



Case study

An investigation of tourists' attitudes towards promoting music niche tourism (case study: Isfahan, Iran)



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ABSTRACT

Niche tourism can be a novel strategy for preserving specific heritage. Music tourism, art tourism, literary tourism, architectural tourism etc. constitute good examples. This paper highlights the introduction of Isfahan city (Iran) as a new music tourism destination. Moreover, this research has four major purposes: 1) to identify the attractions and heritage for promoting music tourism in Isfahan; 2) to investigate the attitude of tourists towards music tourism development; 3) to measure tourists' awareness of this niche market; and 4) to measure the attitude of tourists towards participating in music tours. This study was conducted in Isfahan, Iran. On the basis of the results of this study it can be concluded that domestic tourists are not familiar with the music tourism concept; however, domestic and international tourists are interested in music tourism development in Isfahan city and they have a high interest in participating in music tours.

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1. Introduction

According to Robinson and Novelli (2005), niche tourism is in opposition to mass tourism and represents diversity and ways of marking difference. Since niche tourism emphasises specific products, it can be said that it is a new sustainable tourism model for preserving, conserving and reviving natural heritage and tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In 2015, World Tourism Day highlighted the theme 'One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities' – a theme that needs to be realised for niche tourism to emerge. Furthermore, niche tourism attracts tourists who are more interested and spend more in the destinations (Weiler & Hall, 1992). Hence, niche tourism is a sustainable economic model in tourism development. This study has its emphasis on music niche tourism. Music is an art form and cultural activity which attracts many tourists to destinations. Therefore, music niche tourism – which emerged recently – could be considered under the umbrella of cultural tourism or art tourism. For the development of niche tourism in a destination, a study of audience and place are two key components (Robinson & Novelli, 2005). The primary purpose of this study is to introduce Isfahan city, Iran, as a place which has a high potential for promoting music niche tourism. In addition, this paper aims to investigate the attitude of audiences (domestic and international tourists) towards the development of music tourism in Isfahan.

2. Literature review

Nowadays, music as tangible (musical instruments) and intangible (musical instrument sounds; singing; folk music; traditional music etc.) heritage attracts many tourists to music tourism destinations. The history of music tourism dates back to the activity of the Grand Tour in Britain. According to Gibson and Connell (2005), the Grand Tour started organizing modern tourism in Europe in attending concerts and recitals or acquiring new musical skills, perhaps the first significant music tourism. After that, nineteenth-century Europe and North America engaged visitors with visits to the great cities where they sampled operas, theatre, ballets and concerts of various kinds, and military bands entertained passers-by in the gardens of cities such as Vienna. Furthermore, tourists travel to Bayreuth, in southern Germany, the birthplace and home of the composer Richard Wagner. Recently, some destinations such as Vienna, Salzburg, Paris, New York, USA (notably in Harlem for jazz music); Lisbon, Portugal (Lisbon for Portuguese Fado music) and Seville, Spain (Flamenco music and dance) are well-known places for music tourism. Moreover, some music festivals such as historic Bach festivals, historic electronic music festivals, and historic hip-hop music festivals, historic jazz, rock and heavy metal festivals attempt to attract audiences to the destinations. In a research in Bali, Johnson (2002) illustrated that promoting Balinese music brought financial gain and brought communities together, and preserved traditional music in the region. In addition, Saldanha (2002) introduced Goa as a music tourism destination in India and believed that music tourism enables social differentiation in the multiracial touristic environment of Goa. Gibson and Connell (2005) in their book, explained about the evolution of music from music tours to niche market and

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classified musical landscapes as: sites of creativity; place of performance; sites of production: recording studios; show towns; niche package tours; guided tours; music in tourism campaigns and lyrical places. It is noteworthy that music may be an important influence in shaping the typically hybrid identities of people and places and it can contribute in important ways to the well-being of people and places and have positive impacts on peoples' lives (Hudson, 2006). Further, in another research, Gibson and Connell (2007) studied the complex links between tourism, music and place in the case study of Memphis (USA). The result illustrated that music tourism not only may create pathways for new kinds of social encounters or reify racial divisions and exclusions but can also and generate income and employment. Leaver and Schmidt (2009) enquired into the nature of music-based tourism in the context of the childhood locations of music icons from the 1950s and 1960s and the data (interview forms) was collected through a snowball sampling method; the results indicated that music-based tourism offers towns and cities the opportunity to further develop elements of their tourist-based economies and the demographic base of the music-based tourism market segment is widening to include both "baby-boomers" and younger visitors. Moreover, Kaul (2013) in his study in Irish village illustrated that lively music plays an important role in attracting more tourists to the destination. Music provides an important and emotive narrative for tourists, as an expression of culture, a form of heritage, a signifier of place, and a marker of moments (Lashua, Spracklen, & Long, 2014). Lastly, Rommen and Neely (2014) noted that in recent decades, the Caribbean region has attracted audiences under the motto of new 3S (Sun, Sea, and Sound). Therefore, it can be concluded that recently, sound is named and known as tourist attraction around the world. It is worth mentioning that a music tourism convention will be held (February 2017; Liverpool, Merseyside, UK) to explore how music impacts, benefits and improves tourism offers, from festivals to heritage, music trails to food and music partnerships.

It is noteworthy that music tourism is a current consideration in Iran. The study of Ziyari and Sadeghi (2011) was specifically concerned with the effect of music and folk music on the tourism development of Qeshm Island, Iran; the clearest result of the investigation is that music and especially folk music can not only help to promote tourism on the island but also preserves folk music as a cultural component. Furthermore, Eftekharian (2013) in his thesis entitled "Music tourism: a novel strategy in promoting tourism of Iran" introduced Iran's traditional music as an attraction and investigated the effect of Iranian music and musical instruments on attracting tourists. Moreover, Tajzadeh Namin and Hashemzadeh (2014) highlighted that music festivals can promote tourism in the case study of Azerbaijan and Iran and that tourism can be a strategy for preserving folk music.

Nevertheless, no significant work has been undertaken in the field of music niche tourism to investigate the attitude of tourists towards the development of music tourism. Besides, up to this time, there exists

Table 1
Heritage in Isfahan city for the promotion of music tourism.

Division	Sub-division	Frequency	
A	Tangible heritage	A1 Musical artists	10
		A2 Isfahan Music Museum	9
		A3 Art university of Isfahan and art schools	5
		A4 Private art schools and institutes	4
		A5 Historical monuments and houses related to music such as music hall, palaces, bridges, bathhouses etc.	10
		A6 Musical instrument production workrooms	5
		A7 Singers and musicians' works	1
B	Intangible heritage	B1 Isfahan music school	4
		B2 Music of religious minorities	3
		B3 Ethnic minorities' music	1
		B4 Talent of young musicians	2

no solid research which takes into consideration music tourism in a case study of Isfahan.

3. Case study

This study was conducted in the city of Isfahan. Isfahan is a city in central Iran, south of Tehran and is the capital of Isfahan Province. The city was an ancient town and capital of Persia from 1598 to 1722. In addition, the city has a great potential for cultural and art tourism. Isfahan (or Esfahan) music school is one of the five Iranian traditional music schools (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz-xy1P4Un0>). Isfahan is a famous city in the history of Iran traditional music and many music celebrities were born, lived and worked in the city. *Seyed Abdol Rahim Esfahani*; *Jalal Taj Esfahani* (musical artist); *Hassan Kasaei* (a famous player of Persian classical music and player of Ney, the traditional reed flute of Persia/Iran); *Jalil Shahmaz* (one of the greatest maestros of Persian classical music and a virtuoso of the tar); *Mirza Ali Ghari*; *Esmail Adib Khansari* (musical artist and artist in folk music); *Ali Asghar Shahzeydi* (musical artist) etc. constitute good examples. Moreover, the Music Hall in *Ali Qapu* Palace and *Abbasi* Hotel, which have various ensembles and where music is performed and songs are sung (deep circular niches are found in the walls, which have not only aesthetic value, but also acoustic) (Fig. 1) are another music tourist attraction in Isfahan. *Khaju Bridge* which is a bridge in the city of Isfahan is another tourist attraction where the tourists can experience live traditional music (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cru8sLtl008&list=PLjpQ2Qy5L5o2pK04riauNz1hUzZTWGdcf&index=3>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49_mrRrXUDk&index=2&list=PLjpQ2Qy5L5o2pK04riauNz1hUzZTWGdcf; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49_mrRrXUDk&index=2&list=PLjpQ2Qy5L5o2pK04riauNz1hUzZTWGdcf; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JePhR0U8EQ8&list=PLjpQ2Qy5L5o2pK04riauNz1hUzZTWGdcf>).



A



B

Fig. 1. A: Ali Qapu palace; B: music hall in Ali Qapu palace (Isfahan, Iran).

(Source: <http://www.makanbin.com/isfahan/?place=%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%BE%D9%88>).

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