2	21.6	5.1	13.9	0.5
19-24	23.3	31.6	1.6	21.6	11.6	6.6	3.3	0
25-40	45.7	22.8	0	25.7	5.7	0	0	0
41-60	52.7	14.8	1.3	13.	6.7	10.8	0	0
60+	53.8	11.5	3.8	3.8	3.8	11.5	11.5	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

A large number of respondents left this question blank compared with other questions in the survey. As can be found in Table 45, 15.3% of the respondents had no idea about the geographical location of Iran, which refers to the lack of information in this case.

Table 5.2.45: Having no idea of the geographical location of Iran among Japanese people

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Location	389	84.7	70	15.3	459	100.0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Population and Size of Iran compared with Japan

Population

Through the pilot study before conducting the survey a lack of knowledge about Iran in Japan was observed. Direct questions to ask information about Iran in detail like population, size of the country and demographic situation were considered to be likely to fail and to be left

without answer. To overcome this problem, questions 4, 5, and 8 asked the respondents to compare their image of Iranian population and size with their own country Japan. The idea of comparison was found applicable among the pilot group who tested the questionnaire and they recommended it. As the results show the idea of comparison was successful to get relevantly high responses and avoid missing cases. 13.3% on average said “I don’t know” in their response and only one percent left it blank.

The population of Iran is almost half of Japan’s population. The significant result among the respondents in different age groups shows that 75% of Japanese in the 41-60 age group appeared to have the right image of the population of Iran when compared with that of Japan. The results are almost the same with the university students and middle aged Japanese showing high proportion of the correct answer (Table 5.2.46)

Table 5.2.46: Japanese image about the population of Iran compared with the population of Japan %

Age	Half	Same	Twice	I dot know
16-18	28.3	22.7	34.7	14.1
19-25	49.2	15.3	23.0	12.3
26-40	48.7	17.0	17.0	17.0
41-60	75	7.5	11.2	6.2
60+	29.4	23.5	23.5	23.5
Average	46.1	17.2	17.7	14.6

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

The Size of Iran

Iran is almost four times larger than Japan in land area. Question 5 of the survey was intended to assess the degree to which Japanese were aware of the size of Iran compared with Japan. The results imply that while a relatively high proportion of Japanese could guess that Iran is bigger than Japan, Iran appears smaller in the image of Japanese high school and university students than for other people. Maybe this is because of more experience of international

travel within middle aged and retired groups compared to that of students. On the other hand, almost 50% of all groups think of Iran as a country smaller than its real size (Table 5.2.47).

The results of this question implies that there is a lack of information about the land of Iran and its size, therefore its surprising for Japanese tourists to see the rice fields and people who are working in their farm in the north of Iran (Kageyama, Japan-Iran cultural association, personal communication, Aug, 13, 2005).

Table 5.2.47: The image of the size of Iran compared with Japan %

	4Times bigger	Twice as big	Same as Japan	I dont know
16-18	14.5	31.6	36.7	17.0
19-25	16.9	35.3	38.4	9.2
26-40	39.0	21.9	34.1	4.8
41-60	41.7	32.9	16.4	8.8
60+	40	31.4	11.4	17.1
Average	30.4	30.6	27.4	11.38

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Climate

As mentioned in the introduction Iran has a variety of climates and agricultural regions. The majority of respondents from all groups in the survey showed the image of a desert country for Iran in their answers. The strongest was among university students with 65.6% (Table 5.2.48).

The overall image of the natural environment of Iran can be found in the results of the free questions too. This implies that people in Japan have a negative attitude toward the dry climates of Iran as a tourist destination. It is often the case that people say the weather is too hot and dry in Iran and only in few cases described the Iranian desert as a place to see camels and caravanserais. On average 22.4% of the respondents pointed that the Iranian climate is

tropical and 12% temperate, both not very strong compared with the image of desert. The reality of Iranian climate is different from what is in the image of Japanese people. It even excites them as a tourist in Iran, as mentioned by Japanese tour operators:

“Most of Iran’s tourist attractions are located in the countryside and give the chance to the visitor to see the natural environment as well as the historical site. Japanese tourists in Iran are excited to see the environment”. (Fukushima, World Air-Sea Service Co, Tokyo, personal communication, August, 18, 2005)

Among those who mentioned desert, 58% gave a negative answer to the question about their travel interest to Iran. It is concluded that the lack of information about the climate and geographical location of Iran brings a negative image of Iranian climate as a tourist destination for Japanese people.

Table 5.2.48: Climate of Iran in image of Japanese people %

	All of them	Desert	Temperate	Tropical
Average	16.8	45.5	12.0	22.4
16-18	17.7	37.2	13.4	31.6
19-25	9.3	65.6	7.8	17.1
26-40	17.0	51.2	17.0	14.6
41-60	24	54.6	10.6	10.6
60+	16.1	54.8	12.9	16.1

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Food

Question 9 of the survey was intended to assess the degree to which Japanese were aware of Iranian foods. Japanese tourists are particularly interested to taste the food in other countries (Heung, 2000). There are different kinds of traditional foods in Iran which varies according to the different climates. Iranian breakfast is usually served with bread and dairy products, but

with no rice. There are different kinds of bread which are cooked traditionally by hand even in the large cities. They serve rice with lunch and dinner, Iranian rice is usually decorated with colored saffron rice on the top.

The respondents were asked this question to test respondent's knowledge of the staple food of Iranian people which is both rice and bread. While some of the respondents mentioned "food" as the reason of their negative attitude toward visiting Iran (8.5% of the retired group), the findings of this question do not suggest a significant result. The proportion of the answers for Rice, Bread and Potato are almost the same (Table 5.2.49).

Table 5.2.49: The staple food of Iran in the Image of Japanese people %

	Rice	Bread	potatoes	Pasta
Average	32.2	34.6	29.2	2.0
16-18	33.4	21.8	43.7	0.8
19-25	41.5	29.2	29.2	0
26-40	36.5	43.9	17.0	2.4
41-60	24.6	67.5	5.1	2.5
60+	29.0	51.6	6.4	12.9

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

The Demographic situation of Iran

While Japanese society is faced with an aging problem like many other industrialized societies, Iran is among the youngest populations in the world with almost 70% under 30⁴¹. Japanese baby boomers "*dankai no sedai*"⁴² are nearly retired at the same time that the similar group in Iran are young people who are seeking for a job. This fact is also easily realized by

⁴¹ Statistical Center of Iran, official statistics on population, Statistical Year Book, different years

⁴² The number of babies born in Japan between 1944 and 1949 were 11.68 million. Japanese demographers this group were named by author Taichi Sakaiya the "*Dankai no Sedai*" (Cluster or lump Generation) in 1967. In Japan, the mandatory retirement age for many companies is 60, which means that in 2007, the *Dankai no Sedai* will begin leaving the workforce in large numbers.

Japanese tourists in Iran and they found it interesting to talk about it during the trip (Mineki, Sayo Travel Co, Personal communication, Tokyo, August 17, 2005).

It was hoped that question 8 would go some way to assessing the extent to which the Japanese have knowledge of the high proportion of young people in Iranian society. The results shows on average that less than 10% of respondents gave the correct answer which is quite natural considering the lack of information in Japan about other aspects of Iranian society like the language (Table 5.2.50).

Table 5.2.50: Japanese image of the proportion of Iran’s population under 30

Age	70%	50%	25%	10%
16–18	17.3	32.1	43.9	6.5
19–25	1.5	52.3	41.5	4.6
26–40	7.5	40	45	7.5
41–60	9.3	49.3	37.3	4
60+	12.9	54.8	29.0	3.2
Average	9.64	39.9	39.3	5.1

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Average income and life level

Question 9 of the survey was intended to assess the degree to which Japanese were aware of the strength of the Iranian economy. The question asked respondents how much the average Iranian salaried worker is paid for a month in Japanese Yen. The correct answer, 40,000, is almost the value of the average salaried worker in Iran (Davani, 2000). Four possible responses were provided, one of which was lower than the correct value and two of which were higher.

The results showed that the Japanese have a largely accurate view of the strength of the Iranian economy but nearly all of those who were mistaken assumed the Iranian economy to

be weaker than its real situation. With the majority of respondents (74.1%) choosing the lower two of the four values provided as possible answers, it is safe to assume that the Japanese are mostly aware of the relative strength of their economy in comparison with Iran. It may also be conjectured as a possible avenue for further research that this awareness is more concentrated among those Japanese who have experienced foreign travel. It is also relevant to note that 3.3% of respondents mentioned “poverty” as a response to the open elicitation question regarding “Iran” (question 1) giving some further, albeit negligible support to the contention that the Japanese largely consider Iran to be a poor country.

Table 5.2.51: Average income (per month) of salary man in Iran in the image of Japanese

Age	40,000\	100,000\	20,000\	200,000\
16-18	41.0	17.0	37.6	3.8
19-25	43.0	21.5	33.8	1.5
26-40	46.3	29.2	17.0	4.8
41-60	33.7	20	33.7	10
60+	42.8	11.4	28.5	8.5
Average	40.3	19	33.8	5.0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Language

The close relationship that language has with a country’s culture was applied in question 10 as a tool to gauge basic culture awareness. Since one of the most fundamental facts about a country’s culture is what language its people speak, it was hoped that this question would go some way to assessing the extent to which the Japanese have accurate knowledge of Iranian culture. Persian (known in Iran as Farsi), is the official language of Iran although Azeri Turkish is also widely spoken, especially among the ethnically Turkish areas of north western Iran. A diverse range of local languages are also spoken in different areas of the country (Zarshenas, 2003). The status of English as a second language is also fast growing as a result of its inclusion in compulsory education and an expanding private language tuition industry.

Question 10 asked respondents which of four languages was the primary spoken language of Iran. Arabic, English and Hindi were provided as alternatives to the correct answer. Results revealed that an almost equal number of respondents had chosen Arabic as had chosen Persian. This is further evidence to support the contention that a significant confusion exists regarding the relationship between Iran and its Arab neighbours. The result reveals a similar misapprehension to that revealed by the results to question 3 which showed that a significant number of Japanese mistakenly thought the geographical position of Iran to be that of Iraq or other Arab states to the West of its true position. Both questions show that Iran, both as a nation and as a culture, is considered by many Japanese as indistinct from the Arab world.

Table 5.2.52: Japanese image of the language of people in Iran

Age	Persian	English	Arabic	Hindi
Average	42.5	4.1	42.3	7.1
16-18	41.4	5.7	40.5	12.3
19-25	30.7	1.5	61.5	6.1
26-40	43.5	5.1	51.2	0
41-60	58.6	2.6	37.3	1.3
60+	57.5	3.0	39.3	0

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Iran, the New Name of Persia

In 1935 the Iranian government requested those countries which it had diplomatic relations with, to call Persia "Iran," which is the name of the country in Persian. The country it is called "The Islamic Republic of Iran" officially, since 1979 after the Islamic revolution in Iran. In the case of this question, it may be that the data gathered from responses is not as important as the educative function that the question serves. Disparate perceptions of Iran and Persia were to be brought together if not at the time of response then certainly when the correct answers were revealed to the respondents (Table 5.2.53).

Table 5.2.53: Japanese awareness about Iran as the new name for Persia %

	New name	No relation	I don't know
Average	26.8	15.7	54.2
16-18	22.9	20.2	56.8
19-25	29.2	12.3	58.4
26-40	31.7	7.3	60.9
41-60	36.8	13.1	50
60+	33.3	15.1	51.5

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

The majority of respondents said “I don’t know” and the question doesn’t bring any significant results to be added to the findings of the survey.

The Attitude toward Iran as a Tourist Destination

The respondents were finally asked to say if they are interested to visit Iran through question 12, with a free space to express what they would like to refer to as a reason for their positive or negative answer.

Almost all of the respondents provided their ideas about visiting Iran as a tourist destination both for negative and positive attitudes. Only 3.9% gave no reason. The university students were the only group with positive answers (55.3%) greater than the negative. Although the average number of negative answers was more than the positive in other groups, there is no radical difference between the negative and positive responses among the respondents except the 60+ Japanese who gave a 65.7% negative answer (Table 5.2.54).

Table: 5.2.54: Desire to Visit Iran

		Yes	No
Age	16-18	40.1	57.2
	19-25	55.3	43.0
	26-40	46.3	53.6
	41-60	42.5	57.5
	60+	31.4	65.7
Average		42.6	55.6

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Tables 5.2.55 and 5.2.56 provide a deep analysis of the reasons behind the Yes/No answers about visiting Iran. The results for the negative answer refer to “War” as a significant reason mentioned by different age groups, by some expressions like: “war is on going in Iran”, “there is civil war in Iran now”. The results are categorized in 10 more groups except “War” as can be found in Table 5.2.56, showing the variety of negative attitudes toward Iran as a tourist destination among the Japanese but the numbers are not significant or to be considered very serious.

In personal communication with Japanese tour operators conducted for this research Iran was mentioned as one of the safest destinations that Japanese tourists have experienced. The results of this section show how the image and reality are different in the case of the security of Iran as a tourist destination among Japanese people.

“Knowledge”, “Culture” and “Historical sites” are relevantly significant among the various reasons mentioned by the respondents to express their reason of travel interest to Iran. (Table 5.2.55). The variety of positive reasons is more than those of the negative but the cases are fewer than significant. As mentioned before, this question is more indicative of a positive or

negative attitude to the idea of travelling to Iran, or perhaps a general level of interest in Iran, than it is of actual overseas travel behaviour.

Table 5.2.55A: Reasons for positive answer for travel interest to Iran among different ages

%

<i>Age</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Real situation</i>	<i>Haven't been</i>	<i>Culture</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Help</i>	<i>Undefined Positive</i>	<i>Travel</i>
<i>16-18</i>	<i>40.1</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>7.3</i>
<i>19-25</i>	<i>55.3</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>4.6</i>
<i>26-40</i>	<i>46.3</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>41-60</i>	<i>48.7</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>60+</i>	<i>31.4</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>2.9</i>
<i>Average</i>	<i>42.6</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>3.1</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>7.7</i>	<i>4.6</i>

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Explanations:

Knowledge: to know about the world, to know about other countries, to know Iranian' feeling about Japan, to study the history

Real situation: I just know from news about Iran, I want to see the truth, want to know the real condition directly not through the media

Haven't been: because have never been in Iran, I have never been in Middle East,

Culture: because Iranians are warm and smiling, to meet delightful Iranians, want to see ordinary life and people,

Food: Iranian rice is delicious, Iranian foods seems delicious, I like to try Iranian foods,

Help: want to help people who are in trouble, want to help people suffering from war and poverty

Undefined Positive: its rich and beautiful, Iran has big possibility to develop, it is mysterious and strange, it peaceful among the Arab countries, it must be nice because Dubai was good,

Travel: want to visit different countries, travel is the best way to know about foreign countries, want to see world out of Japan

Table 5.2.55B: Reasons for positive answer for travel interest to Iran among different ages

%

<i>Age</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Personal</i>	<i>Soccer</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Historical Sites</i>	<i>Silk Road</i>	<i>Climate</i>	<i>Blank</i>
<i>16-18</i>	<i>40.1</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>3.8</i>
<i>19-25</i>	<i>55.3</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>3.1</i>
<i>26-40</i>	<i>46.3</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.4</i>
<i>41-60</i>	<i>48.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>60+</i>	<i>31.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.9</i>
<i>Average</i>	<i>42.6</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>3.7</i>

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Explanations:

Media: I saw some TV programs about Iran, I saw rich and beautiful Iran in TV

Personal: because my teacher told good things about Iran

Soccer: I want to watch soccer in Iran, I want to see the emotions of Iranian soccer supporters, I want to see Iranian soccer

Religion: I want to see so many people worshipping God. Because Iran is in the bible, Old Testament says about Iran,

Historical Sites: I want to Persian historical sites, I want to see the building with blue tiles,

Silk Road: I want to see the Silk Road

Climate: I want to experience various climates in Iran, I want to see the environmen

Table 5.2.56: Reasons for Negative Attitude toward Visiting Iran Among Different Ages

%

<i>Age</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>War</i>	<i>Danger</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>No Interest</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Politics</i>	<i>Travel</i>	<i>Culture, language</i>	<i>Nothing to See, Do</i>
<i>16-18</i>	<i>57.2</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>8.9</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>3.4</i>
<i>19-25</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>15.3</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>1.5</i>
<i>26-40</i>	<i>53.6</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>4.8</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>7.3</i>
<i>41-60</i>	<i>57.5</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>60+</i>	<i>55.7</i>	<i>11.4</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>8.5</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>22.8</i>
<i>Average</i>	<i>55.6</i>	<i>18.4</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>5.2</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>6.1</i>

Source: the survey conducted for this research in Oita Prefecture, Japan, 2005

Explanations:

War: war is on going in Iran, there is civil war in Iran now

Danger: it is dangerous; I may be kidnapped in Iran

Knowledge: I don't know any thing about Iran.

Weather: the weather is very changeable in Iran. It's very hot and dry.

No interest: I can not find any thing interesting in Iran; there are other places I want to see more than Iran.

Food: Iranian foods don't suit me.

Religion: religion is very strong; I don't go to religious countries

Politics: Iran doesn't have good relationship with America.

Travel: I don't want to go out of Japan. I can enjoy my free time without travelling.

Culture and language: I can not speak Iranian language. I don't understand Iranian culture.

Nothing to see, to do: there is nothing in Iran. I can't find any thing to do in Iran. I have no idea about what we can do in Iran.

Part Three: Conclusion

The high demand and interest in knowing about other people and cultures among Japanese people led the author take the role of a cultural ambassador in satisfying the educational demands of the respondents to the survey. Therefore, the time spent to conduct this survey was not only used to collect the questionnaires but also to answer curious respondents who wanted to know more about Iran. In this context, the author experienced the unique possibilities of Iranian cultural promotion and education in Japan at first hand through participant observation.

Iran has no place in people's mind as a tourist destination as the majority have almost no knowledge about the country and its various tourist attractions. It's often the case that the absence of a direct source of information from Iran leads to misinformation and even disinformation about Iran in Japan. Iran is misclassified with its neighbouring Arab nations and specially Iraq.

Present-day Iran is not representing its long historical background to attract cultural and heritage interested Japanese tourists, and Persia is more imaginary than a real destination to be traced on the map. Japanese perceptions of Iran and Persia are totally different and the advantages of Persian unique cultural elements such as Persian carpets etc are not used in promoting the Iranian tourism Industry.

The security and safety concerns in the image of Japanese people about Iran can be considered as the major problem hindering tourism. As a part of the region in which the

world's most serious conflicts are on-going, the Iranian tourism industry is suffering from the war on Iraq and Afghanistan. For the majority of people in Japan, it's not clear whether or not the war in the Middle East is ongoing inside the borders of Iran like its neighbours of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Challenges Iran is facing in its international relations have affected all Iranian industries and tourism is not an exception. In this context, Iran's nuclear issue is a clear example. There has been no attempt to provide Japanese people with information on the real situation of Iran for years by Iranian authorities, and the author was the first and only direct source for the majority of respondents to the survey study. In this climate Japan's international tourism market is neglected by Iranian authorities and since the US and western media remain the main source of information about Iran, there will be no serious change in tourism relations between Iran and Japan in the short-term future. These observations are taken up in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 6

TRAVEL AGENCIES AND THE EXISTING TOURISM BUSINESS BETWEEN JAPAN AND IRAN

Introduction

This chapter further analyses the current tourism relations between Japan and Iran. It focuses as before on Japanese travellers as a potential market for Iran, but is intended to provide additional information from a mix of primary and secondary sources such as travel agents. However, the formulation of this research is different from existing research on Japanese tourists because of the limited share of Iran in Japan's overseas travel market. Only one out of every 6000 Japanese tourists at present visits Iran⁴³. Consequently, taking advantage of available information and experience with Japanese tourists in other destinations enjoying mass tourism relations with Japan, this study has attempted to find out the limits and opportunities of Iranian tourism promotion. It also further investigates the existing political, economic and social relations between Japan and Iran.

There were three major foci for this additional research: a) Japanese travellers that are considered as potential users of Iranian tourism products, b) Japanese travel agencies and their Iranian counterparts as the facilitators for promotion of travel business between the two countries and c) the attitudes toward Iran as a tourist destination worldwide and in Japan. The overall ignorance in Japan's travel industry about Iran, lack of knowledge about Iran's tourist attractions, misunderstanding of Iran's relations with its regional neighbours especially Iraq, security problems, a particular lack of awareness about Iran as the inheritor of Persian heritage and historical attractions are major findings of this study.

⁴³ The statistical information on Japanese tourists as a whole is accessed from various sources English and Japanese such as JTB reports, *Kokusai Kanko Sinkou Kai*, however in the case of Iran ...*kokusai kanko sinkou kai* has more information on Iran.

Tourism Industry and Travel Agencies: Theoretical Background

Tourism researchers have been examining the role of travel agencies within the tourism industry for many years. These discussions have included travel marketing, destination branding, tourism information management, tourist search behaviour and destination image as well as evaluating the travel agent itself in terms of productivity and service quality within the industry during the last two decades (Anholt 1999; Bitner and Booms 1982; Beirman 2000; Duvall, 1993; Harrell 1977; Leblanc 1992; Yaman and Shaw 2002). However, the contribution of the research reported on travel agencies in the tourism literature needs further work (Leblanc 1992).

Travel agencies are regarded an important factor in tourism industry and travel management, taking the role of intermediaries or cultural brokers. Travel companies are also included in some tourism research in a category of mediators who are actively engaged in promoting and developing tourism in their perspective countries. In this concept, the category of mediators in which travel agencies are said to participate also includes governments, guidebooks, tour guides, travel writers and people involved in the transportation business as well as the travel agency itself (Chambers, 2000).

Fodness and Murray (1999) emphasized the role of the travel agent as a decisive source of information, especially in the case where destinations suffer unfamiliarity and lack of information. In this situation, as a knowledgeable source, the travel agent plays a dominant role in reducing the perceived risks of an unfamiliar trip. Although there are a wide variety of other contributory sources such as travel magazines, commercial

guidebooks and brochures to inform the travellers, none of them can replace the role of travel agents as a trustworthy and professional source of information.

In the case of Japan tourism advertisement materials such as pamphlets and magazines are various and advanced, well printed and easily accessed from almost all travel agent offices. Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) branches for example, which exist throughout the country are a showcase of advertisement materials offering tourist destinations from different regions throughout the world. However, no information on Iran as a destination can easily be found unless one searches carefully or asks directly for it. The most common tourist pamphlet which contains information about Iranian tours published by JTB does not use the name “Iran” but “Persia” on its cover. While this thesis has shown that it is questionable that Persia does represent Iran in the mind of Japanese people, it is worthy of mention that JTB sources the main and only mass published tourist advertisement in Japan which contains information about Iran. Except for JTB, there are only few Japanese travel agents, not exceeding fifteen, which conduct tours in Iran and these are located mainly in Tokyo. Japanese travel agencies that have experienced travel business with Iran and their Iranian counterparts were the main source of information for analysis used in this chapter.

Methodology

This additional research involved comprehensive field work documenting the travel experiences of Japanese to Iran in Tokyo and Tehran. The stories of the business experience of Japanese travel agencies in Iran are untold. Only a few travel agencies are conducting Persian tours in Japan actively due to the limited number of Japanese

travellers interested in Iran. The study sums up the experiences of these travel agencies gained through a series of semi-structured and open ended interviews. The author became a member of the “Japan-Iran Cultural Association” and through this organization meetings with travel agencies in Tokyo were arranged.

The author also interviewed Japanese tourists and travel agency owners on a research trip to Iran during 2005. Among Japanese interviewees in Iran were Japanese tour guides escorting their groups of Japanese tourists. Iranian tour guides, “Iran Air” Tokyo office, the cultural section of the embassy of Iran in Tokyo, and Japanese members of the Japan-Iran cultural association were also among the interviewees.

Japanese Tourists and the Middle East

The nature of tourism relations between Japan and Iran is based on cultural and heritage tourism. Consequently, this study sought to understand how the cultural and historical elements of Persian and Islamic Iran could be used in tourism promotion. However, the country is also potentially rich in other fields of tourism such as ecotourism and nature-based tourism. Although any act of tourism promotion if successful will lead in the end to an increase in the number of tourists in the promoted destination, it is assumed in this study that tourism promotion can start in the generating country through information provision, even if actual travel does not at once occur. If there are restrictions to bringing Japanese tourists with cultural interests to Iran at present, this research sought to discover ways of bringing Iranian cultural elements to *Japan* in order to develop at least the potential of tourism relations between Iran and Japan. It defines the image

problem of Iran among the Japanese and examines opportunities to increase awareness about Iran as a destination in Japan.

Many different elements can trigger a tourist's decision to visit abroad. One may decide to visit a place after reading a novel, a pamphlet or magazine or looking at a newspaper article while the other may choose a destination when seen in a TV program, movie or mass-media advertisements. The destination may be recommended by a family, friends or even a travel agency. The proportion of these travel reasons also differs for different destinations (Milner, et al 2000; JTM Co, 2005; JTB reports different years).

The Middle East and Africa are amongst the important destinations for Japanese tourists every year. Visiting historic and cultural attractions accounts for about 65% of activities undertaken by Japanese tourist in Middle East countries (JTB Report, 2003~2005). The main reason for a packaged tour to Egypt or Morocco for example is cultural and the importance of heritage tourism can be seen by looking into the itineraries offered by Japanese travel agencies as packaged tours. "Iran" as a tourist destination also has numerous cultural and heritage sites with a theoretically high potential to attract Japanese tourists.

The study of Japanese overseas travellers carried by JTB, which is the most intensive on-going study in this field, shows that for 40.7% of Japanese tourists who travelled to the Middle East in 2005, "reading a pamphlet" was the starting point for making the decision. The Middle East was recommended to 12.3% of Japanese tourists by family or

friends, and for 11.1% of those who visited the region, it was a movie or TV program that influenced their decision (JTB report, 2005).

The appearance of “Iran” as a travel destination among tourism advertising materials is the focus of this part of the thesis. It examines whether or not there are sufficient materials about Iran in tourism advertising literature in Japan and how effective this is. If you are living in one of the main cities in Japan like Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka for example and if you are looking through travel pamphlets to see which destination might interest you enough to choose for your next trip, you will rarely find “Iran” as a typical country that represents the culture and ancient civilization of the Middle East region unless you are particularly searching for Persia or Iran by intent. There are only a few travel agencies all over Japan (around 15) that are actually operating Iran tours (Mogi, 2005). The opportunity to identify Iran as a tourist destination in the tourism advertisement literature is even less in the small cities of Japan. The branches of the Japan Travel Bureau, established in 1912, the oldest and largest travel agency in Japan, contain the only source of information on Iran travel that is accessible outside of the main cities.

Japanese Travel Agencies and Iran / Persia

The importance of the travel agency in the traveller distribution system, and their changing role, has been noted in the tourism research literature (Leblanc, 1992). Although new communication facilities and the World Wide Web have influenced the use of the travel agency and many people have turned to the internet for example to arrange their travel, specially in industrialized countries, this does not necessarily mean that there will be no need for the travel agency in the future. Relevant studies emphasize

that the travel agencies are still playing important roles even in advanced societies. Many experienced internet users in America for example, prefer to arrange and book their travel through traditional travel agencies (Lang, 2000). However, in Japan, the overall average of overseas travel reservations made on the Internet (34.5%) exceeded that of travel firms (30.7%) in 2005, but the proportion is quite different for different destinations. According to the JTB report (2006) 83.6 percent of Japanese travellers to the Middle East in 2005 participated in packaged tours arranged by a travel agency.

JTB and its “Persia” Tours

Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) is the oldest and largest travel agency in Japan (Miller et al 2000). With about 25,300 employees, JTB branches are spread out and easily available all over the country (JTB, 2006). The Company has only one type of itinerary for Iran a few times a year. In a series of pamphlets called “Look JTB”, various destinations from all over the world are introduced to the customers with detail information. “Look JTB” pamphlets are published continuously once every 6 months and each contains a group of destinations which share common tourist attractions. For over 15 years, “Iran” has been included in the group in which Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon and Uzbekistan are listed. “Iran” is the only destination in this group that is represented not by its official name but “Persia” on the cover of the pamphlet⁴⁴. There are 10 different itineraries for travel in Egypt. Turkey has also a notable place in this group with 6 itineraries providing various choices for travellers. However, there is not more than one itinerary for the rest of the countries mentioned in the group, including

⁴⁴ The staff of JTB central office in Oita city in personal correspondence with author raised the point that this pamphlet is mainly printed for Egypt and Turkey which are famous destinations in the region for Japanese travelers. They pointed out that they do not know about the relation of Iran and Persia because no one has asked about Iran /Persia tours (October 2006).

Iran. This may imply however that JTB did not find enough interest among Japanese overseas travellers for some of the Middle East destinations such as Iran, Syria and Lebanon.

The only itinerary offered as a JTB Persia tour is a full packaged tour mainly containing visiting historical and archaeological sites and shopping. The group is escorted by a Japanese guide as well as an Iranian guide from both JTB and their counterpart Iranian travel agency.

The small number of Iran Visitors and Japanese Travel Agencies

Conducting full packages tours regularly on a Middle East destination as elsewhere demands some facilities, among which are a reliable counterpart tour operator and experienced tour guides. The number of travellers/customers determines the destination for which the travel agency's limited facilities should be allocated. According to the latest statistics on Japanese overseas travellers, 17,403,565 Japanese travelled abroad in 2005(JTB, 2005). The number of Japanese tourists to Iran in 2005 is about 3000 which means only about one out of 6000 Japanese international tourists visited Iran in this year⁴⁵.consequently, for Japanese travel agencies, "Iran" is a destination for travellers with particular interest which differs from some other today's famous Middle Eastern/African heritage tourism destinations and like Egypt and Turkey.

⁴⁵ The number of Japanese tourists who traveled to Iran directly from Japan is even less than 3000. The above number is estimated by the Iranian Airline and embassy of Iran in Tokyo and includes the other Japanese tourists who entered Iran from other countries except Japan.

Only a limited numbers of travel agencies, which are mainly located in Tokyo, are conducting packaged tours to Iran a few times a year.⁴⁶ Some have branches in other main cities like Osaka, Sapporo and Fukuoka. The possibility of finding a travel agency (except the JTB network) in Japan which offers a tour to Iran is very low in small cities. In personal correspondence with a group of 25 local travel agency owners in Fukuoka, none of them have even thought about Iran as a possible tourist destination for Japanese tourists.⁴⁷ It would not be unrealistic to generalize the same situation as the common imagination of “Iran” as a destination among travel agencies in other cities in Japan, resulting from little or no demand for Iran tours among their customers.

The characteristics of the Iran tour in the Japanese itinerary

Research on tourism in Iran has revealed that Iranian culture and history appeals to different groups in different ways. One finding relevant to this study is that German tourists in particular are likely to be attracted by archaeological sites and are more likely to be well informed before arriving in Iran compared with tourists of other nationalities (SBU, 1998). Russians find it a good destination for business for example. About 29,000 Russians visit Iran each year on business while only 1000 come as tourists (Kermani, 2005). However, “Rest and relaxation” is the main purpose of tourists from Saudi Arabia in Iran⁴⁸. Tourists from Saudi Arabia find their favourite place in the northern part of Iran near the Caspian Sea, which is a temperate green area with a lot of vegetation and totally different from their

⁴⁶ According to the Iranian embassy in Tokyo and *Iran Air* (Tokyo office) which are in direct contact with Japanese travel agencies conducting Iranian tours, only about 15 travel agencies are taking Japanese tourists to Iran at present (data collected during 2005- 2006 in personal correspondents with author).

⁴⁷ The data was provided by Mr. Kawai, the owner of Sakura travel agency who participate in the meeting, the travel agency owners also responded to the same questionnaire about Iran which is collected from 450 Japanese people in Oita prefecture. The survey results with this group confirm their lack of information about Iranian tourist attractions and their anxiety about safety and security of travel to Iran.

⁴⁸ Mosavi, tourism specialists, Iran Touring and Tourism Organization (ITTO), personal correspondence, 27 Jul, 2004

own land. Saudi tourists stay in villas deep in the forest with their relatively large size families. In a visit of Saudi tourism officials in Iran in 2006, a plan was revealed to increase the number of Saudi tourists from the current 50,000 to 300,000 by 2009, which implies the growing trend of tourism relations between the two countries (IRIB, 2006). For European tourists to Iran, the Country is a collection of historical and archaeological sites to be seen in several trips to different part each time.⁴⁹ Japanese tourists seem to share the same interest with Europeans especially German tourists in Iran, and totally differently to tourists from other Middle East countries.

A typical tour on Iran offered by Japanese travel agencies is a history-oriented tour. It takes Japanese tourists to the historical sites in Iran including archaeological attractions and remains of Persian dynasties as well as the heritage sites of Islamic Iran.⁵⁰ The trip is organized usually for one week or more. Thanks to the big number of historical attractions all over the country, it's easily possible to arrange a new itinerary for those who have already visited the country. There are enough opportunities for travellers to see different places and the sites in Iran but very limited chance for cultural activities or contact with Iranian people in spite of the high demand among the tourists for that.

Japanese Tourists in Iran

Due to the small number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran only a few travel agencies⁵¹ take part in selling Persia/Iran tours in Japan. They have two or three different itineraries offering visits to the historical sites in “north& northwest”, “central parts”

⁴⁹ Mahmoud, Rashad. Iranian/German archaeologist and professor of Frankfurt university, personal communication, Jun, 2005

⁵⁰ The information on the quality of Iran tours is based on personal correspondents with the travel agencies that took part in this study and their advertising publication and pamphlets.

⁵¹ The number of travel agencies who are in business with Iran is about 15 according to the results of the interview with four of the most famous ones in Tokyo.

and “south & southwest” of Iran. Iran is usually included by the travel agencies in their Middle East or “Silk Road “destinations.

In the pilot studies for this thesis, major issues in the tourism relationship between Iran and Japan were among the research findings, those were: unfamiliarity with Iran as a tourist destination in Japan, lack of tourist activities, image problems and educational service characteristics provided for Japanese tourists in Iran.

Unfamiliarity with Iran as a tourist destination

It was often the case in this study in Tokyo for the researcher to be asked many questions about Iran by Japanese people (who had met an Iranian for the first time), implying their unfamiliarity with Iran. This study also conducted a survey in Oita Prefecture to examine the lack of knowledge about Iran as a country, nation and tourist destination in detail in smaller cities, and the same results were observed.

Unfamiliarity and lack of information about Iran as a tourist destination was also emphasized by Japanese people whose tourism business with Iran is their profession. A sales manger from one of the travel agencies in Tokyo with 15 years experience of operating Persian tours explained the market realities as follows:

“Iran is not considered as a tourist destination by majority of the Japanese. Japanese tourists are interested in history and heritage tourism but they don’t know about Iran in spite of its potential as a place to study an old history and civilization, because there is no advertisement about Iran. We do not see any

marketing activities by Iranians as is usual in Japan from other destinations. We can not expect people to show interest in something that they don't know anything about. You see the advertisements of different destinations here (pointing to a board with many pamphlets in the travel agency) there are from various parts of the world except Iran even we have Iran tours. I know Iran is much more attractive than some of these destinations that you see a lot of information about them only because I have been in Iran but how do the others get to know about it. We have some explanation about Iran in our pamphlets like other Middle East countries with including the itineraries but it is not enough for the person to decide to travel to Iran.” (Fukushima, World Air-Sea Service Co, Ltd Personal communication, Tokyo, Aug 16, 2005)

Another travel agency in Tokyo with branches in other major cities in Japan that also operates Persia/Iran tours focuses on Silk Road tourism⁵². Iran is special within the Silk Road destinations for them because it is where they find many caravanserais remaining from the Silk Road to attract their customers. In an interview with the Managing Director of this travel agent he also stressed the lack of information and unfamiliarity as the main reason for the gap between Iran's potential to attract Japanese tourists and the market reality:

⁵² The other destinations offered by “The Great Silk Road Tour Operator Group” are Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The travel agent has been continuously operating Persia tours during last 13 years.

“It depends on the wish to promote tourism by Iranian tourism officials. Iran has already succeeded in marketing and business with Japan in other industries but not the tourism. Let me give a live example; Iran has found a good market to sell Oil in Japan. It has also attracted Japanese to companies invest in oil and gas industry in Iran. The country is rich in the case of natural resources but like other natural resources, the oil is perishable and you have nothing more to sell when it is finished. Iran has also a rich culture and long history and Iranians inherit numerous historical sites but I don’t see the wish to sell them to Japanese tourists. The more you sell the history and culture of Iran in Japan the more it becomes popular and valuable but it will never finish like natural resources. Japanese know Iran as an oil productive country but they don’t know much about the Iranian background of Persian history and heritage because there is no advertisement and easy source of information offering to Japanese people about Iran. People have a natural fear of unfamiliar things. It’s the same as thinking of Iran as a tourist destination for Japanese tourists in general at this time. It doesn’t mean that Iran is dangerous or there is security problem but it’s only because they don’t have enough information about Iran. It’s a natural feeling about anything you don’t know about it.” (Mogi, The Silk Road Tour Operator Group, Personal communication, Tokyo, November 2005)

Lack of Information about Iran is mentioned as the main obstacle for tourism promotion by Japanese people who are in contact with Iran in their business like travel agents, and

also Japanese people with cultural interest about Iran like the members of The Japan-Iran cultural association.

Tourist activities

Any plan to attract more travellers to Iran from Japan can not succeed without analyzing the purpose and experiences of those who have already visited the country. Considering that there is almost no research and data available on Japanese tourists in Iran, the staff of Japanese travel agencies who are regarded as a source of information in this field were asked to identify the main purpose of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

None of the interviewees had any doubt that cultural and heritage tourism is the main purpose of Japanese tourists in Iran. They visit Iranian historical sites in different cities. The sales manager of one of the travel agencies had following to say by dividing Iranian history to two parts:

“Iran has a long history and there are many historical sites representing different periods of the history. There is plenty of information available in Japanese for those who are interested to study the history of the Middle East region that Iran is located in. Some of our customers know exactly where they want to go in Iran and which historical site to visit. We make their itinerary exactly as they like. It is easy to change the fixed itineraries to meet individual needs thanks to many historical sites available all over the country. We have also some special groups to Iran like archaeologists which focus on some regions. They have their own plan and prefer to stay in one place than

traveling around Iran. We send the same groups some times to China as well. I know a collage of Foreign Studies in Osaka sends Japanese students to Iran once or two times every year. Historical sites in Iran are attractive both from Islamic Iran and pre-Islam.” (Mineki, SAIYU Travel Co; Ltd, Personal communication, Tokyo, Aug, 2005)

Although the main activity of Japanese travellers in Iran according to these information sources is to study the history of Iran in site, there is also another interest expressed by Japanese tourists in Iran and mentioned by the travel agents but they can't fulfil the request. The interviewee from the SAIYU Travel Agency in Tokyo expressed this fact:

“Some of our customers who are more than 50 years old want to know how ordinary life is going in Iran and to contact local people. They want to visit some Iranian house and talk to people in close. Historical sites are great but the journey is not alive just to see the place, we want also to contact with Iranian people they say. I couldn't find any travel agent in Iran that can help us with the mater. It seems they are not allowed to have cultural exchange activities in their itineraries or they hesitate to make it. I tried to make it once but it was difficult to separate men and women and I couldn't make it.” (Mineki, SAIYU Travel Co; Ltd, Personal communication, Tokyo, Aug, 2005)

Activities undertaken by Japanese tourists in Iran as they appear in typical itineraries offered to the groups are tightly History-Oriented. Of course they also enjoy Iranian

foods and shopping as it's usual in any tourist destination. Iran has some famous souvenirs to offer like "Persian Carpets", but history is considered by the industry as the particular tourist production of Iran to be offered in the trip.

The International Image problem

Iran has been appearing recently in the international mass media in a way that brings a negative image of the country for people around the world, especially for those who are not familiar with Iran as a nation and culture.

This trend accelerated when Iran was mentioned by the US President in January, 2002 in his term of "axis of evil" to describe "regimes" that in his opinion sponsor "terror". Iran is also embroiled in a row with US over its nuclear program which is the top news about Iran and is ongoing. Iran and America have not had a full diplomatic relationship since 1979 and the political problems between the two governments have resulted in negative propaganda against Iran by America through the media for years.

As an example; the results of a survey study⁵³ published by the BBC shows that Iran is the country most widely viewed as having a negative influence in the world, with the US in second place. The Managing Director of "The Great Silk Road Tour Operators

⁵³ The survey for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm "GlobeScan" and the University of Maryland took place between October 2005 and January 2006. It asked how 39,435 people in 33 nations in the world including Japanese talked about various countries. On average, just 18% said Iran has a positive influence. The US and Italy have the most negative view about Iran. BBC NEWS, February 3, 2006, more detail can be found in (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/4674656.stm) last retrieved 13 June 2006.

Group” stressed a comparative view of the image problem that their company is facing in developing tourism business with Iran:

“It depends on peoples minds and also depends on their level of information about a country. How much information is conveyed to people in Japan about Iran? Unfortunately not so much, more than 1,300,000 Japanese tourists visit mainland America every year in spite of the high rate of crime because Japanese people experience a shower of USA information. They feel relieved to the circumstances that they are used to it. The information is not sufficient for Japanese in the case of Iran. The difference of the volume of information is the key factor of the image problem about Iran.” (Mogi, The Silk Road Tour Operator Group, Personal communication, Tokyo, November 2005)

This is particularly salient in the case of Iran where misinformation and, in many cases disinformation, leads to basic misunderstandings and negative representations. This is not only the case among people as tourists but also for those who work with travel agencies. A Japanese tour guide who has been escorting Japanese tourists in Iran for years says about his first experience of travelling to Iran:

“To be frank I should say that for the first time, I was hesitating to travel to Iran with tourists. I used to prefer other destinations than Iran as a business trip in my job. Iranian people changed my mind in my first visit. They are very friendly. I had been in Middle East countries before my trip to Iran but I

found culturally different people in Iran, separate from Arabic countries. The media shows a different view of the country especially when we see the new president (referring to Mr. Ahmadinejad) but the real situation of the country is something else.” (Fukushima, World Air-Sea Service Co, Ltd Personal communication, Tokyo, Aug 16, 2005)

The image problem about Iran in Japan is a factor that should be considered in any kind of tourism promotion activities. The more there is positive information provided from many different sources about Iran, the easier people can make up their mind about the country and travelling there. The results of this study however suggest that Japanese people usually are not familiar with other sources of information about Iran, except for their Ministry of Foreign Affairs that says: “Japanese tourists and businessmen should be careful to travel to Iran”.

“Persia”, Imaginary or Real Destination

It is often the case that people who are directly in contact with the tourism business between Iran and Japan point to the big surprise of Japanese tourists when they visit Iran for the first time. They can guess about the place and historical sites that they will visit as it appears in their itinerary, and they may be familiar with them through their studies before the trip, but they never thought that the Iranian people might attract them. A staff of one of the travel agencies in Tokyo that operates tours for Middle East countries stressed this issue as follow:

“For Japanese tourists who accompany us in our tours for the first time “Iran” is like other countries in the region (Middle East). It’s not true I know, but its fine. They don’t know the difference but they learn when they come to Iran that it totally different from Arab countries for example. It is a part of their experience and is usually a big surprise.” (Mineki, SAIYU Travel Co; Ltd, Personal communication, Tokyo, Aug, 2005)

Visiting culturally different people in Iran is surprising for Japanese tourists and makes their trip more attractive. In the case of Iran as an Islamic country located in Middle East, it is very easy to be thought as a part of an Arab world, especially for tourists who are interested in the history of the region and have been in some Arabic countries in the middle east before visiting Iran. As the results of the present study suggest, it’s interesting for Japanese tourist in Iran who are familiar with the history to know why Iran didn’t become a part of the Arab world after the Arab invasion about 1400 years ago and in spite of converting to Islam.

This situation was further investigated during two research trips to Iran with Japanese groups that the author personally conducted for this study in 2005. The trip purpose was to find out in more detail that what interests Japanese tourists in Iran in particular. The destinations were similar to the ordinary tours offered by Japanese travel agents in terms of covering all tourist attractions offered in typical Iran tours, but different in the case of having a flexible itinerary that gave enough freedom to the tourists during the trip to direct the researcher to their particular interests in Iran.

There were three people in the group each time including the author; the main person in each group introduced his partner to accompany the trip. The members were found through the interactions with Japanese people in Oita city initially undertaken for this research during the year 2004. The results of this study are produced from interviews with the two groups before, after and during the trip and can be classified into two parts.

Experience with Japanese tourists in Iran

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.

The cultural exchange events with Japanese people from Oita city and international students arranged by the APU student office provided the ground for interaction with Japanese people in order to conduct this study. A series of presentations and lectures on cultural and historical elements of Iran was prepared and conducted in some schools, local public halls and a local newspaper to build up the connection with interested people to help with carrying on this research.

The first trip was conducted with two Japanese people from Oita city who were classified as potential Japanese tourists or customers for an Iran trip as a result of this study. One of the persons who accepted to take part in this research tour is a Japanese manager; he introduced himself and his position as follows:

“I have been working for Tokiwa industry for more than 35 years and will be retired soon. Our company has a long history. It is famous in Oita prefecture. We have special customers and a sales network in almost all cities in Oita Prefecture. My job requires me to be in contact with people and study their needs and new desires to keep our market share in Oita Prefecture. Our customers are from various social groups with different attitudes and it’s necessary in my job to know about Japanese social and buyer behaviour and its trends over time”. (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, Jul, 2005)

Research findings in this section also suggest that the lack of information about Iran as a destination among Japanese people which was proposed by the travel agencies in Tokyo and Osaka is important. This fact is clearly stressed by the following:

“I have been in some of the countries in Asia and Europe but I didn’t think about Iran as a travel destination. We sell Persian carpets in some of our stores and therefore I did know the name of one city in Iran that the carpets came from. I am interested to know about different cultures and people. I

manage international cultural exchange events as a volunteer for the school near my living place every year and it is also interesting for me to know about Iranian people and how is the life and business going on in their country.” (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, Jul, 2005)

The Image problem is also the common finding between Japanese tour operators in Tokyo and the people who took part in the research trip to Iran from Oita City. The problem was explained by the Japanese tourist in pointing to The “Persian Carpet” surprisingly as:

“All I know about Iran is through the media and everyday news that I usually check in Japanese newspapers. The news about Iran is usually related to the Iraq war and Iran’s nuclear problem. My image of Iran was a country far away from Japan, mysterious, a developing country, oil productive, desert and rush weather, strong commandment of religion, sex discrimination and contact with terrorists. But the beautiful Persian carpets made me curious to know about the ordinary life of people specially who make these carpets in Iran with their hands. They must have such a good sense of art. I found the image problem about Iran among my friends too .It was a big surprise for my friend to know about my visit to Iran. It was strange and funny for them and they didn’t hesitate to ask me “why did you go?” They listen to me with curiosity when I talk about my new image of Iran but I doubt if they can believe me. They have to see by themselves.” (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, November, 2005)

The image problem of Iran seems to be even more serious in Japan when people consult with their family members about choosing a travel destination. The following is what happened to the two tourists before they took part in the research trip:

“I have been in many countries around the world as a tourist and businessman and every body in my family is familiar with my overseas trips, but it was hard for me to convince them when I decided to visit Iran. “It is the mater of your life”, “you should be careful”, “what are you looking for in Iran?” and some more they asked me in my family before my trip stressing their worries.” (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, September, 2005)

This problem was also mentioned by the sale manager of SAIYU Travel Company in Tokyo more generally. They have been facing the requests from younger member of the families of their customers for Iran tour asking the travel agency to take their parents or grand parents some where else except Iran. The travel agent also has to answer many questions concerning security in Iran.

The difference between this research trip with Japanese and the usual ones available in travel agencies was also able to provide the chance for tourists to be in touch with ordinary people in Iran as well as visiting the historical sites. The small size of the group (only two) and informality of the trip brought the chance for the tourists to have a

deep understanding of the patterns of everyday life in Iran. The Japanese visitors stressed their experience of human communication with Iranian people as the following:

“Every thing was different in the country from what I expected. Completely different and opposite, I saw the ordinary life going on in Iran. I saw peaceful life and very kind people; it was a big question for me that why Iranian people are so kind to me? I was surprised that many people speak English. I enjoyed Iranian foods, and the gorgeous historical sites. Islamic mosques in Isfahan city are very beautiful.” (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, September, 2005)

To visit Iranian people was as interesting as the historical sites for Japanese tourists in the trip. The most favourite city for them was Yazd city where they had chance to do home stay with a native family in that city instead of going to a hotel. It was different with the Japanese tourists that usually point to Isfahan city or Shiraz city because of their unique heritage sites. To study about people, local foods and cultural activities with local people is also realized by Japanese tour operators as a need but they find it difficult to meet this request of the tourists.

Japanese stay 8 days in average in Iran according to the Tokyo tour operators. There are three different itineraries that are usually conducted by travel agencies to cover the visit to sites all over the country. One of the Oita respondents:

“I am looking for a chance to visit Iran again. It is a big country and I couldn't see all. The landscape which is totally different from Japan is an attraction itself. I want to see other places in Iran and I can guess how interesting it will be. I find information about Iran that I need through internet because I am familiar with the country now.” (Ono, Tokiwa industry, Personal communication, Oita, February, 2006)

The desire to repeat the trip (whether it happens or not) represents some scale of satisfaction and interest in the destination. The country is too big to be visited in one trip. Tourist attractions are mainly the historical sites from different periods of time and are spread all over the country especially in rural areas.

The experience with Japanese tour operators in Iran

The interactions with Sakura Travel Company in Oita city to prepare for this research were made possible through the Career Office of Ritsumeikan APU. Sakura Travel Company is located near Oita station. They manage tours for Japanese people to mainly all-English speaking countries as well as conducting cultural exchange activities for Japanese students. The company belongs to the Association of Japanese Travel Agencies. It was assumed in this study that in order to demand attention and time from the staff of Sakura travel company to take part in the research through the lectures and presentations on Iran provided for them by the author, the key factor was to be patient enough in making a strong relationship with them. A comprehensive knowledge of Iran as a culture, nation and tourist destination was presented for the staff of the travel company as a research activity according to the time they were willing to allocate to

cooperate with this research. Progress was slow because of the busy life of the travel company's staff.

The research trip for this study that took Japanese tour operators from "Sakura" Travel Company to Iran was conducted a few months after the staff of Sakura Travel Company got familiar with Iran as a travel destination. The person that took part in this research tour to Iran from Sakura Travel Company in Oita City had the following to say as his self introduction:

"I was a school principal before I set up the cultural exchange center in Oita city. During last 16 years I have sent more than 1000 Japanese students from Oita city for home stay, cultural exchange and language learning program to some schools that I have been in contact with them in Australia and New Zealand. The students were in different age from 10 to 80. I have experience of living in England and New Zealand too." (Osagawara, SAKURA Travel Service, Personal communication, Oita, May, 2005)

The travel experience in Iran with the staff of Sakura Travel Company resulted in issues like; the lack of information about Iran, image problem, the opportunities to promote Iran as a destination in Japan, the history and culture of Iran as tourist attraction and cultural exchange activities with Iranian people to be added in Iran tour itineraries to attract Japanese.

Misinformation and disinformation

As in the other parts of this study, the results of this section emphasize the lack of knowledge about Iran as a destination which results in misunderstanding and image problems about Iran among Japanese people. As a member of a Japanese tour operator with interaction with other travel agencies in Japan, the interviewee said the following is the general situation among the staff of other travel agencies that are in contact with Sakura Travel Company from different cities in Japan:

“Japanese know very little about Iran even among those who work for travel agencies. I have never seen any pamphlet which advertises Iran in travel agencies in Oita, Fukuoka, Tokyo and Sapporo. Local travel agencies like us are usually in close contact with people in their area. The customers trust the agency. A Travel agency usually works with a land operator in a destination. We are in contact with some local agencies or land operators in Australia, New Zealand, England and Asian countries but no Iranian travel agencies yet. This is the same for other travel agencies that we are in contact with them I believe” (Osagawara, SAKURA Travel Service, Personal communication, Oita, June, 2005)

The number of travel agents that are practicing Iran tours in Japan regularly is estimated to be not more than 15 companies⁵⁴. It is therefore quite natural if this happened for the staff of Sakura Travel Company in their industry relations with other travel agents in Japan. The four travel agents that conduct Iran tours regularly expressed that there is no

⁵⁴ The estimation is done by four of the famous travel agents in Tokyo and Osaka that have been already conducting Iran tour and the Japan-Iran cultural association

problem with security in Iran and they even rank it as a destination with high safety levels compared with some other destinations with much bigger share of Japanese international tourists than Iran.

Sakura Travel Company expresses this issue as a typical local travel agent in Japan that does not have the experience of travel business with Iran as the following:

“Security is the most important factor for travel agents to recommend a destination to their customer. Our Foreign Affairs Ministry announces that Japanese tourists and business people must be careful to visit Iran and accordingly the travel agents usually don’t look at Iran as a tourist destination because we don’t have any more source of information about safety in Iran to introduce them to the tourists than this” (Osagawara, SAKURA Travel Service, Personal communication, Oita, June, 2005)

Sakura Travel Company knows well that there is no problem with security because of their experience of travel to Iran, but the only evidence they can offer to show this fact is their personal photos and information they collected during the trip to Iran:

When I talk to my friends about Iran trip they usually ask about the security. I have many photos to show them and I have to say that I didn’t feel any danger while I was in Iran. It’s much safer than some Asian countries where I have been and many Japanese visit every year. It is a big surprise for everybody when they hear about my visit to Iran (Osagawara, SAKURA Travel

Service, Personal communication, Oita, December, 2005).

Destination Promotional Opportunities and Iran

The history of Iran and historical sites are mainly emphasized by the Japanese travel companies that operate Iran tours and the itineraries offered by the travel companies clearly show the nature of a “History-Oriented” tourism business. The results of experience with the local travel agency’s staff in Oita also accepted the role of history as the main attraction of Iranian tourism industry, but it also suggested that to study the ordinary life and Iranian people themselves is attractive for Japanese:

“I always think about the high possibility of tourism relationship between the two countries. Iran has such a long history and excellent historical sites. It is a nice destination for Japanese tourists but I would like Japanese to visit Iranian people too. I was thinking of Iran as part of Arab world but I studied how Iranians have kept their own culture. Visiting people with different culture and religion is very attractive for Japanese. The Shiite Moslems in Iran which are the majority made the country different with other Islamic cultures especially with the Arab world that I have seen before. It was Ramadan when I was in Iran and I saw the funeral ceremony and festivals of “Imam Ali” that can not be found in other Islamic countries. If Japanese travelers have a great time to meet people in Iran, they will tell their families and friends about their experiences. I also would like Iranian tourists and businessmen to visit Japan. It brings more opportunities for people in both countries to know each other” (Osagawara, SAKURA Travel Service,

Personal communication, Oita, November, 2005).

This research also suggests that tourism promotional activities between Iran and Japan can be practiced through cultural activities. To start tourism promotional activities to interest Japanese tourists, Iran should be looked more as a destination to take small groups with interest in culture and life-seeing and less as service oriented mass tourism. This would not weaken the importance of Iranian historical heritage in Iran's tourist industry, but would get the industry started.

Tourism Promotion and Education Function

The educating function of tourism can be viewed from a more general perspective and need not be restricted to the case of Japanese tourists visiting Iran. However, the limited number of Japanese tourists among international tourists in Iran brings more significance to the education function to promote Iran in Japanese travel market.

A multi-method research approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, including interviews, observation and survey study, by the author as an Iranian student in Japan have led to the realisation that overseas students studying in Japan can engage Japanese in a way that begins the process of interaction between cultures and may result, in certain receptive cases, in those Japanese travelling to that student's home country. It has already been mentioned that one aspect of the collectivist behaviour of Japanese tourists is a high degree of referral and recommendation with tourists particularly likely to travel on the recommendation of a trusted source. It is this paper's contention that every Iranian student studying in Japan has the potential to win the trust of Japanese and

function as a generator of positive representations of Iran itself as a safe, enjoyable and worthwhile tourist destination.

It is thus a further application of the information contained in this section to consider the potential of Iranian students planning to study abroad as cultural ambassadors. Iranian students in Japan are mainly funded by scholarships and would thus be easily organised for the purposes of cultural dissemination and tourist promotion. This fact is also mentioned by a Japanese professional experienced in the field of Japan's international relations (and the Director-General for International Affairs at MEXT):

“People don't know about Iran in Japan as they know about many other countries. Iran has a long history and rich culture .Iran and Japan have diplomatic relationship and accordingly Iranian students have been getting scholarships from Japanese government as well as non governmental organisations every year to study in Japan. There are many Japanese people who are interested in cultural exchange activities. An Iranian student can play an important role as a source of information about Iran in Japan” (INOUE, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), personal communication, Aug, 17, 2005).

Furthermore, the Japanese are, on the one hand very open to events with an international flavour and on the other, very welcoming to foreigners who express the desire to take part in Japanese traditions. School and local community events in Japan in which foreigners are invited to take part, whether they are explicitly intended to be cultural

exchange events or not, are prime opportunities for such foreign students to bring insight to those uninformed or misinformed about their home country. This is particularly salient in the case of Iran where misinformation and, in many cases disinformation, leads to basic misunderstandings and negative representations. This is where cultural ambassadors, whether Japanese who have visited Iran or Iranian students studying in Japan can work to the greatest effect. With its power to cut through misconceptions and mass propaganda, direct interaction with a trusted and knowledgeable source of information on Iran is a foundation stone on which positive representations of Iran can be built.

However, the question remains of whether or not the Iranian tourism industry is prepared to take this opportunity for direct tourism promotion in target markets or indeed, whether it is even aware that such an opportunity exists. Furthermore, do Iranian students know enough about Iran's history, culture, and attractions to be able to answer satisfactorily the questions that will certainly be posed them by interested Japanese? If it can be argued that tourism, in an important sense, begins at home, then it is certainly equally true that cultural education does also.

Iranian Travel Agencies and their Current Business Environment

According to the ITTO Monitoring and Standards Department, there were 1,117 travel agents and tour operators in Iran in 1999 serving the requirements of the inbound, domestic, and outbound tourist markets. Of these 465 were licensed to sell tickets only, 339 were licensed to operate tours, and 313 were licensed to undertake both ticketing and tour operations. Table 6.1 gives the projected requirement of travel operators over

the time horizon of Iran's National Tourism Master Plan.

Table 6.1: Forecast Of Travel Operations Establishments

Period	Travel Agencies	Tour Operators	Travel Agency Tour Operator	Total	Additional Establishments
2000	465	339	313	1,117	0
2001-2005	824	601	554	1,979	862
2006-2010	1,319	962	888	3,170	1,191
2011-2015	2,121	1,546	1,428	5,095	1,926

Source: ITTO, 2000

By 2005 there were 2,500 agencies, which represented an increase of 45% over the estimation of Iranian national tourism plan. However, this level of growth has not been positive for the industry, as many of the agencies are recording recurrent losses and 40% are on the brink of bankruptcy (Euromonitor, 2007).

The main inbound tour operators in Iran are the Azadi International Tourism Organization⁵⁵ (AITO), the Iran Tourist Travel Company, Passargad Tours, Caravan Sahra Tours, and Mohajeri & Co. Tours. Together, these account for the majority of inbound programs having close connection with major tour operators and wholesalers in the regional and long haul markets. Their overnight and day tours and other packages cover a wide selection of Iran based on the natural, cultural and other tourism resources such as skiing identified in the previous section. These operators have alliances with a number of relatively small special interest tour operators and wholesalers in Europe, the

⁵⁵ The author's experience working and conducting research with AITO tours between 2001 and 2003 revealed that the monopolistic nature of tourism business in Iran is strong enough that no new comer is let to enter the market. Above mentioned travel agents have their roots to some handful of Iranian governmental foundations such as Bonyad foundation which owns Iran's tourism facilities such as 4 or 5 star hotels and restaurants. The system seems to be accepted by the rest of the travel agents as they are not willing to try any marketing effort to attract overseas travelers and focus their facilities mainly on Iran's outbound travel to operate pilgrim tours from/to Islamic neighboring countries of Syria and Saudi Arabia for example.

Middle East, East Asia (mainly Japan), Australia, and North America. The major global international tour operators and wholesalers are currently not engaged in Iran tourism (ITTO, 2001).

The tourism industry in Iran experienced an unstable situation during the years after the Islamic revolution of 1979. The industry has been faced with many crises such as the Iran-Iraq war (1980s), Persian Gulf War (1991), Afghanistan war (2002), and the Iraq war (2003). Iran's nuclear energy program at present is the main topic under which unfavourable news is published about Iran internationally. As a country surrounded by hostile forces in its neighbouring countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, the tourism industry in Iran is facing serious challenges. Presenting Iran as a safe tourist destination for international tourists is a demanding aim for the promotional activities of the Iranian tourism industry even though actually there is no problem with security inside Iran.

Japanese tourists have been particularly missed among the international tourists in Iran during the last two decades. While 24,106 Japanese⁵⁶ (one out of every 166 Japanese tourists) visited Iran in 1978, the year before the Islamic revolution, only about 3000 Japanese tourists visited Iran in 2005 (only one out of 6000 Japanese overseas travellers). Promotional activities to revive the Iranian tourism industry have increased from 2001 after the industry was almost forgotten for a decade during the Iran-Iraq war. Active participation in international and regional tourism exhibitions, facilitating visa issuance, regional and international tourism cooperation agreements, increasing the number of flights to neighbouring countries and attempts to improve banking system

⁵⁶ KOKUSAI KANKO SINKOU KAI (international tourism promotion society), KIKAKU CHOUSA BU(project investigation department), Japan, different years

facilities for international tourists in Iran are among the main activities undertaken by Iranian tourism officials recently to promote tourism after a long period of neglect.⁵⁷ Japan is already considered a target market for Iran's tourism industry by Iranian tourism officials (ITTO). 2006 was "the year of Japan" for the Iranian tourism industry⁵⁸. In a series of exhibitions called "The Glory of Persia" more than 200 Iranian cultural heritage items from the collection of the National Museum of Iran were on show to Japanese people in 6 major cities in Japan. Iran was also represented by ITTO in the 2005 world exposition in Aichi for 6 months (Aichi, 2005).

Tourism is considered more important in today's Iran as a job creative industry due to the demographic situation of the country. With about 70% of the population less than 30, there is a high demand for job and employment especially among the younger generations (Iran Statistics Center, 2005). Recent promotional activities by Iranian tourism officials in Japan imply that the industry has found a good opportunity to market Iran in Japan. This is because, as examined in other parts of this paper, the political problems which hinder Iran's tourism relations with Europe and America for instance, do not exist between Iran and Japan. Iran accounts for 14 percent of Japan's overall oil imports at present and Japan is the biggest single oil importer from Iran (Intar-Tass, 2006). The relatively stable economical and political relationship between the two countries is thought of as a comparative advantage in Japan's overseas travel market for Iran by Iranian tourism officials.

⁵⁷ The new trend of tourism promotion Iran after Islamic revolution and the story of Iranian governmental efforts and activities in this field are explained extensively in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁵⁸ Mousavi, Manager for technical library of Iran at the Touring and Tourism Organization (ITTO), personal communication with author, Jul 2005

Conclusions and Afterthoughts

The road to promote Iran' tourism in Japan is not without serious challenges. However, tremendous opportunities also exist. The country has achieved impressive change since the Islamic revolution but the domestic crises such as Iran-Iraq war in 1980s and the ongoing regional crises in Iran's neighboring countries of Afghanistan and Iraq have imposed difficulties for the Iranian economy and the tourism industry is no exception.

Iran has found a good market in Japan to sell oil during the years. The fact that Japan is the main customer of Iranian Oil implies the success in reaching Japan's energy market by Iranians. As a marketing policy, Iranian tourism officials should take advantage of existing business contacts between the two countries to promote Iran not only as a safe source of energy for Japanese economy but also as a destination with rich history and culture which can attract Japanese tourists with heritage and cultural interest. However, Iran is not only not improving in tourism relation with Japan presently but is also losing its share in Japanese energy under the new political crises famed as Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Iran should capitalize on its rich history and tradition to succeed in Japan's overseas travel market. Japanese senior travellers seem not to be worried about the absence of sea, sand and alcohol in destinations like present-day Iran, as many western tourists are. Therefore, focusing on cultural and heritage tourism in Japan is the key to promote Iran's tourism. In this concept, the chance to succeed will increase from 2007 at the beginning of retirement age of a notable number of Japanese baby boomers with interest in heritage tourism.

Only few travel agencies in Japan have the experience of tourism business relations with Iran. They are specialized in Middle East and Silk Road destinations among which Iran is highly recommended by the travel agency. In this concept, the tour operators agree that Iran has exceptional potential to attract Japanese tourists that is not reached. As the travel agencies believe, the importance of the tourism industry in general and particularly the Japanese travel market has been neglected in recent years by the Iranian authorities. It's to be concluded that to gain a better share of Japanese travel market as a Middle Eastern destination, the Iranian tourism industry should take advantage of corporation with the experienced travel agencies as the cultural brokers in this field.

The “Recommendation” is an important factor to trigger a Japanese tourist’s decision to visit Iran. For this reason, Japanese tourists visiting Iran should be considered valuable assets to the Iranian tourist industry. Thus, in order to market Iran tourism in Japan, Japanese tourists should be thought of less as consumers and more as opportunities to spread knowledge, less as economic opportunities and more as potential cultural ambassadors. In this sense, the time spent by Japanese tourists in Iran should be considered by Iranian tourism policy makers as a training period for these cultural ambassadors.

Typical Iranian package tours are fully planned for sight-seeing but are too isolated to provide the chance for life-seeing. Although visiting Persian historical sites is the main activity for Japanese tourists in Iran, tourists are also interested in cultural activities through which they can meet local people. Therefore, to prepare the opportunity for

interested tourists to experience the Iranian lifestyle is the critical challenge for Iranian tour operators in the process of obtaining higher tourist satisfaction in the existing market.

The key point in the promotion of Iran as a tourist destination in Japan is to bring more awareness and knowledge about Iran to the Japanese population. In this context, public investment is necessary to introduce Iranian tourist attractions and to change Japanese people's attitude toward Iran. In this way even though the image problem of Iran amongst the Japanese population is an obvious fact that one can not expect to be changed quickly, its worst aspect that of trading on ignorance, can be offset.

Chapter 7
Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary and Recapitulation

The results of the different parts of this research are presented together in this chapter in order to construct a set of conclusions and a set of recommendations on the pragmatic solutions needed to change the image of Iran as a destination in the eyes of Japanese tourists and Agents. The possibility of promoting cultural tourism between Iran and Japan is discussed before the chapter takes a final look at the potential of Persian history and the cultural heritage of Iran to attract Japanese travelers. Unfamiliarity with Iran as destination has been documented in this study. The role of the Iranian government and tourism officials in tourism promotion has also been examined through a discussion of the political environment of Iran. Furthermore, Japanese travel agencies and their Iranian counterparts who take the position of intermediaries in the existing limited travel business between the two countries have been analysed. Finally, the chapter provides the latest information about the tourism industry in Iran before the conclusions are spelt out.

Review of Research Objectives

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 started 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 these 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.

Cultural Heritage Tourism and Japanese Travelers: Theoretical Background

Culture and cultural heritage are unique productions of each society. Both the tangible heritage and the traditions of countries are symbols of cultural expression. Therefore, historical sites, monuments and other material heritage are important for those who seek for deeper understandings of society, either as visitors to a foreign country or as native inhabitants. In this context, recent demographic, social and cultural changes in the major

source countries including Japan have led to new niche markets in destinations such as history and culture oriented vacations. Though sun, sand, surf and ... holidays are not expected to vanish, they have decreased in popularity and importance as more visitors seek educational opportunities in destinations as well as the unique chance of experiencing cultural activities in a place as tourist attraction (NWHO, 1999). Furthermore, culture oriented tourism tends to attract more educated visitors from higher income level market segments, who are considered to be more respectful to local cultures and therefore ensure relatively high net benefits to destinations.

The social and cultural situation of Iran after the Islamic revolution still does not allow mass tourism to be practiced in the country as it may exist in many other destinations. Only moral tourists, those who are eager enough to learn about Persian culture and history in spite of Islamic rules and regulations banning alcohol and forcing the compulsion of the Islamic veil for women for example are expected to visit the country at present. The existence of thousands of historical sites and monuments remaining from both Persia and Islamic Iran as well as the authenticity of Persian culture makes Iran a unique destination, different from the rest of the Islamic countries of the Middle East in many respects. Therefore, there is not only the possibility to develop a cultural tourism market but also a high potential to attract moral/cultural tourists to Iran, at least in theory.

If culture is to be considered as “ways of living together”, as UNESCO (2001) put it, then the Iranian people have been practicing cultural activities throughout their history for they have learned not only to live together among native inhabitants of Iran but also

to live with the various nations who have entered the geographical space now known as Iran from different part of the world such as the Romans of Europe, the Turks and Mongols of Asia, and the Arabs of the Middle East. What has remained today from the long history of Persia is the Persian culture and identity, which implies that the tolerance of Persian culture and its capability to live together with newcomers has made it possible for it to survive over time. This tolerance, together with the numerous heritage sites such as ancient buildings and monuments left throughout the country representing each era of the history of Persia, its culture and civilization, should be able to be tapped by the Japanese tourist market.

The Japanese overseas travel market is a major source of cultural tourists in global terms. According to the Japan Tourism Marketing Company (JTMC) that conducts active research in the field every year, between 2001 and 2006 for more than 40% of Japanese international tourists on average visiting historical sites and architecture was their second highest preferred purpose of travel after the enjoyment of nature and scenery. Furthermore, marketing opportunities for cultural tourism in Japan have increased also from 2007 with the retirement of the baby boomer generation. Market research done by JTB found seniors who have experienced travel tend to want to visit countries they yet to visit, such as those in the Middle East, South Africa and Latin America (Nitta 2006). In the case of Iran, the historical sites are mainly located in the countryside, which also provides visitors with remarkable natural scenery. The country is also rich in crafts; Persian carpets for example, with their universal renown among are special souvenirs for international tourists specially the Japanese in Iran. Therefore, one can assume that for Japanese travelers who are also known to spend more time and

money than other international travelers shopping in destinations, Iran is potentially a favorite destination.

The Cultural Heritage of Persia

The land of Iran has experienced numerous rulers who have not been native Iranians. Different nations entered the country and inhabited the place throughout the history whether as immigrants or invaders. The tolerance of Iranian culture provided all victorious nations in Iran including Romans, Arabs, Turk and Mongols with the chance to study Persian culture, to be interested and even to contribute to it. The history of Persia provides enough evidence that Persian culture not only survived but also taught the newcomers to the land to behave like Iranians. The cultural boundaries of Persia established by the Achaemenids who once ruled over Iran as the world's biggest empire 2500 years ago have proved to be strong enough to preserve Persian identity. While, the current land of Iran is much smaller than the political boundaries of the Achaemenid Empire the cultural elements of Persia still exist and are alive within the cultural boundaries of the ancient Persian Empire.

The remains of Persian architecture and art in present-day India, Uzbekistan, Iraq and Egypt represent traces of the invisible boundaries of Persian Culture. Visits to the wider region therefore provide the chance for interested people including historians, archaeologists and cultural tourists to observe and discover the similarity of cultural productions which root back to Persia. Its obvious that the land of modern Iran which is the core of the Old Persian Empire contains more elements of ancient Persian civilization to offer than other places such as the Louvre Museum in Paris for example,

in which more than 50 percent of the Islamic works kept are from Iran (Financial Times, 2004). There are more than 1.2 million historical sites and monuments left from different eras of Persian history in Iran which made the country a showcase of the human civilization. Modern Iran is ranked by UNESCO as one of the World's top countries in terms of world heritage and historical sites. However, the samples of Persian culture out of the country are more easily introduced to international visitors than the original sites in Iran.

Religion and kingship were the two strong elements of the Achaemenid Persians and contributed to preserve Iranian Culture throughout history. Zoroastrianism was the religion of the court in the Achaemenid Empire (500BC) and their successors until the time Persia converted to Islam (560AD). Charisma, gifted by the God of Zoroastrianism to the King of Persia enabled them to rule with Justice. When Persia converted to Islam, the term charisma was translated to Al-Noor (Rashad, 1998). Religion has been always a consistent part of Iranian life throughout their history and from that they learned how to respect other religions. Buddhism was initiated in the western parts of the Persian Empire through which the message of Buddha spread out to the East. Nestorians found Iran the safest place to set up their churches when they were not allowed to exist in Europe (Beny & Nasr, 1993). It may surprise many to know that the World's most ancient Christian church is located in Iran's northwestern province of Azerbaijan, or to hear the fact that after Israel, Iran is the home to the majority of Jewish people in the Middle East.

The royal culture of kingship in Persian is symbolized in the word Shahanshah first used by Achaemenids kings titling themselves as the King of the Kings of the Persian Empire. The same term was used later by the Samanid and Safavid dynasties. Later, in a symbolic action, Mohammad Reza Shah, the last Iranian monarch, gathered 69 nations including kings, presidents, Sultans, Princes and Princesses in 1971 at the tomb of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire, to declare his title of Shahanshah as descendent to Persian kings (Rashad,1998). The Persian book of Shahnameh (book of kings) which has documented the endeavors of the well known Persian Poet and scientist Ferdowsi to keep Persian royal culture alive is a brilliant work amongst the cultural productions of Persia. A manuscript of the book was accepted by the UNESCO International Advisory Committee (IAC) in June 2007 for inclusion in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. It shows not only the creditability of the work itself but also the attempt by Iranians to preserve their cultural elements. These elements are what would make up a series of attractive cultural tourism packages to sell to international tourists should the other barriers to entry be reduced or eliminated. But would the Japanese market take these up? The next section summarizes this study's arguments for believing that this would happen.

Japanese Society and its Attitude toward Iran

The perception of a destination plays an important role in tourism marketing. Furthermore, it is unusual to succeed in promoting a market without concrete knowledge of attitudes toward the place that tourists are expected to visit. Consequently, many qualitative and quantitative studies are carried out regularly in target markets in order to adapt marketing activities with market reality. In this context, it was

disappointing that the author's search for published and non-published sources of information on the Japanese attitude toward Iran as a destination (or similar studies) was without result. Accordingly, a survey of potential tourists and travel agents was conducted for this study to source the basic information needed as well as to bring insight to the study (Chapter 4 and 5).

The survey results in this study are not limited to information gained by analyzing responses as it is usual in the case of survey studies. It took almost two years to conduct the survey during which the author experienced cultural exchange activities with Japanese people in different forms and groups. It was found almost impossible to conduct the survey with local people especially the older generation in Japan without the help of a trusted third party or intermediary, for that reason the survey was supported by a local travel agency located in Oita city. The subject of the survey, "Iran" as a destination was also found to be surprising for almost all the respondents for the author was the first Iranian they had ever met and communicated with.

Lack of information and unfamiliarity with Iran as a destination has resulted in limiting tourism relations between Iran and Japan. However, it was also observed that the situation of having no information brings much curiosity among Japanese with respect to Iranian culture and ordinary life in Iran. In this context, the author has played not only the role of researcher but also teacher for those who were encouraged to learn about Iran by taking part in the survey. It was found necessary to prepare an answer sheet to meet the requests of respondents and deal with frequently asked questions proposed by them. In addition to the direct results of the collected questionnaires

therefore, the high demand and interest to learn about Iranian people and culture among Japanese was confirmed by these means. It was surprising for the respondents to know for example that Iranians do not speak Arabic and that they grow rice, as well as other information about Iranian lifestyles, for they have not seen a program about Iran on local TV which could introduce Iranian life nor can they find a tourist pamphlet commonly available everywhere in Japan that advertises Iranian tourist attractions.

The perception of Iran derived from the survey in Oita Prefecture is also important in that it is not affected by memories of the earlier problems of Iranian workers in Japan, for almost none of the respondents had seen a crowd of Iranians in their town as almost all people in Tokyo experienced a decade ago. However, a few respondents pointed that they still remember the news about Iranians in Japan in the media. A pilot study with the same questionnaire in Tokyo proved the difference between perceptions of Iran in Tokyo and Oita Prefecture as a typical local city in Japan. Therefore, one can conclude that advertising Iranian tourism in Japan must be different in Tokyo to any conducted in other cities of Japan.

The results of the survey have left no doubt that the existing image of Iran in Japan does not help with tourism promotion between the two countries. It is the case that lack of knowledge about Iran and the absence of reliable sources of information from Iran easily accessed in Japan have left enough room for the media to destroy the image of Iran in Japan. The picture of Iran is drawn today through the tales of the political conflicts between Iran and the West, especially the United States, which has resulted in the suspension of tourism and cultural relations between the two countries. On the one

hand, it is very difficult for Iranians to get tourist visas for visiting Japan. On the other hand, Japanese tourists are not interested in visiting Iran for they are not familiar with the country at all as a destination. When applying for a tourist visa to Japan, Iranians are now seen by Japanese authorities as potential illegal workers who will over stay their visa unless they prove a different case to Japanese officials. The current situation has resulted in limited tourism and human relations between the two countries. In this context, the results of the present survey provides in detail clues about what Japanese people know from different aspects of Iran as a tourist destination. It brings insight for tourism specialists about what is needed to be provided in order to pave the way for Japanese tourists at least to think about the possibility of visiting Iran as a destination.

The intention to travel is highly influenced by destination image and especially the perception of safety and security. In this context the decision of potential travelers when faced with risk may be categorized in four possible ways: a) pursue their travel plan, b) change their destination choice, c) modify their travel behavior, or d) acquire additional information in order to decide to continue with their travel plans (Reisinger, 2005; Chandler 1991; Englander, 1991). In the case of Iran as a destination in which, in the eyes of 29% of the respondents in Oita Prefecture for example, civil war is on going now, only a few pursued their original travel plan (a). They have either changed their destination choice or modified their travel behavior in the case of Iranian tours over the past three decades (b, c). However, as mentioned by Reisinger (2005), there is another case in which a traveler may acquire additional information about Iran as the only opportunity for tourism promotion between the two countries. But it is questionable that this can happen easily in the case of Iran as direct sources of information about the real

Iran as a destination cannot be found normally in Japan. The author's experiences with Japanese people through conducting the survey have provided a negative answer to this question. The lack of knowledge and direct sources of information about Iran as a destination is dominant in current Japanese society, preventing the promotion of Iran as a destination.

Japanese high school students for example showed stronger negative images about Iran compared with other groups in the survey. While 59% of high school students mentioned "Civil War" in their image of Iran, none of them referred to the name of Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran for example whose photo is in their "World History" text book along with a rough explanation about the Iranian Islamic revolution. This implies that they have mistaken Iran for its neighbor country of Iraq. It emphasizes the role of media and the political environment in the formation of the Japanese image of Iran, especially amongst the younger generation who are theoretically supposed to be the potential tourists of the future. While it will not be easy to change people's minds and misunderstandings about Iran in a short period of time in Japan, there is also a high regard for effective cultural promotion and advertisement activities about other cultures in today's Japanese society, which could bring better results if conducted with regard to the cultural understanding of Iran. The image of war in Iran which exists in Japan can be replaced by peace in the mind of Japanese high school students if they watch Iranian animations such as "There was the Moon and a Fox" for example which was screened in June 2007 at the Hawaii International Film Festival (HIFF), for how can there be war in the place that such a cultural production is coming from (Press TV, 2007)? This

example is proposed because animation plays a very important role in Japan among cultural productions, especially for the younger generation.

The perception of Iranian cultural and natural attractions is not favorable in Japan today. To study the history of Iran and Persian civilization, which is supposed to be the main motive for Japanese tourists heading to Iran appeared in the image of only 11% of the respondents who took part in the survey, while more than 50% did not know the relationship between Iran and Persia. The survey results suggest that mass propaganda against Iran broadcast in the media has damaged not only overall image of Iran in the eyes of Japanese people but also the way that Iranian tourist attractions such as cultural heritage and the natural environment appear to people in Japan. In the case of religion for example, Current Islamic Iran represents nothing more than religious regulations (restrictions) that limit personal freedom and entertainment. Furthermore, the current religion of Iran is seen more as a barrier for cultural exchange than a part of Iranian culture by Japanese people, for no respondent referred to his/her interest to see Zoroastrian fire temples in Yazd City, the old churches in Azerbaijan province or even the beautiful mosques of Isfahan. Again, high school students seem to have the strongest negative image among the respondents of Iran as a religious country (40%). In the case of natural scenery and environment, the image of Iranian deserts for example is described as a place with nothing interesting to offer as well as harsh so that typical Japanese tourist can not stand it. There is no place for the numerous Silk Road sites in Iranian deserts in the imagination of Japanese people currently. Therefore, there is no advantage for the Iranian tourism industry in presenting millions of historical attractions and cultural heritage sites to Japanese overseas travel market if they do not attract

Japanese tourists mentally. In this context, it is the *way* that a country appears to the people in the target market that seems more important than the potential to meet tourist demands.

The geographical location of Iran is also not distinguished easily from the Arab nations of the Middle East by Japanese people. For instance, in response to a question in the survey which asked respondents to place Iran in a blank world map provided, 27% marked one of the other Arabic countries. There is more confusion in the case of Iraq for example, which has a similar pronunciation with Iran. It is often the case that the Japanese find it difficult to distinguish between the two countries. Also, some 39% of respondents thought Iranians speak Arabic, suggesting cultural misconceptions between Iran and the Arabic world of the Middle East among Japanese people.

The Role of Travel Agencies: Intermediaries or Monopoly Positions

A typical Persian tour offered to Japanese tourists emphasizes visits to Iranian historical sites, monuments and museums. Numerous heritage attractions in Iran and the big size of the country make it possible for travel agencies to arrange different itineraries which would make the trip to Iran attractive even for those who have already visited the country. Furthermore, the big size of the country and the dispersion of heritage sites do not allow tourists to visit all the country in one trip. Consequently, the itineraries proposed by Japanese travel agencies are called with different names such as “Word Heritage in Iran”, “Persian Treasures”, “The History of Invasions in Iran” and “Silk Road Tour” to give emphasis to the difference between each possible trip. Some parts of all itineraries are common, which take tourists to the central parts of the country, and

the main difference is whether to go to the northern provinces of Iran near the Caspian Sea or to the southern parts of Iran. Some of the rich historical areas of Iran near the borders of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan which are not recommended to visitors as a result of the security problem in those countries cannot be included (Chapter 5).

The story of the travel business between Japan and Iran is untold. The Iran National Tourism Organization has no office in Japan to promote tourism as it does in some other Asian countries (Malaysia and Thailand for example). Limited tourism promotional activities are held by the Iran Air Tokyo office and the cultural section of the Embassy of Iran in Tokyo where no record of relevant activities exists, according to author's experiences of communicating with officials from these two Iranian governmental organizations in Tokyo. The first effort to contact Japanese travel agencies for this study was through the Embassy of Iran and the Iran Air Tokyo office in 2004. The staff of Japanese travel agencies in charge of Iranian tours as the professionals in the field were subsequently asked by the Iranian Embassy and Iran Air to fill out a questionnaire on behalf of this research (Appendix 1), but this was found to be a hands-off approach which resulted in almost no feedback. None of the agencies replied to the questionnaires requested by Iran Air office according to the Iran Air Marketing Manager, and there were only two cases who replied to the embassy. Accordingly, as a solution, the author spent time in building relationships with non-governmental organizations in Japan such as the Japan-Iran Cultural Exchange Association through which an opportunity to communicate with the travel agencies in Tokyo could be provided. This was the first research study about Iran they had taken part in, the agencies declared.

A Persia/Iran tour is not only a special tour for Japanese tourists who are interested in history of the Middle East but also a professional tour in the eyes of Persian tour operators in Japan for not every travel agency offers it. Persia is recommended as an especial destination to customers who have been to other countries in the region. However, Iran is not a mass tourism destination to be advertised by mass media some of the Japanese travel agencies believe. Japanese tour operators also believe tourists will find it authentic and culturally different to other Islamic countries of the Middle East when they visit Iran, if only they can be persuaded to do so.

In this regard, none of the travel agents contacted have ever experienced security related problems in Iran but instead, seen a rich culture, kind people and good hospitality. However, neither Japanese travel agencies nor their Iranian counterparts can meet the customer's need for communication with local people in Iran. In addition to studying the history and visiting historical sites in Iran, Japanese tourists are interested to study everyday life in Iran. This cannot yet be provided in existing tours in Iran. Nevertheless, the ability to conduct a Persian tour is seen by the few travel agencies in Japan as their unique specialty and profession and they are proud of it. But as they believe, not many Japanese travel agencies know about Iran as a destination or dare to send Japanese customers to Iran/Persia.

The situation of land operators who receive Japanese tourists in Iran is the other side of the story of Japan-Iran travel business which is untold. The number of Iranian travel agencies that can do this is even fewer than their Japanese counterparts. There are a few

travel agencies in Iran belonging to an economically powerful foundation that has its roots in the Iranian government called the Bonyad Foundation. One of these, Azadi International Tourism Organization (AITO) is the strongest Iranian travel agency with almost 80% market share in operating tours for Japanese in Iran. The Bonyad foundation owns tourism facilities such as 4 and 5 star hotels used mainly by international tourists in Iran, including the Japanese. Such a highly monopolized system has its own advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, as a travel agency AITO provides the highest service quality for Japanese customers as they require it. Through its strong networks, the company has been able to guarantee safe and secure trips for international tourists including Japanese during the past decades throughout the country. On the other hand, as a public sector company, the travel agency has been taking mainly the role of a domestic tour operator with low efficiency in the field of international marketing, especially in Japan. The large share of the public sector in the promotion market has left almost no room for private tour operators. This is a problem because the public travel companies are traditionally managed with almost no proficiency in the marketing area. The monopolistic travel business system does not act open and clearly which makes it difficult to conduct research and even impossible sometimes to collect primary data to build accurate marketing campaigns for the industry.

The Iranian Government and its Attitude toward Japanese Tourism: Cultural Marketing or Crude Imagery Only?

The dominant role of governments and the need for political stability in tourism promotion has been emphasized enough in the tourism literature. In this context, the tourism industry of Iran is not an exception but a typical example. The political

background within which the tourism industry in Iran operates was presented in Chapter 5. The Islamic revolution of 1979 was taken as a turning point in Iran's politics and international relations and the situation of the tourism industry before and after the revolution was compared. The revolution is an important event in Iran's international relations as it ended the then quite cordial relations between Iran and America. On one hand, the U.S government has been represented as the "Great Satan" for Iranians since 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Islamic revolution. On the other hand, Iran is introduced always as a threat to international community and was recently included in President Bush's "axis of Evil". Furthermore, the wall of unreliability between the two governments has been preventing American tourists and businessmen travelling to Iran and accordingly they have been replaced by Russians and Chinese. The more American companies and businessmen are forced to avoid Iran because of imposed sanctions, the more economic ties and business contracts are applied between Iran and Russia/China. Iran signed memoranda of understanding in the field of tourism in 2006 and 2007 with China and Russia respectively.

In a further complication, the Islamic revolution was followed by the long disastrous Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, that damaged not only tourism infrastructures but also the image of the country as a safe destination. Then, it took almost a decade in the 1990s for Iran to complete the reconstruction process and get ready to host international tourists again. In spite of this political and physical turmoil though, Iran could attract about 9000 risk-avoidant Japanese tourists in the late 1990s, the highest total ever reached after the Islamic revolution. However, this situation could not last long because of the invention of the war against terrorism by the United States which is operated just behind

the borders of Iran in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Accordingly, the anxiety of war and security concerns in 2003 cut 70% of Japanese arrivals in Iran and half of the usual German tourists for example. Later in 2005, Khatami's policy of rapprochement with the West and "the dialogue among civilizations" was replaced by the new ideas of President Ahmadinejad, and these have resulted in more tensions in Iran's international relations with the West, especially the United States. Iran's nuclear program which recently has been the main issue of Iran in the international community has provided enough opportunity for the international media to introduce the country as a threat to the international community. It has also resulted in new sanctions against Iran through the Security Council of the United Nations.

Even though these events have happened, Iran has experienced relatively stable relations with Japan compared with the West. The fact that Iran plays an important role in supplying energy for the high demanding Japanese economy can be assumed to be the main reason behind the stability of relation between the two countries. In spite of American pressures and disagreements, Japan has remained the major customer for Iranian oil for more than two decades since the Islamic revolution. However, recently Japan has given up continuing investment in Iran's massive Azadegan oil field and reduced imports of Iranian oil. The relationship under which Foreign Minister Komura Masahiko's visit to Iran in August 1999 was made and the resumption of yen loans (Kakuchi, 1999) approved, is radically changed now to the point that even some Japanese banks have declared they will apply a limitation on loans in 2007 for Iran.

The visa waiver agreement between Iran and Japan which applied from 1974 was suspended in 1992. Thousands of Iranians came to Japan with a three month valid tourist visa at that time but overstayed in order to work in Japan. The war damaged economy of Iran and the bubble economy in Japan accelerated the process to bring cheap foreign labor to Japan. Later, with the bursting of the bubble, the Iranians were left without jobs and people in Tokyo were surprised to see a crowd of 8,000 Iranians gather in Ueno and Yoyogi parks in weekends to share information on employment and consult how to deal with the new situation. The two governments of Iran and Japan found the suspension of visa agreement the easiest way to solve the problem at that time. Today, after a decade has passed it is still difficult for Iranians to visit Japan unless they can prove that they do not intend to work in Japan when applying for a tourist visa via the Japanese Embassy in Tehran. This problem occurred because of miss-management of officials in both countries, however it damaged the image of Iran in Japan as for many people in Tokyo the Iranian illegal workers still represents the truth of Iranian society.

Tourism Planning in Iran

The Iran National Tourism Plan was approved in 2002, from when tourism promotional policies and activities were applied more seriously by the Iranian Government and tourism officials. The plan has been shown to be relatively successful in reaching its first goals in targeting pilgrim tourists from Islamic countries and overseas Iranians. However, one cannot expect miracles from the plan to change Iran's tourism industry quickly in the current political environment. European tourists have been replaced by Arab Muslims of neighboring countries since the Iraq war (2003) onward. In the case of

Japan, the plan has been realistic enough to place emphasis on Iran's cultural and heritage tourism to attract Japanese tourists. Japan is considered as a target market that can potentially provide tourists for Iran both in the short and long term. However, in spite of the emphasis of the tourism plan on promotional activities and advertisements to introduce Iranian attraction in Japan, there has been virtually no effort in this field by Iranian tourism officials. The job is abandoned to the Iranian Embassy in Tokyo with no professional assistance in the field. While Iran has tourism promotion offices in other Asian countries such as Malaysia and Thailand for example, the ignorance of the Japanese overseas traveler market is questionable to say the least.

Recommendations

Considering tourism and the desire to travel as social behavior makes it difficult to provide absolutely certain solutions to the dilemma of promoting a certain destination or developing interest among people to pay a visit to a particular place. However, the results of this research have suggested the following conclusions and recommendations to help in narrowing the gap between potentials and market realities in Japan-Iran tourism relations:

1. Iran: A Rewarding Tourist Destination behind the Walls of Unfamiliarity

A lack of tourist attractions, poor tourism infrastructure such as accommodation and transportation, security problems, difficulties in getting visas and a policy of closed doors might be the reason for some destinations failing in the international travel business, but none of these applies in the case of Iran as a destination. Nevertheless, the

country has not succeeded in the Japanese overseas travel market and there is no desire for Japanese international travelers to visit Iran at present.

If you ask Japanese people today to explain the reason for their negative attitude toward visiting Iran as a tourist destination you may find Iran being imagined as an Islamic Arab country with a social situation back in the medieval age with respect to religious restrictions and civil war; something far from 21st century civilization and not even related to Persian civilization. This image is something similar to what western media represent as Iran at present, which has roots in the political conflict between Iran and the West, especially with the United States. The image of Persia, which is the former/second name of Iran is positive generally in Japan. However, Persia does not represent more than a myth for the Japanese today, as the land of flying carpet or Persian bazaar for the majority of people, except for those who are interested in world history.

Is it really safe to visit Iran? Does the country have any thing to offer as tourist attraction to Japanese tourist? The answer to these questions by Japanese could be surprisingly different to the viewpoint of Arab Muslims of the Middle East for example. It also highly depends on the source of information about Iran available to the majority of people. In the case of the Middle East, it is true that the whole region is facing an image problem because of the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the image of Iran as a destination is damaged in Japan much more than its neighboring countries of Turkey or Dubai for example, which are relatively successful in attracting Japanese tourists.

The current image of Iran as a destination in Japan is the result of this market being neglected by Iranian officials for almost three decades in spite of the fact that the Japanese overseas travel market used to be a main source of tourists to Iran. Iranian tourism used to attract more visitors from Japan than any other country in the region before the Islamic revolution of 1979. The loss of that market has happened while Iran has experienced more stable political relations with Japan than with European countries; the Iranian Embassy in Tokyo has not been closed because of the change of government and Iran Air flights between Tokyo and Tehran have not been stopped even for a single week. There have been enough opportunities for Iranian officials to provide basic information about the country in Japan in order not to be currently mistaken for Iraq. Furthermore, the strong oil business between Iran and Japan has already provided enough room for the Iranian government to undertake cultural marketing if it had desired during the past decades.

The problem of promoting Iran in the Japanese overseas travel market goes back not only to the political issues and Iran's international relations but is also related to the desire to accept foreign tourists including Japanese. It took years for the Iranian government to rethink the policy of "Neither East, Nor West" that was one of the strongest slogans of the Islamic revolution. International tourists (or at least foreign cultural tourists) are not regarded anymore as the representatives of western culture who may destroy the values of the Islamic revolution as was the case during the 1980s. However, the cost that Iranian society has paid to learn how to change attitudes toward foreign tourists is the loss of Iran's share of international overseas travel, among which

the Japanese overseas travel market is not an exception. Today the Iranian population, which is more than twofold bigger than 28 years ago when the Islamic revolution took place, is willing to host international tourists. The government is also looking for foreign tourists to provide jobs for the young generation in Iran. Both the Iranian people and the government of Iran are culturally prepared to value the benefits of tourism instead of relying on oil revenue only, be seen in the new tourism promotion policy of Iran. The exhibition “Glory of Persia” in the major cities of Japan in 2007, which at time of writing is currently on show in Osaka, is a symbolic action of the new policy and has resulted in a 20% increase in the total number of Japanese tourists in Iran in the first half of 2007 compared with the previous year.

2. Promoting Iranian Tourism in Japan: Suggestions and Solutions

The demand for learning about other countries and cultures in Japanese society currently is high. The author’s experiences of living and conducting research in Japan between 2003 and 2007 have proved the demand for learning about Iranian culture amongst the Japanese people in different groups, from high school students to retired age. Meeting with a group of Japanese it is enough to say that Iranian people do not speak Arabic, they grow rice, and polygamy is not culturally accepted in Iran to surprise almost every one, who have totally different image of Iran as a nation and a tourist destination. However, when people are interested to know about a country it doesn’t necessarily mean that they are interested to visit the place. In this, when tourism starts at home it helps with the removal of the wall of unfamiliarity with the destination, which may led to actual visits any time later. Furthermore, in the case of Iran as a destination for the Japanese, they are seen more enthusiastic when they find some thing different

with what they have imagined about the country through a direct source of information from Iran.

The rich culture and long history of Iran increases the possibility of success in promoting Iranian cultural tourism in the Japanese overseas travel market. The remains of Persian art and architecture that are still flourishing in other countries like India, Uzbekistan and Egypt may be used to attract Japanese people every year by advertising Iranian culture and civilization. Visiting the Islamic section in the Louvre museum where more than 50% of items are from Iran has triggered the decision for some Japanese tourists to visit Iran according to Iranian tour operators. In this concept, people who visited the cultural borders of the ancient Persian Empire that is much wider than the land of modern Iran are more willing to visit the core of Persian civilization later. New marketing opportunities are also provided from 2007 in Japan with the retirement of a high number of the baby boomer generation.

A tourism promotion plan to target the Japanese overseas market for Iran must be realistic and patient enough not to expect a big change in the number of actual travellers from Japan to Iran in a short period of time. The long period that Japan has been neglected by Iranian tourism officials must be considered to understand the level of unfamiliarity that exists about Iran among the Japanese. However, a big change in the political environment of Iran especially in Iran-America relations could bring a completely different situation for the tourism industry of Iran. The following recommendations by the author are designed to promote Iranian tourism in Japan in the existing political and cultural environment.

- The Iranian tourism organization must open up its tourism promotion office in Japan to carry the job which is abandoned to the Iranian Embassy in Tokyo at present;
- Tourism promotional activities in Japan will be more effective if done through the recommendation of or with the direct help of Japanese third parties such as cultural associations, news agencies and travel companies, while the Iranian side would be better to concentrate on information gathering and policy making;
- Iran must be advertised as a safe and interesting destination in the Japanese media by any means continuously such as TV advertisement or cultural programs, newspaper articles, exhibitions etc is necessary;
- Holding cultural programs about Iran for small groups in local Japanese public houses and high schools should be considered as a part of the long term tourism promotion plan in Japan;
- Conduct joint promotional activities with Japanese travel agencies that already conduct Iranian tours to take the advantage of their experience in the field. The Japanese agencies should be equipped with Iranian advertisement materials such as tourist pamphlets etc;

- Make contact with local travel agencies in Japan in order to introduce travel business with Iran, Iranian land operators and their Japanese counterparts that are already conducting Iranian tours;
- Facilitate social agreements between Iranian and Japanese cities with cultural or tourism similarities such as spa tourism (Beppu City in Japan and Ardabil City in Iran), as well as schools or universities in order to develop more human relations between the two countries and promote cultural news from Iran in the Japanese media.
- Use the capacity of Iranian students in Japanese universities to represent Iranian culture so as to focus on the cultural promotion of Persia in academic environments in Japan;
- Make contact with organizations interested in hosting small exhibitions on cultural productions from other countries to entertain their customers. Such opportunities could be found in small branches of banks or Japanese inns etc throughout Japan for Iranian cultural products;
- Promote research activities by allocating a quota for tourism related studies in the scholarship programs offered to Iranian students who apply to study in Japan and finally

- Provide Iranian cultural and tourism advertising materials to be used as souvenirs for Japanese tourists who visit Iran in order to take advantage of this exceptional group as cultural ambassadors of Iran/Persia in Japan.

Further Research

Lack of research in the field of tourism in general is a major problem of Iran's tourism industry. Moreover, tourism research targeting Japanese overseas travel is yet to be conducted by Iranian tourism specialists. In this context, this thesis is amongst the earliest or is the only study in the field. It has also brought up new ideas of further research opportunities as follows to be considered by any one who is interested in tourism promotion between Japan and Iran, especially Iranian tourism officials who need help with promoting the Iranian tourism Industry in Japan:

- Analyze and seek to modify the content of Japanese high school text books of "World History" about Iran, giving opportunities for cultural promotion of Persia and Islamic Iran in Japan;
- Research the role of non-governmental organizations in tourism promotion between Japan and Iran. This could be a case study of the activities of the Japan-Iran Cultural organization and will identify further tourism promotional opportunities;
- Research and develop Persian virtual tourism in Japan. Take advantage of the popularity of the internet to introduce Iranian historical tourist attractions in Japan;

- Contact the Persian cultural ambassadors in Japan to study the experiences of Japanese travellers in Iran and then changing destination image;
- Research the potential role of Persian cinema and visual arts of Persia in cultural and tourism promotion in Japan.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Iran quiz: questionnaire for survey study conducted in Oita Prefecture (2005-6)

AGE 年齢: _____ 才

M 男性 / F 女性

1. When you think of Iran, what comes to mind? (please write as many words as you want)

イランというと、何を思い浮かべますか。(お好きなだけ書いてください)

2. When you think of Persia, what comes to mind? (please write as many words as you want)

ペルシャというと、何を思い浮かべますか。(お好きなだけ書いてください)

3. Can you find Iran on this map? Mark the location with “X”

下の地図でイランがどこにあるか分かりますか。イランと思うところに「×」をつけてください。



4. What is the population of Iran compared with Japan?

イランの人口は日本に比べて、どのくらいだと思いますか。下から選んでください。

- A) Half B) Twice C) The same D) I don't know
A) 半分 B) 2倍 C) 同じくらい D) 分からない

5. What is the size of Iran compared with Japan?

イランの面積は日本と比べて、どのくらいだと思いますか。下から選んでください。

- A) The same B) Twice C) 4 times D) I don't know
A) 同じ B) 2倍 C) 4倍 D) 分からない

6. What is the climate of Iran?

イランの気候はどうでしょう。下から選んでください。

- A) Temperate B) Desert C) Tropical D) All of the above
A) 温和 B) 砂漠 C) 熱帯 D) これらすべて

7. What is the staple food of Iran?

イランの主食は何でしょう。下から選んでください。

- A) Rice B) Bread C) Potatoes D) Pasta
A) 米 B) パン C) ジャガイモ D) パスタ

8. What proportion of Iran's population is under 30?

イランの人口の中で30歳以下の人たちが占める割合はどのくらいでしょう。
下から選んでください。

- A) 10% B) 25% C) 50% D) 70%

9. How much do you think in average, a salary man is paid in Iran?

イランのサラリーマンは、1カ月にいくらくらいの収入だと思いますか。下記から選んで
下さい。

- A) 200,000 円 B) 100,000 円 C) 40,000 円 D) 20,000 円

10. What language do people in Iran speak?

イランで話されている言葉はどれでしょうか。下から選んでください。

- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------|
| A) Arabic | B) Persian | C) English | D) Hindi |
| A) アラビア語 | B) ペルシャ語 | C) 英語 | D) ヒンディ語 |

11. Do you know the relation between Iran and Persia?

イランとペルシャの関係を知っていますか。下から選んで下さい。

A) Persia is one of the old parts of Arab world and doesn't relates to Iran

(イランはペルシャの新しい名前 でアラブとは異なる)

B) Iran is new name of Persia and different from Arab

(イランはペルシャの新しい名前)

C) I don't know

(分からない)

12. Would you like to visit Iran?

イランに行ってみたいですか。

YES / NO

Why?

その理由も書いてください(何でも自由にご記入下さい)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this quiz

ご質問にお答えいただき、ありがとうございました。

Appendix 2. Questionnaire Designed For Tourism Professionals Based On Likert Scale

親愛なる旅行産業の専門家の皆様

Dear tourism specialist

イランと日本旅行産業の可能性の高さにも関わらず集客が少ないのが現実であります。下記のアンケートは立命館アジア太平洋大学大学院で学んでいる学生の調査、研究のためにのみ使用させていただきます。調査、研究の結果をご希望であれば、kazemv@gmail.com へお問合せください。貴重な時間を割いてアンケートに答えていただくことに感謝するとともに、真摯なご意見を心よりお待ちしております。

As you know Japan-Iran tourism relationship is very limited in spite of high potential. The information conducted by this questionnaire will be used academically only as a PhD research conducted in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and we will be happy to let you know the coming results if you like through this mail address: kazemv@gmail.com. your patience in taking time and giving your pure ideas is really appreciated.

Please read the statements and respond according to the following scheme.

下記を読んでいただき、各項目についてご意見をお聞かせください。

- _ Strongly disagree 全く同意できない [1]
- _ Disagree 同意できない [2]
- _ Neither agree nor disagree どちらとも言えない [3]
- _ Agree 同意 [4]
- _ Strongly agree 完全に同意 [5]

1. High air fares relative to other destinations have a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

航空料金が高いことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

2. The lack of flights to Iran from locations other than Tokyo has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イランへ行く航空便が東京発着便しかないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

3. A lack of information about Iran's tourist attractions has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists to Iran

イラン観光の魅力についての情報不足がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

4. A lack of cultural events, festivals and exhibitions about Iran in Japan has a negative influence on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

文化的なイベント、お祭り、展覧会などの行事が少ないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

5. A lack of advertising for Iran as a tourist destination has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

観光地としてのイランの宣伝が少ないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

6. The limited number of travel agents in Japan offering Iran tours has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イラン観光を扱う旅行代理店が限られていることがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

7. Insufficient cooperation between tour operators in Japan and their counterparts in Iran has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran

日本とイランの旅行業者間の連携不足がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

8. Insufficient cooperation between tourism industry officials in Japan and their counterparts in Iran has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran

日本とイランの観光振興団体間の連携不足がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

9. A lack of knowledge about the distinctive characteristics of Iran compared with other countries in the Middle East has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

中東諸国の中でのイランの独自性が知られていないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

10. The political climate in countries neighboring Iran such as Iraq and Afghanistan has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イラクやアフガニスタンなどイラン周辺国の政治状況がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

11. Deficiencies in the existing tourism infrastructure in Iran have a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

既存の観光インフラ（施設など基盤となるもの）の欠陥がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

12. Inefficient utilization of the existing tourism infrastructure has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

既存の観光インフラ（施設など基盤となるもの）が十分に活用されていないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

13. The inefficiency of governmental planning in the tourism industry in Iran has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イランにおける観光産業に対する政府の政策が効果的でないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

14. A lack of public funding for the tourism industry in Iran has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran

イランにおける観光産業に対する公的な財政援助の不足がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

15. The unstable economic situation in Iran has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イランにおける不安定な経済状況がイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

16. Poor human resource management in the Iranian tourism industry has a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran.

イランの観光産業における優秀な人材が少ないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

17. Deficiencies in marketing conducted by the Iran Tourism and Touring Organization have a negative impact on the number of Japanese tourists visiting Iran

イラン側の観光振興のための機関があまりマーケティングをしないことがイランに行く日本人観光客が少ない原因である。

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

Appendix 3. Survey Study in the exhibitions of “the Glory of Persia” in Sapporo , Fukuoka and Osaka

This survey study is conducted as a PhD research in the fields of Persian history and cultural studies, cultural exchange and heritage Tourism Promotion for Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. We can't emphasize how precious are your opinions and your patience to express them because of the lack of research in this field.

このアンケートは立命館アジア太平洋大学で研究中の、ペルシャの歴史文化・文化交流・遺跡観光についてのも
です。この分野の研究はまだまだ進んでいないため、とりまのうちに意見をいっていただければ嬉しいと思いま

あなたの 年齢 AGE: _____才 性別 SEX: 男性 M / 女性 F

1. イランというと、何を思い浮かべますか。(お好きなだけお書きください)

When you think of Iran, what comes to mind? (Please write as many words as you want)

2. ペルシャというと、何を思い浮かべますか。(お好きなだけお書きください)

When you think of Persia, what comes to mind? (Please write as many words as you want)

3. 下記の中で行ったことのある国はありますか。(番号に○をつけてください)

Which of the countries below you have been before?

1. イラン Iran 2. トルコ Turkey 3. エジプト Egypt 4. パキスタン Pakistan
5. シリア Syria 6. リビア Libya 7. モロッコ Morocco
8. ウズベキスタン Uzbekistan

4. あなたはイラン情報をどのようにして得ましたか。(下記からお選びください・複数可)

Which of the followings do you remember to have got information about Iran?

1. 高校の教科書 (My high school text book) 2. パンフレットを読んで (read a pamphlet)
3. 家族/友達から (from family/friends) 4. テレビや映画から (from TV program/Movie)
5. 本を読んで (read a book) 6. 雑誌や新聞から (magazine or newspaper article)
7. テレビのニュース/CMなどのメディアから (from TV new/commercial or mass media)
8. 独自の情報源から分析して (My own research from different sources)

5. イランに行くとしたら次のどれが目的となりますか。

What would be your preferred purpose of travel if have the chance to visit Iran?

1. 自然・景観 (Nature and scenery) 2. 買い物 (shopping) 3. のんびりする (rest and relaxation)
4. 有名ホテルに宿泊 (stay at famous hotels) 5. イランの文化体験 (experience Iranian culture)
6. 現地の人と会う (meet local people) 7. イランの料理・食べ物 (Local cuisine or favorite foods)
8. 史跡・建造物 (historical sites and architecture) 9. 芸術や美術館 (Art galleries and museums)
10. スキーなどの冬のスポーツ (Skiing or other winter sports)

6. イランに行くとしたら、誰と行きたいですか。 Who do you want to travel with if visit Iran?

1. 配偶者 Spouse
2. 家族や親戚 family/relatives
3. 友人 friends/ acquaintance
4. 仕事仲間 fellow employees
5. 一人 alone

7. イランに行くとしたら、どうやって予定を立てますか。

How do you prefer arrange your trip if you decide to visit Iran?

1. 旅行社経由 Through a travel agency
2. インターネット internet
3. イラン航空に尋ねる I will contact Iran Air
4. 電話やメールで直接頼む telephone/ mail order
5. 分からない I don' t know

8. どのような形態でイランに行きますか。 How do you travel if you decide to visit Iran?

1. パッケージツアー Will buy a Package tour
2. グループを組んで行く Will go with a group
3. 一人で旅行計画を立てる I will individually arrange it
4. 分からない I don' t know

9. もしイランに行きたくない人がいる場合、その理由はどのようなことだと思えますか。

Which of the followings may hinder your desire to travel to Iran?

1. 費用がかかる Cost too much
2. 治安の問題 security concerns
3. 時間がない can not take time off
4. 遠すぎる Takes too long to go to Iran
5. 情報が少ないため行く気がしない no information or motif
6. イラン旅行取扱いの旅行会社が見つからない I couldn't find a travel agency to have Iran tour

7. 中東で先に他に行きたい国がある Desire to visit other Middle East destinations first
8. イスラム教などの宗教の問題 Religious/Islamic concerns
9. イランの気候は体に悪そう I may become ill because of Iranian weather
10. 現在のところ中東に行く気はない I won't travel to Middle East at now
11. 一緒に行く人がいないから No one to go with

10. あなたご自身はイランに行きたいですか。 Do you desire to visit Iran?

Yes / No

理由 Why? :

If you would like to receive the overall results of this survey or have any question of history, culture or current Iranian ordinary life lifestyle, please do not hesitate to contact us in this address: nipponiran@gmail.com or provide us with your email address or contact bellow:

このアンケートの結果やイラン・ペルシャについて関心のある方は、nipponiran@gmail.com にメールをいただくか、ご自身のメールアドレスもしくは連絡先を下記余白にご記入ください。
アンケート集計後、こちらからご連絡いたします。

ご協力いただきありがとうございました。

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Questionnaire.