

# Motivational Factors of Travel to War Places in Iran

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### Abstract

Iran and Iraq war is not only the longest conventional war in 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also it is one of the most destructive wars of the world after World War II. During this long and unequal battle, brave defendants of the homeland with their unique braveries threw the violating enemy from Iran soil and created eternal epics. These eternal epics occurred with martyrdom and sacrifice of thousand children of this land and thousand soldiers were martyred in pure soil of the battle fronts. For this reason, appreciating and zealous people of Iran in years after holy defense founded tradition of visiting war zones and foothold of the soldiers and defenders of the land and this proper tradition was formed as caravans called Rahian Noor and hundred persons came to see war zones individually and collectively.

What is important is that different factors caused to motivate the persons to travel to these zones and recognition of these factors can increase travel to these zones. This research has been done with use of semi-structured interview method.

On the basis of results of this research, sacredness of the war places in Iran, values of Iranian culture, interest in seeing the left monuments and identity dependency caused to travel to battle fields in Iran.

**Keywords:** War tourism, Iran, Cultural values, National identity

### Introduction

Study on relationship between tourism and war is one of the subjects considered by the scientific meetings in some recent years. Thinkers of this field studied relationship between tourism and war in two aspects:

- 1- War had negative consequences on tourism because war challenged continuation of tourism and development of infrastructures and endangered the economy of the tourism

based zones. In fact, as the tourism is able to allow economic variety and growth, war destroys all buildings in short term.

- 2- The second relation is tourism after war. The left monuments of war are regarded as national heritage in many countries and turned into tourism charisma because war is not only bitter time, place and event, but also is an event which changes all structure of a nation or some countries. For this reason, honors, war zones, monuments, glorification ceremony of the soldiers, the prisoners etc can be converted to important motivational factors in tourism. Today, war tourism has many proponents in the world and millions of persons in different parts of the world visit war tourism charismas. This part of tourism industry in the world has been developed rapidly and many investments are made in different countries of the world in this field.

Speed of tourism growth and visiting war zones in Iran is higher than that of all kinds of tourism which has considered in its development. On the basis of informal statistics, about 5 million persons visit these zones every year. But scientific research has been done in this regard. Therefore, it is necessary to do broad studies.

### **Review of Literature**

Phenomenon of travel to the places of death and catastrophe has long record. Siton (1992) declares that tourism followed mortality since Gladiators and their competitions in Ancient Rome. Its footstep can be found in middle Ages and pilgrimage travels in places of punishment and capital punishment. Term Dark tourism was introduced by Professor John Lennon and Malcolm Noli for the first time in middle 1990s in Glasgow University.

Lennon and Foni studied different sites and places of dark tourism heritage all over the world. Battle fields and war fronts, war representation, borders, formalities, tradition and customs museum, exhibits to tombs and monuments and studied different fields and interpreted and constructed these places, war, death, terror, murder, genocide, slavery, fear and terror. Although work of these two persons was a new subject in tourism, it lacked strong and firm theoretical framework and dealt with attitude and view of suppliers and didn't include status of the consumers. We should note that since concept of dark tourism is subset of many types of tourism such as cultural, historical and heritage tourism, it is difficult to define and explain it. Therefore, dark tourism is a complex branch of tourism.

In tourism research, travels which relate to death, adversity, and cruelty, catastrophe and disaster were studied with different names of which the most balanced one is dark tourism. Other names such as mortality tourism, grief tourism, dark tourism, fear tourism, disaster tourism, and cruelty heritage tourism have been raised. However, there is no clear definition in each field.

War challenges have been studied as tourism charisma in many internal war sites in USA (Abroe, 1998; Hanink & Stutts , 2002; Greene, 1990) as well as the in places relating to World Wars of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Franza & Johnson, 1994; Martinez, 1992; Charleton, 1991; Siton, 2000 and

1999; Edwards, 2000; Slade, 2004). Vietnam War tourism sites have been important in these fields (Henderson, 2000). In Europe, interpretation of war and conflict has longer record. Use of emotional approach for interpretation of the past events relates to interoperation of controvertible interpretation (Uzzell, 1989).

In study on the reasons for travel of the tourists to the war zones, motivations have been considered compulsory and critical element in study on dark tourism or mortality tourism. On this basis, they presented models regarding motivations of the tourist. These models are as follows:

### **Plog Typology**

Plog (1974) discusses that character and motivation of the persons are related to each other. The writer divides character into two psycho centric and allocentric types. Psycho centric type relates to depressed, repressed, nervous and non-adventurous character. Relaxation and tranquility are their main motivations. On the other hand, the allocentric persons are adventurous and self confident persons. At time of travel, they are more absorbed by non-touristic zones so that they can have new experience and exploration and communicate with the persons from the strange and deserted zones. Plog typology provides important insights and views for study of the tourists' motivation in tourism generally and dark tourism particularly. For example, Tarlow believes that dark tourism is a type of spiritual tourism which is affected by nostalgia. He suggests that the person who seeks tourism nostalgia will move toward psycho centric type of Plog. Therefore, dark tourism should be presented in a method which mixes history with hazards to absorb allocentric group of the passengers.

### **The Push and Pull Model**

One of the common models relating to motivation of tourists in research and study is Dan's push and pull model. On the basis of Dan's views, pushing factors are those which direct tourist to recreational places such as sunshine, sea etc and the values which are seen so that passenger resides therewith that purpose. On the contrary, the pulling factors related to the subjects which encouraged passenger to travel such as escape from routine work, nostalgia of the past etc. Dan believes that problem of motivation will be easily solved with concentration on pulling factors.

Crompton (1979) was one of the writers who classified motivations into pushing and pulling factors and many other writers accepted this approach (for example, Bansal and Eiselt, 2004; Correia, Oom do Valle & Moco, 2007; Goossens, 2000, Kozak, 2002). Push and pull model was regarded as standard model for research and investigation of the tourists' motivations because this model is clear and it is simple to work with.

## **The Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Typology**

With similar approach of Dan (1977), Iso-Ahola (1982) suggests that the reasons of people for leisure time and tourism can be as follows: searching and escaping. The writer believes that the factors which motivate the tourist include 1-tendency to leave the life environment (extrinsic factor) and 2- tendency to obtain mental rewards (intrinsic factor) through travel to different environments. Selection of one or both of them will be effective as main reason for travel in plans and behaviors of the tourist.

## **The Travel Career Ladder**

Another model is motivation of the tourists which has been well known is travel career ladder which was created by Peers (1988). He describes five stages of the tourist's needs bottom up: need for relaxation and tranquility, need for safety/security, need for communication, need for self esteem, self confidence and need for achieving the goal. On the basis of Peers' ideas, motivation is dynamic and future oriented, is affected by social factors and grows and motivations of the people change over time. While this model has been accepted, applied and progressed in different studies, this approach was criticized by the tourism researchers. Rayan (1998) found that the persons who experienced a destination have more adjustment between demands and ability to reach their goals.

Researchers studied dark tourism motivations with use of the above models which are given in summary in the following table.

Table –summary of dark tourism motivation studies

Writer	Place	Motivations
Best (2007)	Norfolk island	Exploration and historical interests, relaxation, spending time with friends
Copper (2006)	Nagasaki Peace Park	Education, monument and curiosity
Ashtoreth (2004)		Curiosity, identity, fear and horror and symphony
Slade (2003)	Gallipoli	National roots
Siton (1999)	Waterloo	Personal relation with war, recreation and entertainment
Strange and Campa (2003)	Ruben island	Learning and exploration
Pool (2003)	Huston Holocaust Museum	Monument, education, curiosity, nostalgia, media, position etc.

In summary, motivation is one of the main factors which are raised at time of asking the dark tourism charismas visitors. There are different reasons for visiting the places relating to

mortality and catastrophe. Although all of the performed studies of dark tourism are not about battlefields tourism, this finding gives correct attitudes about battlefields tourism motivation.

## **Research Methodology**

Information gathering method was qualitative and the sampling in this section is purposeful. This method doesn't allow generalization in contrary to the probability sampling. In non-probability sampling which was used in this part of research, subjective judgment is used for selection of the sample. Qualitative sampling wants to be purposeful rather than random. Qualitative research seeks to find that there is logical coherence and random sampling can decrease this quality. Therefore, selection of the sample is derived from conceptual questions. Among the war tourism authorities, the persons were selected who had more familiarity with behavior and attitude of the visitors.

## **Findings**

Study on personal and social motivational factors in war tourism is one of the important and complex issues. Many performed studies have dealt with the reasons for formation of war tourism and broad scope of the factors has been raised. Researchers mention the most important factors among the performed interviews:

### **1- Sacredness of the war related places**

The most important factor which absorbed different classes especially the young to places relating to holy defense periods such as battlefields, tombs of the martyrs etc is spiritual space. Perhaps, it is difficult to elaborate such space. But observation of the present persons in Rahian Noor campaigns confirms such fact. With all persons who have traveled to these destinations regard them pilgrims who travel to such places with intention of closeness and due to spiritual need for spiritual space. Type and form of the travels to these regions are different from other types of travel: simple and light. For this reason, passengers don't intend to spend leisure time, especially the students who visit the war zones during the semester. Naming this type of travel as Rahian Noor and use of some tools such as keffiyeh for similarity to soldiers indicates this important aspect.

Experts believe that the most important reason for sacredness in such spaces is formation of war in Iran. Holy defense periods didn't relate to material or conquest of or demand of the government but beliefs and ideals of people after Islamic Revolution and trying to destroy the government and occupy Iran caused the people to defend against violation of Iraq and name it Holy Defense. In contrary to many wars in the world which confused the soldiers who were gambling and drinking at their leisure time in the fronts, space of fronts in Iran was full of praying and worshipping.

With reliance on religious lessons of Islam, martyrdom in the way of God and protecting the land doesn't mean death but martyrdom and the martyr has the same position as the prophets

and imams have and his afterlife is imagined to be attractive and elevated. Therefore, for those who learn such concepts, martyrdom is a wish which is realized to get close to God and those who visit battlefields and remind the martyrs see their wishes to be realized in these persons and resort to them.

Some researchers believe that deliberating such concepts as a motivation for visiting battlefields may be due to the comparisons between Iran war and other wars in the world of which dark point of similarity is more than other points. In many cases, these wars, the martyrs and the injured are only pitiful and their families are impressed by their martyrdom while culture of martyrdom in Iran is praised and encouraged. For this reason, spiritual aspect of the war is more important than dark and glooming aspect.

## **2- Defending the land, concept of national identity:**

In addition to epigeous lessons in Iranian culture, those who defend soil and land against foreign violations are praised and respected. During history of Iran, this land was attacked by the foreigners and all of those who have defended the country in different ways far from result of the wars (victory or defeat) were supported and praised by people. In fact, reminding the events occurring in the wars and braveries is regarded as symbol of national identity and even can show glory of the Iranians in contemporary history of the world. Holy defense period led to victory of Iran as one of the unequal wars in spite of power of the opposing front and is one of the honorable wars of Iran. Admitting miracle of Iran war as noted by the foreign thinkers such as Roger Garaudy confirms this fact. Many performed operations during holy defense periods were out of the classic wars common theories system and many officers of the world liked to analyze it. All of these specifications are regarded as pride for Iranian identity in addition to braveries of the soldiers who went to battlefield with empty hands. Many fathers bring their children to these fields to remind them of some events. Although it is not possible to border between religious values and Iranian culture values as factors effective on demand of war tourism, we can refer to both reasons clearly in some cases.

## **3- Visiting the left monuments of history and national heritage:**

With regard to effect of two factors mentioned above, travel of the persons and places to which they travel depend on attitude of the persons and religious and cultural dependency on the subject. Many left monuments from the historical periods may not be admired or visited by the public due to lack of cultural, religious and even national supports, holy defense issue attracts attention of two groups of visitors with the above supports:

- 1- The visitors who travel to these regions with strong religious –cultural attitude.
- 2- The visitors who go to visit the traces of war with nationalistic attitude and emphasis on Iranian entity.

Visiting relics and events occurring in the countries is one of the important motivations of global tourism. In transnational dimension, this motivation is the strongest factor in non-

Iranians travel to the war zones. Other countries are not exceptional and war zones left all over the world attract many tourists with use of this factor.

Important issue for confirming this factor is introduction of the relics left inside and outside Iran. Making documentary films with high quality and production of written material such as brochure and book are the strategies of Iran war introduction especially in important battles because wars are part of the world history which could have had considerable effect on collapse of societies or international relations. We should note that history of recording some events is determined by the historian and battlefields with political goals change in history. Travel to battlefields and visiting the events can help clarify the facts and make some parts which have been neglected. For this reason, those interested in history go to see these zones far from feeling available in the left relics of battles.

#### **4- Nostalgia**

Enthusiasm for reviewing the memoires is one of the most important motivational factor in tourism especially war tourism. All of those who lived in battlefields and had to leave their houses visit the war zones in order to recollect their sweet or bitter mementos.

In Iran, many fighters, devotes and families involved in war travel to war zones and congress is held for commemoration of the martyrs and operations in addition to visiting the zones. These persons believe that no spiritual and friendly space of that time was repeated for them after war and they visit these zones, recollect mementos and renew treaty with the martyrs. These persons are the most resistant passengers of the war zones and bring their families to these places. On the other hand, description of the events which is recited by the war survivors among the family, friends, students etc attracts other persons to the war zones.

#### **5-Media**

Experts believe that media have high ability to magnify or denounce events. In Iran, media especially national media (TV) which have high effect on thought of the people encourage the people to visit the mentioned regions because they show war documentary films including film, photo, memoires, and the combined programs.

## Other factors

Some factors are summarized in the following table.

Factor	Description
Education	War zones are informative for two reasons : 1- seeing consequences resulting from war and promotion of peace and coexistence and 2- training cognitive meanings and broad and extraordinary scope of holy defense and understanding it closely
Curiosity and location	Some visits of historical zones by the passengers relate to their travel path but this factor is weak for war zones because those who travel from southern and western cities plan and make decision to visit these zones.
Sympathy, relaxation, interest in bothersome conditions	In Iran, there are such interests but they are very weak.

Table 3-other factors effective on demand of war tourists according to the experts

The experts were asked to score the factors from 1 to 10 of which results are as follows:

Effective factors	Total score
Holiness of the place	150
Iranian culture values	128
Seeing the relics and monuments	140
Reinforcing national identity	145
Interest in history	133
National heritage	131
Media	137
Curiosity	70
Nostalgia	102
Education	106
Others (sympathy etc)	48

Table 4: total weight of factors effective on demand of war tourism according to the experts

## Conclusion

Many countries which incurred heavy damages due to different wars considered war tourism as important channel for achieving their goals after elapse of renovation periods in order to introduce events occurring in the country and reinforce their position in international level and even to do political, economic and cultural exploitation. Japan and Vietnam were among these countries.



Sustainable development approach which is one of the global goals for preserving resources of the country is mixed with development of new types of tourism such as war tourism. War tourism is one of the postmodern tourism forms of which principles are based on protection of the built relics and war tourists rarely damage cultural and biological environment of the tourism zones in contrary to recreational tourism. War tourists make effort to protect the available relics.

In this research, the basic issue of war tourism in Iran i.e. reasons for travel to war zones was studied. Goal of selecting this subject is to recognize factors effective on demand of war tourism and their effects. These factors were studied from the points of view of the travelers to war zones because visitors are the most important source for recognizing motivations. Recognition of these factors can provide suitable perspective for compiling short-term and long-term development programs for such tourism.

According to the experts, religious and Iranian values, belief in national heritage and identity of holy defense and recollecting those days are the most important reasons for traveling to war zones.

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