

# Leisure and Tourism as a Treatment in Iran: A Sociological Appraisal

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi

## Correspondence:

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi,  
Professor of Sociology,  
Department of Social Science,  
Alzahra University,  
Tehran

Tel: 009821-22859416

Email: mtshykhi@alzahra.ac.ir ; mtshykhi@yahoo.com

## Abstract

The present article explores how the people of Iran who have been prone to increasing socio-cultural change in the past few decades, are exposed to leisure and tourism in order to be spiritually rehabilitated. As previously found, one of the ways to refresh and reactivate people in a given society is to facilitate tour and travel for them. Similarly, changing economic conditions for a large portion of the people on the one hand, and better communications and means of transportation have all contributed to boosting leisure and tourism in the country. It is worth noting that Iran's literacy rate which has been enhanced in an unprecedented manner, has widely affected leisure and tourism at national level. Moreover, the government is also encouraging tourism in order to further activate the economic cycle. This article also explores how more and more people are motivated to go on leisure and tourism to further explore various cultural and tourist attractions of greater Iran from coast to coast. Modern social networks have also played a major role in extending leisure and tourism for different classes of people. The article proposes that improved policy-making positively affects the industry.

**Key words:** Leisure. Transportation. Economic conditions, Quality of Life. Cultural change.

## Introduction

Iran with a population of 79.5 million, and 72 percent urban population in 2016, is more than ever before exposed to leisure and tourism (WPDS, 2016). Not only the urban, but the rural people too go more frequently on certain types of leisure and tourism including pilgrimage as compared with the past. Many people involve themselves in leisure and tourism as a spiritual and psychological medicament. The complicated and changing life of the current time needs increasing leisure and release which could be found in tourism.

The main objective of the paper is to reflect the concepts of leisure and tourism, their mutual interactions, and their inter-relationships with each other. Throughout the paper, various dimensions of leisure activities, and emergence and development of tourism will be addressed. We will also witness how new and changing frames of socio-economic life in modern times have motivated development of leisure and tourism. The paper explores how leisure involves the substitution of a preferred activity that provides pleasure by satisfying the internalized values, free of the everyday pressures of social obligation (Sigler and Chaudhary, 2000), and that is materialized by tourism as intended in this research. Both leisure and tourism highly affect the quality of life. The paper is an introduction to, and overview of, the emergence of leisure demand and tourism industry, including discussions of their growth and motivations. The features will highlight and reflect the crucial issues related to phenomena. The paper aims at placing special emphasis on issues related to the role of science and technology in the development process of leisure and tourism. It will come to the conclusion that the employed gain benefits from leisure and tourism. Leisure being the antithesis of work, is complementary to work. The research also finds out how changing socio-economic circumstances have enhanced "leisure tourism" such as holidays and sports. Data included in the present paper will demonstrate as to how a person's sex has influence on the choice of leisure activity.

The two concepts of leisure and tourism are complementary to each other. Leisure normally relates to recreational activities during the non-work time, where there is no compulsion, and where there is autonomy and control over what is being done. It is also called "discretionary time". Like work, leisure activities take place in a society at certain times, and in particular locations such as the cinema, the theatre, the home, sport centers and so on (Bilton, et al. 2002). Leisure activities have grown especially in the last 50 years everywhere including Iran, as a result of a number of factors. These include: a rise in the disposable income of many workers; a reduction in the hours worked per week; holiday pay; commercialisation of leisure, and a contraction of working life (Bilton, et al. 2002). All the above points implicate the Iranian population as a result of globalization of patterns of values relating to leisure.

The growth of leisure time does not mean that everyone is in a position to take it up. For example, the unemployed find it particularly difficult to convert free time into leisure, as they have reduced financial resources, and restricted social contact, combined with a sense of lost identity, self-esteem and personal status. Paid work, then, is central to one's enjoyment of leisure.

"Leisure" is a misleading term because it can include rest of recreation, or self-development. It is usually seen as the antithesis of work. Therefore, if you do not have work, you do not have leisure either. Indeed, to speak of the unemployed as having ample leisure, would be regarded by them as inappropriate. However, imposed leisure is neither rest, nor recreation, nor development (Handy, 1995). The present demographic structure of Iran shows that 28.9 percent of the 15-29 age group are in search of paid work, but cannot get it; so, leisure activities are meaningless to them (Statistical Centre of Iran, 2002). In other words, due to inadequate full-time employment for everyone in this age group, their unemployment represents in effect a form of enforced leisure.

Tourism on the other hand, as the world's biggest industry, is usually known as the other side of the leisure coin. The author introduces the reasons why people travel, and defines what is really meant by "tourism". Tourism had grown dramatically since the end of the Second World War, to become one of the world's fastest-growing industries, offering a wide variety of employment opportunities as well. Throughout the world, the dominant attitude towards tourism is economic, and the majority of tourist organizations also have the same economic attitude towards the phenomenon, yet, tourism from the viewpoints of the tourists themselves, as well as the cultural organizations, is a cultural issue (Ettelaat, 1993). However, such a cultural feature would help in promoting the quality of life of the leisure seekers in general. Likewise, tourism, its development, features of tourism, its structure and progression aims will be purposed in the context of the present article.

Tourism is one of the world's biggest industries with more people than ever before travelling in their own countries and exploring new destinations abroad. This phenomenon

owes much to the development of communications. Tourism covers many different sectors such as tourist attractions, public sector bodies such as tourism, travel agents, tour operators, accommodation, catering, and transportation (Youell, 2000). Tourism as a temporary, short-term movement of people on destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and as activities during their stay at these destinations, is multi-purpose.

Tourism could also be termed "leisure tourism" when undertaken as holidays, sport, education, culture and religion. It may be for the purpose of "visiting friends and relatives", or it may eventually happen as "business tourism" such as business meetings, exhibitions and trade fairs, conferences, conventions and so on.

### Quality of Life

Quality of life as a concept encompasses a huge agenda from the state of the environment to personal growth, health, economic rewards, satisfaction in life and psychological well-being. However, clean air, a quieter countryside, personal safety, leisure and tourism all contribute to our quality of life (Cahill, 2002). In today's modern life, we can argue that there is an overall loss for us as well as the society if our leisure and touring needs are not met.

Quality of life has a subjective element. One person's view of what constitutes quality of life may be very different from another's. Realism also demands, however, that we acknowledge that in a consumer society our sense of subjective well-being and our needs are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by advertising and other techniques of persuasions including leisure and tourism. Obviously, leisure participation and satisfaction are important determinants of quality of life (Leitner and Leitner, 2004).

### Profiles and Challenges

In a large country like Iran with an area of 1648000K2, and a population of 79.5 million in mid 2016 (WPDS, 2016), one would imagine there are various climatic conditions, historical and cultural heritages and sites of which many, including Iranians, are not aware. Local leisure travellers may still be surprised by some quite "unknown" places and attractions, mainly because they have not been well identified by the people. Iran is connected to the Caspian Sea in the north and Persian Gulf in the entire belt of the south. More people use the northern resorts because of the availability of facilities and the modest climatic conditions. High costs of travelling do not permit the middle and lower middle classes to travel. Moreover, one can find a lot of natural and ecological resorts in Iran, but they are not highly used by the locals as leisure and tourism destinations. Though there are a lot of mountains in Iran, only few professionals happen to pass by.

The government has advertised in recent years to enhance travel and tours. Lack of purchasing power of the general public does not easily allow it to happen. To earn foreign exchange, foreign tourism is highly publicized

and welcome. So far as the Iranian southern resorts are concerned, many people prefer to visit Kish island in the south of Iran for the special facilities, low prices, and the open social milieu available there. That is why many Iranian holiday-makers choose the area.

### Need for Sports vs Cultural Change

Cultural change extensively appearing in Iran, in general, is followed by new needs including leisure and sports. Cultural change in various dimensions and in different respects based on development of new institutions, has surprisingly happened to Iran in recent decades, the same as in many other developing societies. Such a phenomenon has been followed by new expectations, within which the need for leisure and sports is of very high priority. In other words, change in one dimension of a cultural phenomenon usually accompanies other transformations as well (Macionis and Plummer, 1998).

On the other hand, the current young population structure of Iran with special reference to urban areas, contributes to the immediate need for leisure and sports facilities to be provided. Under such demographic circumstances, the "disguised need" for sport is appearing more than ever before. Providing for it would contribute to further individual and social health, national unity and integration. As a result of cultural change and development of the youth, their homogenization vis-a-vis value system, behavioural patterns, expectations, provision of leisure and sports among them appears inevitable. In the absence of an infrastructure the scenario will be ever more complicated and controversial.

If we go back five decades when modern sports had not come into light as today, and when the sports were played more by the professional adults in Iran, "Zurkhaneh" (a traditional type of gymnasium in Persia), was mainly used; and there were a few of them in every city where only the males could attend to play (Dehkhoda, 1994). Due to the dominance of modern Western sports, traditional "Zurkhaneh" is fading away in sport and leisure scene in Iran and being replaced by modern sports such as aerobics for both sexes.

### Development of Leisure and Tourism

Leisure and tourism have grown since the 1950s due to the following factors: changing socio-economic circumstances including increasing car ownership, more leisure time and higher income levels; developments in technology including improvement in air travel industries, computer technology, growth in domestic and international tourism, and people becoming more educated; product developments and innovations such as the development of seaside resorts, more road-building in countries like Iran, growing demand for travel and tourism products and services, more division of labour, more need to strengthen and develop the industry to create more opportunities and sources of income. Changing and increasing consumer needs, expectations, fashions and the like have all helped in the development of leisure and tourism.

However, though social change has led leisure and tourism needs, sociologists believe that a gap is created between the people's expectations due to social change and their actual conditions, namely, what is known as "relative deprivation" (Abeles, 1976). Such a controversial situation is observable in society.

Leisure and tourism play a prominent role in bringing about further developments in quality of life. From the economic point of view, productivity being an end, needs the means of health, promotion of health at work place, promotion of consciousness and motivation. However, the materialization of all these is dependent on trends of leisure and tourism (Economic and Planning Under-Secretary, 1995) (EAPUS).

### Methodology

The present paper explores a wide range of questions about the dynamics of social change, matters of social policy and broader theoretical issues associated with the development of the issues of leisure and tourism. It has tried to use an appropriate conceptual framework most relating to all-round data collection to complete the current research. The researcher has tried to base his research on reliable and valid forms of representative findings to reach the intended objectives.

The method of research used in the present study is of synthetic type in which through exposition, namely, the process of combination of parts into a whole. The method includes use of published books, journals, and reports. Some information was also collected from appointed informants through direct interviews. Information collected was arranged and described to assess quality of life in terms of leisure and tourism based on theoretical frameworks.

Socio-economic planning in various dimensions is very important for a country like Iran, and it must be achieved through the use of various resources in the country. Similarly, social research having a wide field and scope must be followed in an all-round manner (Raj, 1990); and one of which is "leisure activities and tourism", in the present study.

### Theoretical Analysis

Rapid changes in technology that occurred in the 20th century, have affected the nature of leisure activities. Increased alienation at work, with deskilling through new technology, has meant that many people are trying to achieve satisfaction and creativity outside work through creative leisure pursuits (Browne, 1996). Leisure has itself become a highly organized and commercialised business. The mass production methods employed in the manufacturing industry have been applied to leisure activities, such as the mass production of stereo and video recorders to cater for the products of the record and music industries. Mass entertainment such as spectator sports, televisions, the cinema and video, the package holiday and the like are known as developments in leisure activities.



Social class differences in leisure have been exaggerated, but difference in income, car ownership, educational qualifications, and working hours mean that middle class and working class people often follow different leisure activities. For example, they are likely to read different books, magazines, and newspapers, watch different TV programs and films at the cinema, join different organizations, eat and drink in different pubs and restaurants, and travel to different holiday destinations. Some leisure activities are denied to the working class simply because of the high costs involved (Browne, 1996).

The development of mass tourism often requires cultures, cities, and regions of countries to rethink their own unique identities, and then package and promote them as products which hopefully will attract people from other cultures (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000). Tourism has compelled us all to become global performers, putting on presentations designed to project our own cultural heritage. This has led to a re-evaluation by some sociologists concerning how we should understand what is meant by "culture and tradition".

On the other hand, Greenwood (1989) suggests that "international tourism involves the largest scale movement of goods, services and people that humanity has perhaps ever seen certainly outside wartime" (P.171). The growth and development of which is so that few alternative industries can match such sustained rates of growth.

Over the past fifty years, the leisure service delivery paradigm has been characterized by several approaches. They include: community service development; marketing and commercial, humanitarian and humanistic; benefits based, social action; compulsory competitive tendering and best value (Lobo, 2002). Among the above, community service development is truer in Iran. Leisure is viewed as having a determining impact on quality of life. It is regarded as a vital contributor to quality of human functions and duties.

The concept of leisure can be used to refer to some combination of time, activity and experience; time free from work and other necessary activities such as eating and sleeping; "play" activities which are intrinsically rewarding (Kuper and Kuper, 1996). Leisure is also differently experienced and unevenly available, namely, people with jobs have more earlier demarcated leisure time and activities than those with domestic responsibilities, whose "work is never done".

## Islamic and Cultural Tourism in Iran

Iran has witnessed religious and cultural movement of tourists in the country in the last few decades with special reference to the development of means of communications and transportation. Many sites and cities in which historic monuments and the holy shrines of Imams and poets are situated such as Isfahan, Mashad, Shiraz, Qom, Hamadan and Kermanshah are highly active in receiving domestic and international tourists. They are a

wonderland for tourists and pilgrims. The holy shrines of Imam Reza in Mashad, Hazrat Masoomeh in Qom, and Shah-e-Cheragh in Shiraz as Islamic cities are of prime importance. They are frequently visited by domestic as well as foreign Muslim Pilgrims. Similarly, shrines of great poets like Saadi and Hafiz in Shiraz, and Avicenna (Abu Ali Sina) in Hamadan, are visited by the domestic and foreign tourists. They have been the sites of cultural and economic significance over centuries, and more frequently in recent decades. They constitute vital tourist regions in their landscape, rich heritage in culture, art and architecture.

Such sites and regions speak of the history, civilization, and the socio-cultural conditions of Iran. There is a growing number of Muslim tourists from the Middle East, south, central, and even east Asian countries coming to visit these Islamic and cultural monuments. The Government of Iran has perceived the emerging sentiment of these visitors and emphasised to improve the Muslim sites by providing adequate infrastructure amenities around and towards the monuments more according to the feel and taste of the tourists. However, production of handicrafts and souvenirs of superb quality and style has been well developed in these cities especially in Isfahan.

However, a significant part of the influence of Western culture on Islamic societies comes through leisure time activities: watching television, using the internet, playing and watching sport, hearing Western music, are obvious examples of this cultural impact (Martin and Mason, 2002). Such trends usually lead to socio-cultural controversies in Iran.

Planning is necessary for Iran's balanced tourism growth and development. By implementing sustainable development planning in the places of cultural tourism, the country would receive a sizable share of domestic and foreign tourists, and more foreign exchange. Tourism planning is not related only to the physical development of the site or conservation of deteriorated historic monuments, but needs the cooperation, contribution, and active participation from the broader community.

## Future Development

To reach social development, providing backgrounds of leisure is necessary, and for that purpose, suitable planning and creating adequate possibilities are essential, especially for the adolescents to use their leisure times (Nejati, 1997). However, leisure is not only necessary for the elderly youth, but it needs to be specified for the elderly too. Thus, reemergence of some old leisure tendencies often occurs for some elderly people. For example, old women may return to their youthful hobbies due to their abstinence for years because of child rearing, domestic responsibilities etc. They may again resume painting for example, in their old age as a leisure activity. (Shoarinezhad, 1994).

Similarly leisure pursuits provide the adolescents with opportunities to release their energies, and consequently

attain creativity and restoration. If these opportunities are wasted, and if thereby the adolescents are not motivated, ground for their deviation is provided (Sharafi, 1993).

However, we see that leisure and tourism have developed very rapidly in the past half century to become one of the world's biggest industries. But, what of the future? Will this dramatic growth be sustained, or will the bubble burst? Most industry experts and professionals agree that leisure and tourism will continue to grow, but in different ways and depending on various conditions. The following factors will be responsible on the issue (Youell, 2000, P.14).

**1) Social Factors:** Demographic trends and social change will have important impacts on the future development of the industry in qualitative and quantitative terms in the new millennium. The fact that people in the West are living longer, the fall in the number of young people, the increase in one-parent households, more couples choosing not to have children, or to delay having children, or to delay having children until later in life; all point to the fact that the type of leisure and tourism products and services will change radically. Such change will affect Iranians too.

**2) Political and Economic Factors:** On a global scale, the late 1980s saw historic world developments with countries emerging from State control and embracing the Western "market economy". However, any change in value systems would create further demands for leisure and tourism. Events like these, creating of the European Union, the Eurozone and so forth\_\_ all have had impacts on leisure and tourism, and in most cases, they have been eased, such as exchange of visits that has increased more than ever before.

**3) Cultural and Environmental Factors:** Since the 1980s greater environmental awareness and health and fitness had emerged and been taken seriously. These factors have had important influences on leisure, tourism and recreation. However, what is known as the so-called "green issues" have emerged and are currently high on the agenda. All these have changed the attitudes towards leisure and tourism.

**4) Technological Factors:** Leisure and tourism have always made extensive use of new technology. For example, developments in transportation make extensive use of new technology. On the other hand, while the extent of information technology "IT" has highly developed leisure and tourism, implication of war hinders it.

### Leisure and Tourism Scenario in Iran

Leisure and tourism, highly in demand, are rapidly growing the country. While the first (leisure) is strengthening the second (tourism), the second also develops the first. The two in a combined form have created a sort of competition among the different classes of people in the society. Higher incomes, more leisure time, and giving priority to it indicate that tourism is expanding. Also, ever changing lifestyles, and the new value system, increased overseas

visits, and increasing number of youths all indicate that the tourism industry will continue to further expand. At the same time, leisure activities and demand for that too, are on the increase.

Iran as a modern society, like many others, is expected to provide her citizens with the opportunities to meet their needs so far as their leisure is concerned. For some people such needs are fulfilled, while for many they are not satisfactorily responded to. Hence, the tourism industry affects us not only because of its tremendous size, but also because of the crucial role it plays in improving the quality of life for millions of people.

In such an important industry as tourism, the potential for jobs is enormous. As the industry is becoming more complex, it demands the services of well trained, enthusiastic and responsible individuals (Zulfikar,1998). The future growth and competitive strength of each of the elements that make up tourism depends on how well each entity cares for the safety and comfort of the leisure-seekers, or the value and satisfaction they get from their money, and on how well their expectations are met.

For materializing sustainable development, and progress of the Iranian society, industrialization requires leisure and tourism programs. However, with regard to the "key role" of industrialization in promoting human material potential, and efficiency in all the economic sectors, industrial development is central and key to economic development (Mashayekhi, 1995). All such developments are dependent on achieving leisure and tourism.

Tourism creates both positive and negative effects in the destination country or region. Thoughtful policy-making and planning can do much to minimize or even remove the negative effects. Tourism as a response to leisure demand, can be a very positive means of increasing the economic, social, cultural and environmental life of a country or region. The major issue now is for the politicians, planners and developers, to rise to the challenge and create responsible tourism in an integrated manner without damaging the physical and cultural environment of the destination.

Because of the eco-system difficulties especially in the urban areas, sustainable leisure and tourism planning are essential. Such problems currently observable in the Third World countries such as Iran, are the same as those that have emerged in the Western countries in the beginning of the 20th century. Such problems and hazards include air pollution caused by domestic as well as industrial units, refineries etc. (Arbab, 1997).

Another view reflects the fact that though the current wave of the industrial revolution which has brought "electronics" into our life, is very promising, yet, it carries negative effects such as the weakening of family networks too (Zangeneh, 1994). However, the entire scenario creating new expectations and needs, requires leisure and tourism programs.

Due to the increasing social, economic and cultural changes occurring in the society, with special reference to the future, we may expect the construction of an increasing number of elaborate leisure complexes, offering a complete range of leisure activities on the one site (Calvert and Calvert, 1992). However, tourism also requires an extensive infrastructure. Tourism now being the mainstay of the economies of developing countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the like, must find the same stand in Iran too. Socially speaking, the tourism industry must not be heavily concentrated on a few key attractions in a limited number of places such as Isfahan, Shiraz and Tehran. It must spread in various places and cities to create economic upheaval and change.

Like all products, the tourism product needs marketing. In fact, marketing for tourism is more important than for manufactured products since tourism products are highly perishable (Seth and Bhat, 1996). For example, a seat in the plane, or a room in the hotel not used today is a total waste. Thus, there is an element of urgency in the marketing of tourism. It is an intangible product. It can neither be stored for future use, nor can it be moved to be shown to the consumer or leisure-seeker - the leisure-seeker has to come to it, to feel it.

**Table 1: Number of Households According to State of Travel, Spring 2013**

| State of Households Travel     | Number of Households |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Total of Households .....      | 22,227,000           |
| Households Having Travel ..... | 11,694,727           |
| Households without Travel..... | 10,532,273           |

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, 2013.

**Table 2: Number of Internal Travels without Nightly Stay by the Main Objective of Travel, Spring 2013**

| Main objective of Travel         | Number of Travel |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Total .....                      | 29,520,040       |
| Travel and tour .....            | 12,734,954       |
| Visiting Friends and Family..... | 7,163,538        |
| Pilgrimage .....                 | 2,725,396        |
| Treatment .....                  | 3,491,057        |
| Other Objectives .....           | 3,405,096        |

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, 2013



**Table 3: Twenty Visited Cities According to the Travels Done by Type of Travel and the Number of Nights Stayed, Spring 2013**

| City          | Number of Travel  |                      |                   | Person's Nights Stayed |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|               | Total             | Without Nightly Stay | With Nightly Stay |                        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>73,823,151</b> | <b>35,507,063</b>    | <b>38,316,088</b> | <b>164,522,233</b>     |
| Mashhad       | 3,927,101         | 495,448              | 3,431,652         | 15,330,558             |
| Tehran        | 3,461,796         | 957,691              | 2,504,105         | 12,478,531             |
| Rasht         | 2800995           | 2,070,337            | 730,658           | 2,888,326              |
| Shiraz        | 1,868,482         | 563,986              | 1,304,496         | 5,333,794              |
| Isfahan       | 1,691,111         | 482,857              | 1,208,254         | 5,219,888              |
| Ghazvin       | 1,530,013         | 1,100,716            | 429,297           | 1,117,414              |
| Qom           | 1,503,460         | 655,953              | 847,507           | 2,550,075              |
| Sari          | 1,451,231         | 797277               | 653,954           | 1,909,034              |
| Kerman        | 1,085,976         | 432,156              | 653,820           | 1,894,790              |
| Bandar Anzali | 1,011,816         | 784,504              | 227,312           | 842,425                |
| Binalod       | 960,894           | 923,863              | 37,030            | 90,350                 |
| Kashan        | 944,624           | 546,825              | 397,798           | 1,135,666              |
| Lahijan       | 895.062           | 653.850              | 241.212           | 829.704                |
| Arak          | 842.939           | 348862               | 494.077           | 2.062.537              |
| Ahwaz         | 815.769           | 283.386              | 532.283           | 3.939.958              |
| Chalous       | 805.212           | 312.611              | 492.602           | 1.830.427              |
| Hamadan       | 785.427           | 274.343              | 511.084           | 2.519.625              |
| Gorgan        | 733.241           | 388.000              | 345.241           | 1.285.412              |
| Astara        | 705.985           | 370.291              | 335.694           | 864.804                |
| Kermanshah    | 683.727           | 229.142              | 454.585           | 1.699.351              |
| Others        | 45.318.287        | 22.834.961           | 22.483.326        | 98.699.563             |

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, 2013

## Conclusion

Leisure and tourism are considered as activities essential to the life of the Iranian nation, because of their direct social, cultural, educational and economic benefits. The development of leisure and tourism being highly linked to the social and economic development of nations, it can only be possible if humans have access to creative rest and holidays, and enjoy the freedom to travel within the framework of free time and leisure.

Though leisure and tourism were not in satisfactory progress during the war in the 1980s, yet, since then, there have been considerable developments, and optimistically the positive effects of which are taken for granted. Moreover, the multi-dimensional change leading to new expectations and needs require leisure and tourism to be developed to meet the increasing and emerging wants of all people regardless of their race, class, creed, and religion with special reference to the young generation of Iran. Leisure perspectives also indicate developments in various sectors both among males and females.

As far as Iran is concerned, her leisure and tourism require the most active attention because of the presence of young population structure who have not adequate income to meet their growing needs. In the meantime, the same attention should be paid to the handicapped. However, the rapid transition and swift development as occurring not only in technology, information technology, in social structures and relations, and in behavioral patterns of Iran, all have had profound effects on leisure, and tourism needs and expectations.

Until recently, Iran did not pay enough attention to the importance of tourism, but, in recent years she has come to tap the tourism potential. The contribution of tourism in terms of foreign exchange accruals is known as "invisible" in the balance of payment data. However, tourism and private transfer could emerge as the major benefactors to the nation by way of their contribution in terms of net foreign exchange inflows. Iran, potentially being a leading tourist destination, needs more planning and management in the context. Eventually, we can conclude that tourism can be a very positive means of promoting the economic, social, cultural and environmental life of the country. It must be added that religious and cultural tourism has also come to be recognized as one of the main sources of domestic tourism in the country. In general, it can promote the quality of life of different social groups, and could be used as a means to treat patients.

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