

Health Tourists in Iran and Cultural Prejudices

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Abstract : The tourism industry is important for different nations in two ways. Apart from economic benefits, it provides a basis for getting acquainted with the culture of different regions of the world. Depending on the capacities and contexts of their geography, countries try to attract more people to their country in different ways. Health tourism has been an important branch of the tourism industry in recent years, and many countries around the world are trying to make progress in this field and attract many tourists from around the world. Iran, like many developing countries in the Middle East and East Asia, is trying to improve and develop tourist attractions in the field of health. Due to the cheapness of providing medical services to tourists, many people have traveled to Iran for medical and health care. However, there is a long way to go before recognizing and reaching the desired position in this field. Due to the direct relationship between tourism and culture, the negative attitude towards the context of Iran has caused foreign travelers not to choose this country as their tourist destination. In this article, we tried to study the change in their attitude towards Iran by using semi-structured interviews of foreign travelers who traveled to Iran for treatment and medical services. The text of the interviews was coded and analyzed by MAX QDA software. Many of the people in the sample were from Middle Eastern and Arabic-speaking countries. Influenced by the media, they felt rejected by the Iranians before the trip. During their stay in Iran and in connection with the health care staff, in the first stage, they pointed out that many of their anxieties about the kind of treatment of Iranians have been allayed. In addition to the satisfaction with the medical services provided, they considered the atmosphere of Iranians' interaction with foreign travelers to be relatively appropriate, and some stated that Iran would be the destination of their leisure trip in the future. At the end of the research, policymakers were suggested that in order to resolve cultural contradictions rooted in values, they should first be recognized and seek to use other opportunities to resolve contradictions and form interactions with other cultures.

Keywords : cultural conflict, health tourism, cultural prejudice, advertising and media

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