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Investigating the Impact of Cultural Tourists on the **Establishment of Friendly Relations and Peace in the World**

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Abstract

Cultural tourism is the cornerstone of understanding the cultures of nations. This form of tourism facilitates cultural exchange and plays an undeniable role in the 2024-10-28 development of international relations. This research, which is applied in purpose and descriptive-analytical in method, based on both documentary and field studies, aims to explore the effects of cultural heritage tourism on strengthening friendly 2025-02-21 relations between nations and promoting global peace. The Golestan and Saadabad Palaces in Tehran were selected as the case study, and the tourists visiting these two **Keywords:** palaces were chosen as the research sample. The field data for the study were Cultural tourism collected through a researcher-designed questionnaire, based on variables related to cultural heritage tourism, tangible and intangible heritage, and global peace. Due to Cultural tourists the unclear definition of the statistical population, the sample size was determined Friendly relations using Cochran's formula, resulting in a sample of 321. However, 273 complete and Global peace valid questionnaires were collected. SPSS software was used for data processing, and Pearson correlation tests were employed for data analysis. The results indicate that cultural heritage tourists play a significant role in enhancing friendly relations and contributing to a peaceful global environment. This role is attributed to the tourists' familiarity with cultural heritage and the modification of pre-existing attitudes. Most tourists acknowledged the transformation of their previously ambiguous and sometimes hostile attitudes into a friendly and amicable atmosphere.

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Introduction

International tourism remains one of the most significant channels for cultural exchange, offering personal experiences that encompass not only the past but also the present society. Cultural tourism plays a crucial role in fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting the exchange of knowledge between nations. Iran, with its vast geographical expanse and rich civilization, holds immense potential for developing cultural tourism. Its long history and cultural heritage provide a strong foundation for such growth (Ghadiri Massoum et al., 2011).

Tourism, by fostering mutual understanding among nations, plays a key role in advancing global peace and promoting cultural connectivity. The political significance of tourism has emerged as a major factor in establishing international credibility. As a widespread form of cultural exchange, tourism positions travelers as cultural ambassadors, helping to nurture and adapt various cultures. It serves as a platform for dialogue between people from different backgrounds, ultimately enriching all cultures involved. Tourism is one of the most powerful means of introducing diverse traditions and cultures to different nations, as tourists naturally engage with the local culture upon visiting foreign countries. International tourism, by definition, brings people from various parts of the world together, allowing them to interact and explore new perspectives, fostering deeper connections. In today's world, the interconnection of cultures and civilizations is seen as crucial to global survival, and the tourism industry holds significant potential to contribute to the realization of global peace (Jafari Nejad, 1997, pp. 269-270).

Sometimes, due to political circumstances and lack of understanding, relations between countries deteriorate. Alongside such relations, the media become active in tarnishing the image of countries, imposing a negative perception of the tourism destinations of other countries, which often deviates from the reality. In this context, tourism is considered one of the best ways to improve a country's image. On one hand, by increasing local community participation, an unfiltered image of the destination is reflected (Manhas et al., 2023), and on the other hand, due to the direct and immediate perceptions of tourists, a realistic and credible image is communicated to the world (Antari et al., 2023). For this reason, Monteiro et al. (2024) argue that tourism, as a driver of peace, has become an appealing topic for academic professionals, and gradually, the concept of peace has established itself as a cultural pillar within the tourism industry (Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010).

To secure its share of the global tourism market, every country must establish a unique position within the international community. Achieving this requires effectively introducing its culture, history, customs, and traditions to other nations. Tourism offers a valuable opportunity for people from different cultural and national backgrounds to interact in a safe and uninterrupted environment. This setting provides an ideal platform to present an authentic and true image of each country and society. Tourists, particularly cultural tourists, serve as ambassadors for their countries, and in many ways, they act as

ambassadors of peace and friendship between nations and civilizations. Their impartiality and openmindedness contribute to fostering mutual understanding. For any country to thrive and succeed, it is essential for these ambassadors to share a positive perspective and offer a more favorable portrayal of other nations. Given the negative global perception of Iran and the broader Middle East, the role of cultural tourism in shifting this narrative becomes even more critical. It presents a unique opportunity to alter global views, particularly towards Iran.

Research questions

Is there a significant relationship between cultural heritage tourism and the establishment of friendly relations between nations, as well as global peace?

To what extent does cultural heritage tourism contribute to the creation of a friendly and peaceful world?

The background and theoretical literature of research

Humankind is currently witnessing and shaping the most significant and rapid paradigm shift in history—one that encompasses profound demographic, economic, ecological, and geopolitical changes. For the first time in human history, we face not just one crisis, but a convergence of multiple crises each global in scope and not confined to a single tribe, community, nation, or region. Addressing these global challenges will require an equally historic paradigm shift. This shift must be driven by a strong environmental ethic that restores ecological balance and addresses the critical issue of climate change. It must also involve an economic system that eradicates poverty and promotes sustainable prosperity, while bringing an end to war as a means of conflict resolution. Only through a united global family, living in harmony and peace, can we tackle the unprecedented issues facing our shared planet and our collective future. The travel and tourism industry has, and will continue to play, a vital role in advancing this paradigm shift. As the world's largest industry, involving nearly every nation, tourism is a central pillar in the movement for Peace through Commerce. Beginning with the rise of "Ecotourism" in the late 1980s, an increasing number of tourism segments have emerged under the broad category of "Peace Tourism," which includes peace within ourselves, peace with others, peace with nature, peace with past generations, peace with future generations, and peace with our Creator. Since its inception in 1986, the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) has championed these values, envisioning Travel and Tourism as the world's first "Global Peace Industry"-an industry that promotes the belief that every traveler is potentially an "Ambassador for Peace." This "higher purpose of tourism" involves tourism's key role in fostering international understanding, environmental protection, cultural enhancement, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and healing the wounds of conflict (D'Amore, 2010).

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According to Bordignon et al. (2009), the cultural heritage of each country is a global asset shared by all the people of the world, fostering a sense of unity and peace among nations. Kim's 2006 study indicates that residents perceive the development of international tourism as influencing both national and international policies. The research further highlights tourism's significant role in fostering peaceful relations between countries, even those with historically hostile relations (Kim & Prideaux, 2006, p. 124). In a study conducted in 2014, Shahramnia and colleagues concluded that cultural diplomacy plays a critical role in promoting peace and security among nations. Their findings emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence, the exchange of cultural relations, and international cooperation, ultimately contributing to the formation of a global community centered on human rights and peace-building (Shahramnia et al., 2014). Zargham Borujani and Khosrovani Dehkordi (2012) found that experts regard tourism as having a minimal impact on increasing tensions or conflict between countries, while having a moderate effect on reducing war and hostilities (Zargham Borujani & Khosrovani Dehkordi, 2012). Additionally, Ghadiri Massoum et al. (2011) concluded that both domestic and international tourism are key drivers for the development of cultural tourism and cultural exchange. Their research suggests that tourism not only offers insights into the past but also enhances present-day societies, fostering more positive and realistic perceptions among tourists towards the host countries (Ghadiri Massoum et al., 2011).

Tourism is, in fact, a cultural activity that provides a platform for interaction between individuals and different communities (Pearce, 1990). In this interactive setting, the authentic and unfiltered image of communities and cultures is showcased (Ferraz & Serpa, 2021). Perhaps the most important of these is the presentation of a real image, free from media controversies, which can ultimately convey the message of peace and friendship to the world through tourists (Becken & Carmignani, 2016). In fact, peace and friendship are among the most significant intangible and spiritual products of tourism, which can be considered one of the best kinds of souvenirs exchanged between nations.

Tangible and Intangible Heritage

Cultural tourism is based on the heritage and culture of different nations and societies (Suryani, 2024). The cultural heritage of nations is divided into two main categories. Tangible heritage refers to cultural entities that can be touched, seen, and measured, while intangible heritage refers to the meaningful and comprehensible aspects of tangible heritage (Makhloufi, 2024). Together, these two are considered one of the most significant attractions of tourism and serve as the main driving force behind the development of tourism worldwide (Tekeli, 2024).

Cultural Tourism

The term "cultural tourism" can be traced back to the 1967 International Scientific Congress on Cultural Tourism in Oxford, where it was suggested that the concept holds the potential to foster a new humanism and serve as a vital means of ensuring global human equilibrium and the enrichment of human identity. In essence, cultural tourism refers to travel motivated by cultural interests (Mousavi & Bagheri Keshkoli, 2013). In cultural tourism, the spatial and social distances between individuals and cultures act as a form of attraction (Mousavi & Bagheri Keshkoli, 2013). In a more specific sense, cultural tourism includes private trips primarily motivated by cultural interests, such as visiting historical sites, museums, galleries, attending artistic performances and festivals, exploring the lifestyles of various communities, and engaging in other community-based cultural activities, often alongside entertainment (Ziaee & Mirzaee, 2011).

One of the most significant definitions of cultural tourism emerged in the 1990s from the International Scientific Committee for Cultural Tourism. According to this definition, cultural tourism is an activity that allows individuals to experience the lifestyles of others. In its initial phase, it provides an understanding of traditions, customs, physical environments, mental beliefs, and cultural concepts—such as architectural, historical, and archaeological sites—that have been preserved through time (Mousavi & Bagheri Kashkoli, 2013).

Cultural Tourists

Cultural tourists are typically highly educated individuals with a deep appreciation for culture and cultural capital. Culture serves as their primary motivation for travel. Additionally, they often have high incomes, resulting from their excellent job positions, which enable them to travel year-round. Traditionally, cultural tourists tend to be older than other types of tourists, with some being retired, thus having more free time to explore different parts of the world. It is important to note, however, that cultural tourists are not the only visitors attracted to cities rich in cultural capital. Most tourists visiting such cities include at least one cultural site in their travel plans (Mousavi & Bagheri Kashkoli, 2013).

These tourists are deeply interested in the cultural capital of a destination and eager to experience it in its entirety, as they seek to enhance their own cultural knowledge through these new encounters. As a result, cultural tourists are highly valued by the tourism market. They play a crucial role in the demand for cultural tourism and are the most frequent consumers of cultural capital. Moreover, they represent one of the most influential demographic groups, shaping the tastes and behaviors associated with the consumption of cultural products (In't Veld et al., 2006, p. 31).

Friendly Relations and World Peace

One of the key provisions of the Declaration on Tourism Rights and Tourism Jobs, adopted at the Sixth World Tourism Organization Meeting in 1985 in Bulgaria, states that tourism must contribute to the establishment of lasting peace and promote mutual understanding, understanding, and friendship among nations on both national and international levels through the behaviors and actions of tourists. This concept is integral to peace tourism, which implies that tourism, in general, fosters peace, security, and harmony across the world. Every tourist, therefore, is seen as an ambassador of peace, helping to build bridges of friendship and understanding between their culture and the host community (Papeli Yazdi & Saghaei, 2009).

In 1945, UNESCO also recognized the importance of cultural diversity. The organization emphasized that mutual understanding among people, through the free exchange of ideas, the advancement of education, and the dissemination of culture and knowledge, is central to its mission. According to the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, achieving world peace, intercultural dialogue, and respect for cultural diversity is essential. This declaration, updated in Paris in 2001, positions cultural diversity as a common heritage of humanity, vital for exchange, innovation, and creativity. It underscores the need to preserve cultural diversity as a fundamental human right to ensure the continuity of human life and well-being across generations (Reisinger et al., 2016).

Every day, millions of people come together through travel and tourism. These encounters extend beyond tourists themselves, as local residents—who may not have the means to travel—also gain new experiences by interacting with people from different cultures. Undoubtedly, tourism helps shape our perceptions of the world, offering a rich and nuanced understanding of various societies. These interactions naturally reduce prejudice, foster new insights, and improve our understanding of other cultures and communities (Wintersteiner & Wohmutour, 2014, pp. 36-37)

Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, discusses the concept of "universal hospitality" in his essay Perpetual Peace (1795). In the Third Definitive Article of the essay, he states, "The right of hospitality refers to the right of a stranger to visit a foreign land without being treated as an enemy." Kant distinguishes between the right to visit and the right to stay, emphasizing that a foreigner's visit does not grant property rights or permanent residence. Rather, it provides the right to temporary residence based on a "charitable agreement" and mutual understanding between nations. This philosophy reflects the shared ownership of Earth and the need for peaceful coexistence. Kant's "Universal Citizenship Law," advocating for hospitality, remains foundational to his vision of a peaceful world order. It links global human rights with national legal systems and, in today's globalized world, underscores the importance of global citizenship.

Tourism plays a crucial role in fostering global peace by promoting the idea of universal citizenship. By celebrating the planet's beauty and the diversity of cultures, tourism can serve as a tool for fostering political dialogue and peace. While tourism alone cannot achieve this goal, it can be a powerful component of a broader cultural system and educational strategy aimed at peace. Sensitive tourism, which prioritizes intercultural understanding and mutual respect, can enhance the global citizenship concept, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious world (Wintersteiner & Wohmutour, 2014, pp. 41-42).

Based on the studies conducted on cultural tourism and peace, as well as the extraction of research indicators, the following model has been proposed for the study.



Figure 1. Conceptual model, Based on Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

This research is applied in terms of its objective and descriptive-analytical in terms of methodology, based on documentary and field studies. The field data of the research were collected through a questionnaire based on the theoretical literature of the study and the opinions of foreign tourists visiting the Saadabad and Golestan Palaces. Given the unlimited nature of the statistical population, the sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula, resulting in 321 individuals, of which 237 complete and analyzable questionnaires were collected. The validity of the questionnaire was assessed by experts and professors in tourism studies, and necessary changes were made based on their feedback, leading to the final version of the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was also measured using Cronbach's alpha, which was 0.882, indicating good reliability. Data processing was carried out using SPSS software, and descriptive statistics and inferential tests, such as Pearson correlation and linear regression, were used for data analysis.

Introducing the Research Field

This research aims to explore the relationship between international tourists and cultural heritage. The study focuses on two significant locations in Tehran: the Sa'd Abad Museum Palace and the Golestan Museum Palace. These sites were chosen due to their cultural and historical importance, as well as their prominence among international cultural tourists visiting Tehran.

Additionally, sites such as Persepolis, which played a central role during the Achaemenid period, serve as important cultural landmarks. Throughout Iranian history, places like these have been significant for national and international relations, including during the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties. Following the Islamic Revolution, some of these palaces were repurposed for diplomatic functions and cultural exchanges. They continue to attract visitors interested in exploring Iran's rich history and Islamic heritage. Consequently, these locations offer a wealth of information that is central to the research topic.

Data Analysis

To measure the variables, a Likert-scale questionnaire was developed and distributed among tourists visiting the Sa'd Abad and Golestan Museums. A total of 321 questionnaires were distributed, of which 273 completed responses were collected and analyzed using Pearson statistical tests and linear regression.

To address the research question—whether there is a significant relationship between the presence of cultural tourists and the establishment of friendly relations among nations and global peace—the Pearson correlation test was employed.

Additionally, to assess the extent of cultural heritage tourism's impact on fostering a friendly and peaceful world, linear regression analysis was used. The Pearson correlation test was applied to examine whether a meaningful relationship exists between cultural heritage tourism and global peace. This test also helped determine whether cultural heritage tourism plays a positive or negative role in establishing a peaceful and friendly world.

The results from the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a significant positive relationship between cultural heritage tourism and world peace, with correlation values ranging from 0 to +1.

A linear regression test was conducted to determine the positive or negative role of cultural heritage tourism in promoting a friendly and peaceful world. The results indicate that this relationship is significant. According to the beta coefficient, cultural heritage tourism has a measurable impact on the dependent variable, which is global peace and friendliness. The findings suggest that cultural heritage tourism plays an effective role in contributing to the establishment of a peaceful and friendly world.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Two Variables of Cultural Heritage Tourism and Peace and
Peace Relations (Based on Researcher Findings, 2017)

		Cultural heritage tourism	Friendly relationship and global peace	
Cultural heritage tourism	Pearson correlation	**0,673	1	
	Significance level	0,000		
	Number of observation	273	273	
Friendly relationship and global peace	Pearson correlation	1	**0,673	
	Significance level		0,000	
	Number of observation	273	273	

Note: The values marked with two stars (**) represent a significant level of 99%.

 Table 2. Regression Analysis of the Impact of Cultural Heritage Tourism on Friendly Relations and
 Global Peace (Based on Researcher Findings, 2017)

Independent variable (forward)	The dependent variable	R	R Square	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Cultural heritage tourism	Friendly relationship and global peace	^a 0,673	0,454	5,543	0,673	14,998	0,000

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that cultural heritage tourism plays a positive role in fostering friendly relations between nations and promoting global peace. This suggests that cultural heritage tourism is an influential factor in the establishment of a more peaceful and harmonious world. In this regard, it can be stated that many tourists, when filling out the questionnaire, spoke about the beauty and grandeur of Iranian culture and the eye-catching nature of Iranian architecture. From their perspective, visiting Iran significantly changed their overall attitude towards the country. For them, experiencing Iranian culture created many positive points to share with family and friends as one of the most important behaviors after the trip.

This result aligns with the findings of researchers such as D'Amore (2010), who suggested that cultural heritage tourism can serve as a solution to reduce conflicts between nations by promoting a global sense of harmony and peace. In his study, De Amour emphasized that tourism plays a key role in fostering international understanding and cooperation. Similarly, Kim & Prideaux (2006) concluded that tourism has contributed significantly to the development of peaceful relations between previously hostile countries.

Based on the research findings, cultural heritage tourism accounts for 67% of the impact on establishing a friendly and peaceful world. Therefore, cultural tourism offers a valuable foundation for international and intercultural communication. It serves as an effective means of shifting tourists' perspectives, encouraging them to respect the cultures and customs of other nations. By fostering an open-minded approach to cultural differences, tourists can enhance their knowledge, cultural awareness, and overall experience. Positive impact of cultural heritage tourism on friendly relations will lead to the creation of both mental and physical security, thereby increasing trust between societies and cultures. Security and trust foster a sense of satisfaction, which, at a higher level, leads to loyalty and a return visit to the destination.

Consistent with these findings, Hezar Jaribi (2011) argue that there is a positive and direct relationship between tourists' sense of security and their willingness to stay or revisit a destination. In another study, they stated that foreign tourists have a high level of trust in our country, which results in a strong tendency among tourists to revisit. According to the researcher's findings, tourists reported feeling a high sense of security and comfort, which led them to express a willingness to return to Iran and encourage others to visit.

Similarly, Zargham Borujani and Khosrovani Dehkordi (2012) suggest that tourism contributes to reducing hostility and increasing empathy, and it has a moderate effect on lowering the levels of conflict and tension between nations. These conclusions are supported by both the research findings and field observations, which indicate that cultural tourism plays a significant role in fostering a culture of peace while also reducing conflicts and war.

Therefore, cultural heritage tourism has a positive role in establishing friendly relations with other nations and promoting global peace. Cultural tourists, who respect the cultures and customs of other countries without harboring fanatical views on cultural differences, use these differences as opportunities to broaden their cultural knowledge and experience. This mindset enables them to become positive ambassadors, showcasing the true image of the host country to both local and international communities. In this regard, cultural heritage tourists can be seen as messengers of peace and friendship worldwide.

Given Iran's considerable potential for cultural heritage tourism, and its ability to promote peace and friendship through these tourists, these opportunities should be strategically harnessed to create a positive global image of Iran. By doing so, Iran can present itself to the world as a nation with a rich, multi-thousand-year-old culture and civilization, one that is stable and secure, as it truly deserves.

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