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Iran's Religious Tourism Market Insight

بینشی بر بازارهای گردشگری مذهبی ایران

گردآورندگان: دکتر جواد براتی - مسعود اعلم صمیمی

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Compilers:

Javad Barati

Assistant Professor of Tourism Economic Department, Research Institute of Tourism, Academic
Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR)- Khorasan Razavi

Masoud Aalam Samimi

Researcher of Tourism Management and Planning Department, Research Institute of Tourism,
Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) - Khorasan Razavi

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Preface

The Mashhad city, as the most popular tourist destination in Iran, hosts pilgrims (religious tourists) from countries with a predominantly Shiite Muslim population. However, not many studies have been conducted on the potential tourism markets of this city. Therefore, with the aim of examining the potential tourism markets of the of Mashhad, we decided to compile a comprehensive booklet to portray the macro-tourism landscape of these markets. In the first edition, this book only examines the tourism situation of 10 countries (countries with the largest share of the Shiite Muslim population). It is hoped that in subsequent editions, a larger number of target markets for Shiite Muslim pilgrims will be added to this book. It is worth noting that the economic approach dominates the writing of this book. Due to the lack of specialized and technical discussions in these studies, this book can be used by the general public and all experts in the system who are interested in understanding a comprehensive picture of the tourism situation of the target markets and its relationship with the Iran and the Mashhad□

The information provided for each country (potential tourism market) is divided into four general categories/pages. An attempt has been made to present this information in a visual and infographic format to make it easier and faster for the audience to understand. The first category (first page) is the macro information of that country, which includes basic demographic, religious, geographical distance, level and economic inequality of that country. The second category (second page) describes the relationship between incoming and outgoing tourists between that country and Iran, the visa status with Iran, flight connections, and the number of tourists entering Mashhad. In fact, this category focuses on the relationship between the origin (potential tourism market) and the tourist destination (Mashhad). The third category (third page) is an overview of the status of incoming tourists to the country, which includes qualitative information, the time trend of the number of tourists, tourist expenditures, and their per capita spending. The fourth category (fourth page) is an overview of the status of outbound tourism from the country, which includes qualitative information, the time trend of the number of tourists, the expenditure of residents leaving the country, and their per capita spending. Due to the limitations of the data available for different countries, the time period of the data may be different for different countries, however, an attempt has been made to use the same framework to present the information of the countries as much as possible.

Since studying this book can be useful for all pilgrimage tourism destinations similar to Mashhad and also for all target markets in this book, it was written in English for greater usability. The visual nature of information and the conversion of data into images in infographic format allows people with different languages to benefit from this book to the maximum. The coloring of countries and charts is determined based on the same rule, so each country has the same and independent color. For a more detailed understanding of the charts and explanation of each chart or image, a guide is provided at the end of the book. Despite the clear and understandable images, you can refer to the end of the book to view the relevant guide.

The source of data is of great importance, especially in this book, which emphasizes cross-country comparative studies. Therefore, an attempt has been made to use reliable international and national sources to collect data. Most of the data used in this book is derived from internationally published statistics by UNWTO, World Bank, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of countries, and the sites <https://www.theglobaleconomy.com> and <https://www.pewresearch.org>. However, limited access to information and weak data from some countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen, led to the use of estimates based on national data. Due to the importance of the accuracy of the data provided in this book, which can be a basis for tourism policymaking and planning, great care has been taken in the estimates and related concepts. However, the authors of this book do not consider their efforts to be free from errors and welcome the announcement and submission of any suggestions. You can send your suggestions and comments to j_baraty@acecr.ac.ir or masoud_samimi_64@yahoo.com.

Javad and Masoud

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Table of definitions and concepts:



Tourist: According to the international definition, this book uses statistics on the number of international tourists with overnight stays and does not include visitors without overnight stays.

<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance>

(PPP)

Per capita income: Purchasing power is an important indicator to express the economic power of tourists in traveling. Since international travel is considered, in this book per capita income is used in the form of PPP (purchasing power parity).

<https://databank.worldbank.org>



Population: Population data was obtained from the World Bank, but due to limited data on the religion of each country's residents, information on the Muslim population was obtained from various sources, especially from the *Pew Research Center*.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/#countries-with-more-than-100000-shia-muslims>



Shia population: Information on the Shia population was obtained from the *Pew Research Center* and research by the *Population Research Institute* <http://populstat.info>.



Per capita tourist spending: The willingness to travel, as well as the amount and type of spending by residents on travel, is not necessarily based on economic criteria but is also influenced by cultural, social and geographical factors. Therefore, per capita tourism spending is not necessarily in line with the purchasing power of residents, however, this criterion can be considered a suitable (and composite) criterion and the most important criterion in prioritizing tourism target markets. Data on tourism spending is obtained from the UNWTO

<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-data/global-and-regional-tourism-performance>



Passport power: This is one of the criteria that affects the affects travel ability. Countries with higher passport power have higher travel ability. The visa relationship between the two countries (between Iran and the country of origin) is also important. This information is based on the latest information available from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the site <https://visaindex.com>



Qualitative data: Includes information on the state of tourism as reported in the *Compendium of Tourism Statistics* and reinforced by the authors' analysis. <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284424146>



Flight information: This means whether there is a direct flight from the country of origin to Mashhad or not, based on information available from the Islamic Republic of Iran Airlines.

<https://en.caa.gov.ir/>