

**Reasons for Travelling and non-Travelling to Certain Destinations: An Empirical Investigation of Iranian Tourist Market**

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**Abstract**

Destination choice is a complex multi-faced decision process both for actual and potential visitors. The literature has examined a number of factors influencing visitors' preferences for travelling to certain destinations but not to others. Among these can be listed as internal/external environmental and individual characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics, personal travel motivations, situational constraints, distance and nationality and destination awareness. Taking this list a departure point, this study aims to 1) investigate the reasons as to why the people would prefer certain destinations and not others, 2) point out the context of their motivations, and 3) suggest what the people like while travelling to destinations other than their own countries. Following the rules of qualitative method, we developed five open-ended questions to conduct an interview with the Iranian respondents. With its 74 million inhabitants and approximately three million visitors to travel abroad, Iran has become a potential market for the international tourism market. A total of 384.1 minutes of answers were recorded (approximately 9:36`per interview). A total of 40 participants were interviewed between March and May 2012. Of these, half were female, 60% of the samples were married, all of the participants were distributed in four age group of 18-25(25%), 26-35(22.5%), 36-50 (27.5%), and over 50(25%). The respondents are well-educated (17.5% had a master's degree, 50% bachelor, and 12.5% associate). The study findings suggest that the perceived lack of safety and security, cultural proximity and political relations are significant factors that make visitors unlikely to visit certain destination such as

Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, USA, Pakistan and Israel. The Iranian potential market is likely to visit mainly European destinations, USA and UAE due to their rich tourist attractions and different culture. The Iranian tourist market motivates itself to travel abroad for the purpose of experiencing a different culture and enjoying relaxation in a peaceful atmosphere. The freedom, as being the main reason that the Iranian tourist market likes the most when traveling to destinations other than their own country, supports the relevance of these motivations.

**Keywords:** destination choice, decision making, tourist motivations, tourist market