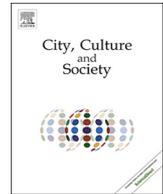




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# A study on tourists' tendency towards intangible cultural heritage as an attraction (case study: Isfahan, Iran)

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Intangible cultural heritage  
Isfahan  
Iran  
Tendency  
Tourism

## ABSTRACT

Human civilization is a set of material and immaterial achievements, none of which was produced without the other. Intangible cultural heritage and spiritual heritage are part of the achievements of human civilizations that give them identity. Isfahan is a city known for its tangible cultural attractions such as Islamic architecture, handicrafts, palaces, Persian gardens, etc. However, it has much intangible cultural heritage that tourists are not familiar with and which is not considered as a tourist attraction. This paper's concern is to study intangible cultural heritage of the city of Isfahan (Iran) as a new tourist attraction. Moreover, this research has three major purposes: 1) to investigate the tendency of tourists towards intangible heritage; 2) to measure tourists' awareness of intangible heritage; and 3) to determine the priority of intangible heritage attractions and activities from the domestic tourists' perspective. On the basis of the results of this study it can be concluded that domestic tourists are not familiar with the concept of intangible cultural heritage. However, tourists are interested in intangible heritage attractions and activities, especially in cooking and tasting local foods, making and tasting local sweets, traditional medicine and medicinal plants and gaining a certain level of skill in producing traditional crafts.

## 1. Introduction

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has been defined in UNESCO's 2003 Convention as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage". Accordingly, the term Intangible Cultural Heritage refers to oral traditions and expression, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2003; Van Zanten, 2004). Intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from past generations to present and future generations and is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, nature and history. According to some authors (Gonzalez, 2008; Lenzerini, 2011; Robertson, 2009; Shahi & Khorshid, 2013; Smuka, 2016) ICH brings a sense of identity to communities.

In 2015, World Tourism Day highlighted the theme 'One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities' – a theme that needs to be realised for creative new attractions, activities and experiences to emerge. This study tries to identify ICH as a new tourism product and in this regard, there is a need to evaluate tourists' trends as customers. Novelli

(2005) highlighted place and audience studies for promoting a new tourism product in a destination and indicated the relation between the demand and the supply side. Since there is a relation between demand and supply, tourism demand should be studied to enable ICH to be identified as a tourism product. Furthermore, before bringing ICH into the market, studies should be carried out on whether tourists will welcome it, whether the tourists have enough awareness of the products and which sub-products are more attractive to them.

Hence, the primary purpose of this study is to study the ICH of Isfahan, Iran, as a tourist attraction. In addition, this paper aims to investigate the tendency and awareness of audiences (domestic tourists as the most important customers for this market) towards ICH in Isfahan.

## 2. Literature review

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) believed that heritage is actually a new mode of cultural production that gives a second life to dying ways of life, economies and places. Peckham (2003) noted that heritage carries two related meanings: 1) it is associated with tourism and with sites of historical interest that have been preserved for the nation; 2) it is used to describe a set of shared values and collective memories. It is

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2018.11.001>

Received 4 November 2017; Received in revised form 22 March 2018; Accepted 8 November 2018

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noteworthy that politics and economics are two pillars giving added value to cultural heritage (Bendix, 2009).

Since the Second World War, UNESCO has preserved and supported a series of world heritage items, starting with tangible heritage, natural heritage and most recently intangible heritage as metacultural production (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (ICH) was adapted by the UNESCO Conference held in October 2003 (Blake, 2008) with the aim of safeguarding the representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques that communities, groups and even individuals used in their culture (UNESCO, 2003). ICH is appreciated as a source of cultural identity, creativity and diversity (Bouchenaki, 2003; Smeets, 2004). Cultural traditions, cultural identity and cultural aspirations give meaning and value to the environment (Robertson, 2009). ICH creates bridges between past, present and future (Petronela, 2016). Lenzerini (2011) argued that there is a positive relation between safeguarding ICH and human rights. Besides, the study on Robben Island (South Africa) illustrated that sites of intangible heritage heavily emphasise symbolic interpretations of meaning (Deacon, 2004). Furthermore, in recent decades, ICH has become one of the main motivations for travel, with tourists seeking to engage with new cultures and experience the variety of performing arts, handicrafts, rituals, cuisines and interpretations of nature and the universe (UNWTO, 2003). However, there are some tensions between protection and commodification of ICH as a new issue in the interdisciplinary field of heritage tourism (Su, 2018). Since the emphasis on this paper is on tourism, below we discuss the positive and negative views of tourism on ICH.

Gonzalez (2008) investigated the relationship between existential intangible tourism and personal identity in Spain and the results indicated that intangible heritage tourism can provide a source of identity separate from local places. In addition, Ma and Wang (2008) suggested that ICH knowledge should be transformed into tourism products and in order to preserve it they urged three strategies: 1) the establishment of museums of ICH which present heritage in a static state, and preferably protect the authenticity of ICH; 2) the creation of theme parks for ICH which rebuild the authenticity of ICH and virtualize the experience space; and 3) real-life scenery stages based on people's performing activities. It can be said that the real-life scenery stage is the best strategy for transforming ICH into a tourism product. Besides, Keitumetse and Nthoi (2009) demonstrated that in the developing world, giving a site World Heritage status is likely to encourage tourism, and the impact on the resident community's intangible heritage must be considered and safeguarded.

George (2010) stated that the tourism industry derives significant economic benefits from local ICH. A major moral and ethical issue comes from the tourism industry's failure to recognize the monetary value of local ICH in its tourism production and to fairly compensate the local producers and creators (communities). Timothy (2011) noted that tangible heritage and intangible heritage are both important elements of the cultural tourism offering and ICH indeed embodies much of the tourism product. Rodzi, Zaki, and Subli (2013) looked at tourism and ICH and mentioned that tourism on one hand attracts tourists and benefits the locals and on the other hand can damage ICH and transform it into a cultural good or practice. According to UNWTO (2012), tourism can be a powerful catalyst for local cultural reproduction and revitalisation, even though it may also pose a danger to those cultural aspects that communities wish to consciously protect from over-commodification. Smuka (2016) employed structured interviews and observation to examine the impact of the use of ICH on the development of the territory. The results illustrated that activities and events organized in the territory did not pay particular attention to ICH as a tourism product, while preservation of intangible heritage through tourism increases the awareness of the community's national identity and promotes the economic and social development of the society in the long term.

Lastly, Sammells (2014) argued that inscribing ICH in the UNESCO

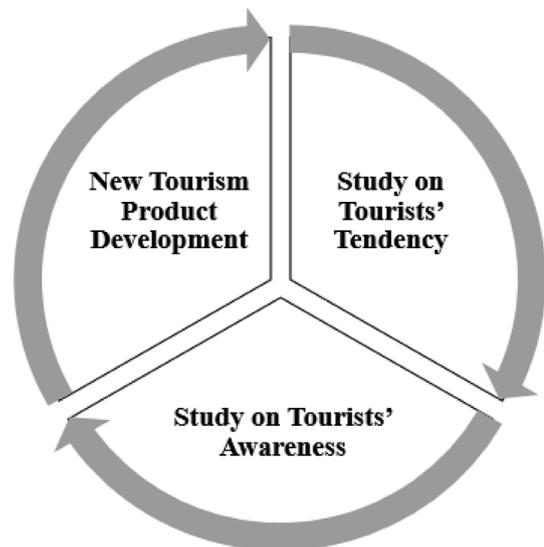


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the research (own construction).

list can be a strategy for conceptualizing, commodity marketing, connecting to global audiences and attracting cosmopolitan ones (such as tourists).

It is noteworthy that intangible heritage and tourism is a current consideration in Iran. The study of Shahi and Khorshid (2013) identified intangible heritage as a strategy for the development of creative tourism in Mazandaran Province, Iran; the clearest result of the research is that ICH cannot only help to create identity for the local community but also relates the past to present and future. Furthermore, the results illustrated that intangible heritage plays an important role in the dialogue between different cultures and mutual respect for cultural diversity and promotes creative tourism in the territory. Su (2018) revealed that engaging with tourism commodification can be a strategy to revive, sustain and re-create musical ICH values in Lijiang, China.

However, up to this time, no significant work has been undertaken in the field of investigation of tourists' tendencies towards and awareness of ICH as discussed in this paper (Fig. 1). Besides, none of the above-mentioned approaches takes into consideration intangible cultural heritage in a case study of Isfahan, Iran.

### 3. Case study

Iran is known as a cultural destination which includes tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Flatbread making and sharing culture; Nowruz; Qālišuyān rituals of Mašhad-e Ardehāl in Kāšān; Naqqāli, Iranian dramatic storytelling; traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf; music of the Bakhshis of Khorasan; Pahlevani and Zoorkhanei rituals; ritual dramatic art of Ta'zīye (<http://www.aparat.com/v/2sYMX>); traditional skills of carpet weaving in Fars; traditional skills of carpet weaving in Kashan; and Radif of Iranian music are intangible cultural heritage inscribed on the representative list of the ICH of humanity, UNESCO (UNESCO, 2017). Regarding safeguarding and introducing intangible cultural heritage, the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization established a spiritual heritage virtual museum in 2013 (ICHTO, 2013).

This study was conducted in the city of Isfahan, Iran. Isfahan is a city in central Iran, south of Tehran and is the capital of Isfahan Province. Isfahan Province as a cultural destination in Iran includes intangible heritage attractions such as traditional wipe-tinning of copper, the art of coppersmithing, flag parades (Alam Gardani), Qālišuyān rituals of Mašhad-e Ardehāl and Golabgiri (making rose-water), which are inscribed on national and in some cases UNESCO lists (ICHTO, 2013). The city was an ancient town and capital of Persia from



Fig. 2. A: Pahlevani and Zoorkhanei rituals, Isfahan, Iran.

(Source: Photo by Heiatian (2016); IMNA News); B: Chogān traditional game in Naghsh-e- Jahan Square, Isfahan, Iran (Source: photo by Saadatpour (2016); Mehr News agency).

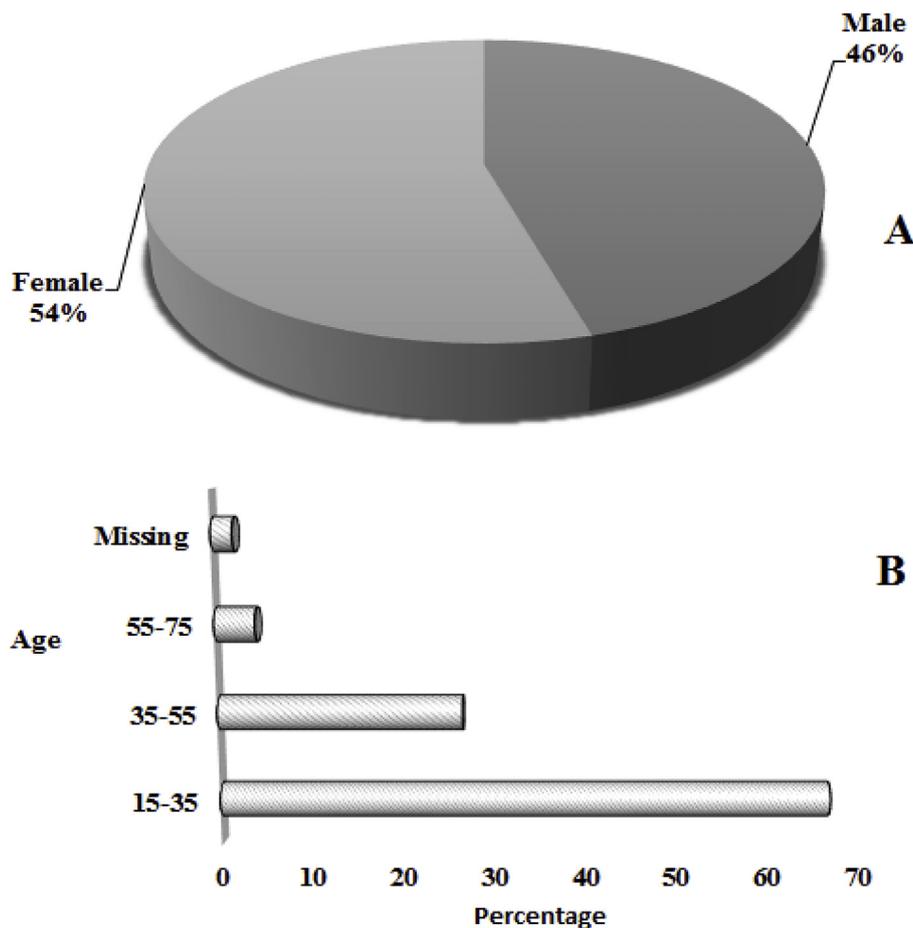


Fig. 3. Demographic profile of respondents: A) gender; B) age.

1598 to 1736. In addition, the city has great potential for cultural and art tourism and it is Iran's number one tourist destination for a good reason. Isfahan has many tourist attractions – Persian gardens and important historic Islamic buildings which give it a visual appeal unmatched by any other Iranian city, and the many artisans working here underpin its reputation as a living museum of traditional culture and arts. It is noteworthy that Isfahan was announced as a creative city in the field of crafts (UCCN, 2017). Besides, Isfahan includes ICH such as traditional skills of carpet weaving, traditional skills of making handicrafts, Pahlevani and Zoorkhanei rituals (Fig. 2A), Isfahan music school, religious minorities' music, ritual dramatic art of Ta'ziye, local and

social customs, traditional games such as Chogān (Fig. 2B), gastronomy, etc., which can attract tourists to this destination and offer these new products to them.

#### 4. Methodology

The research methodology includes quantitative research. The first phase consisted of an extensive literature review of intangible heritage and tourism. The main objective of this study is to investigate the tendency of domestic tourists towards the development of intangible heritage in Isfahan, Iran. In order to achieve this goal, two research

**Table 1**  
Descriptive analysis of the tendency of respondents towards intangible heritage.

Variables	Frequency (Scale)					Skewness
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	
Question 1: Are you familiar with Isfahan's intangible heritage?	42 10.9%	79 20.5%	147 38.2%	70 18.2%	47 12.2%	0.047
Could you please enter your mark (from very low (1) to very high (5)) for tourism activities regarding intangible heritage in the city?						
Question 2: Are you interested in getting to know and listening to the Isfahan music school?	19 4.9%	59 15.3%	141 36.6%	116 30.1%	50 13%	-0.211
Question 3: Are you interested in visiting musical instrument workshops and gaining knowledge about their production?	16 4.2%	64 16.6%	133 34.5%	118 30.6%	54 14%	-0.185
Question 4: Are you interested in watching the ritual dramatic art of Ta'ziye (a kind of Condolence Theatre inspired by historical and religious events and a kind of Passion Play on the tragic fate of Hassan and Hussein who are the grandsons of the prophet Mohammad)?	40 10.4%	59 15.3%	132 34.3%	101 26.2%	53 13.8%	-0.219
Question 5: Are you interested in participating in or watching live Pahlevāni and Zorkhānei rituals (a traditional sport)?	18 4.7%	79 20.5%	151 39.2%	106 27.5%	31 8.1%	-0.066
Question 6: Are you interested in traditional skills of carpet weaving?	22 5.7%	55 14.3%	135 35.1%	122 31.7%	51 13.2%	-0.292
Question 7: Are you interested in visiting handicraft workshops and gaining skills in traditional crafts?	10 2.6%	57 14.8%	124 32.2%	122 31.7%	72 18.7%	-0.221
Question 8: Are you interested in learning about Isfahan's forgotten handicrafts and gaining a certain level of skill in their production?	22 5.7%	74 19.2%	136 35.3%	113 29.4%	40 10.4%	-0.15
Question 9: Are you interested in listening to Iranian oral storytelling?	30 7.8%	50 13%	133 34.5%	110 28.6%	62 16.1%	-0.308
Question 10: Are you interested in cooking and tasting local foods?	11 2.9%	54 14%	68 17.7%	104 27%	148 38.4%	-0.661
Question 11: Are you interested in learning about epic Isfahan narratives?	41 10.6%	99 25.7%	123 31.9%	91 23.6%	31 8.1%	0.03
Question 12: Are you interested in exploring and watching traditional games in the city such as horse polo (Chogān) in historic places?	16 4.2%	82 21.3%	138 35.8%	99 25.7%	50 13%	0.006
Question 13: Are you interested in participating in sacred music of religious minorities and learning about it (e.g. Christians)?	10 2.6%	57 14.8%	138 35.8%	116 30.1%	64 16.6%	-0.141
Question 14: Are you interested in learning about the habits and social customs such as rites and ceremonies related to transition processes in the city (e.g. birth, marriage, death, etc.)?	18 4.7%	55 14.3%	127 33%	116 30.1%	69 17.9%	-0.272
Question 15: Are you interested in making and tasting local sweets of the city such as Gaz, etc.?	6 1.6%	45 11.7%	97 25.2%	115 29.9%	122 31.7%	-0.46
Question 17: Are you interested in listening to live Isfahan folk music?	25 6.5%	44 11.4%	156 40.5%	113 29.4%	47 12.2%	-0.3
Question 18: Are you interested in listening to and understanding proverbs and oral traditions?	12 3.1%	56 14.5%	150 39%	106 27.5%	61 15.8%	-0.94
Question 19: Are you interested in learning about the traditional water supply system in Isfahan such as baths, irrigation system based on canals (Madi), etc.?	29 7.5%	52 13.5%	144 37.4%	106 27.5%	54 14%	-0.254
Question 20: Are you interested in learning about traditional medicine and medicinal plants?	21 5.5%	49 12.7%	114 29.6%	111 28.8%	89 23.1%	-0.384 Missing data (1; 0.3%)

questions and four hypotheses were developed:

Q1 Are domestic tourists familiar with Isfahan's intangible cultural heritage?

Q2 Are tourists interested in Isfahan's intangible heritage attractions and activities?

**H1.** Tourists are familiar with Isfahan's intangible heritage.

**H2.** Tourists are interested in Isfahan's intangible heritage (attractions and activities).

**H3.** At least two of the variables (attractions and activities of intangible heritage from the tourists' perspective) are significantly different from each other.

**H4.** Two variables of gender and awareness of intangible heritage are independent.

ICH is a current world consideration. Therefore, the study aims to discover attractions and activities of ICH that can attract tourists to the city. Thus, in the second step, according to observation, literature review and the National Heritage List, the intangible heritage activities and attractions of Isfahan were listed (Table 2).

In the next phase, a questionnaire (using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very low to very high) was designed to investigate the tendency of tourists towards ICH. Hence, data for this part of study

were gathered through questionnaires (closed-ended questions). Regarding this, it was focused on tourists and the questionnaire was distributed in the city (around attractions, hotels, airports, etc.). For determining sample size, the researchers used [Veal's \(2006\)](#) rules. Veal's table (2006) illustrated that the sample size should be 384 people. Thus, 400 questionnaires were distributed and 385 questionnaires were returned to us.

## 5. Results

As mentioned before, a total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to domestic tourists in the city centre, historic monuments and sites, and hotels where most tourists are found. After eliminating unusable responses from the completed questionnaires, 385 responses were coded for data analysis. Cronbach's alpha is 0.853, which presents a high level of reliability. Descriptive statistics were calculated to ascertain the characteristics of the sample and to compare means and standard deviations for each multi-item scale. Among the survey participants, 45.7% (176) were male, and 54.3% (209) were female (Fig. 3). The majority of respondents were between 15 and 35 years of age (66.8%) (Fig. 3). Based on the result of the descriptive analysis (on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very low to very high) (Table 1), 65.4% of respondents were interested (high and very high on the scale) in cooking and tasting local foods and 61.6% (high and very high on the

**Table 2**  
The result of binomial test.

Binomial Test						
Variables	Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	
Familiar with intangible heritage	Group 1	< = 3	268	.7	.6	.000
	Group 2	> 3	117	.3		
	Total		385	1.0		
Music school	Group 1	< = 3	219	.6	.6	.116 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	166	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Musical instrument workshop	Group 1	< = 3	213	.6	.6	.035 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	172	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Ritual dramatic art of Ta'ziye	Group 1	< = 3	231	.6	.6	.519 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	154	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Pahlevāni and zoorkhānei rituals	Group 1	< = 3	248	.6	.6	.042
	Group 2	> 3	137	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Traditional skills of carpet weaving	Group 1	< = 3	212	.6	.6	.028 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	173	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Traditional art and handicraft workshop	Group 1	< = 3	191	.5	.6	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	194	.5		
	Total		385	1.0		
Forgotten handicrafts	Group 1	< = 3	232	.6	.6	.481
	Group 2	> 3	153	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Iranian oral storytelling	Group 1	< = 3	213	.6	.6	.035 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	172	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Cooking and tasting local foods	Group 1	< = 3	133	.3	.6	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	252	.7		
	Total		385	1.0		
Epic Isfahan narratives	Group 1	< = 3	263	.7	.6	.000
	Group 2	> 3	122	.3		
	Total		385	1.0		
Traditional games	Group 1	< = 3	236	.6	.6	.321
	Group 2	> 3	149	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Sacred music of religious minorities	Group 1	< = 3	205	.5	.6	.004 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	180	.5		
	Total		385	1.0		
Making and tasting local sweets	Group 1	< = 3	148	.4	.6	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	237	.6		
	Total		385	1.0		
Live Isfahan folk music	Group 1	< = 3	225	.6	.6	.283 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	160	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Proverbs and oral traditions	Group 1	< = 3	218	.6	.6	.097 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	167	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Local customs	Group 1	< = 3	200	.5	.6	.001 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	185	.5		
	Total		385	1.0		
Traditional water supply system in the city	Group 1	< = 3	225	.6	.6	.283 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	160	.4		
	Total		385	1.0		
Traditional medicine and medicinal plants	Group 1	< = 3	184	.5	.6	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Group 2	> 3	200	.5		
	Total		384	1.0		

<sup>a</sup> Alternative hypothesis states that the proportion of cases in the first group < .6.

scale) of tourists are interested in making and tasting local sweets. In addition, 51.9% (high and very high on the scale) of respondents would like to learn about traditional medicine and medicinal plants. Moreover, analysis of the data indicates that 50.4% (high and very high on the scale) of tourists are interested in visiting workshops and gaining traditional arts and handicrafts skills. Furthermore, 48% (high and very high on the scale) of tourists would like to hear and learn about the

habits and social customs in the city (e.g. ceremonies, births, marriages, deaths, etc.). 46.7% (high and very high on the scale) of tourists enjoy participating in sacred music of religious minorities in Isfahan and 44.9% (high and very high on the scale) of them claim to be interested in learning about traditional skills of carpet weaving, and also participating in and visiting traditional carpet weaving workrooms. Listening to Iranian oral storytelling was mentioned by 44.7% (high and very high on the scale) of tourists. In addition, 44.6% (high and very high on the scale) of respondents noted that they would like to visit workshops and gain more knowledge about the art of crafting musical instruments. 43.3% (high and very high on the scale) of tourists are interested in understanding proverbs and oral traditions. The results of descriptive analysis also illustrated that 43.1% (high and very high on the scale) of the audience paid particular attention to hearing live music in the Isfahan music school (Table 1).

In the next phase we tested the first and the second hypotheses:

**H1.** Tourists are familiar with Isfahan's ICH.

**H2.** Tourists are interested in ICH in Isfahan (attractions and activities).

The clearest result of the investigation (Binomial Test; H0:  $P \geq 0.6$ , low attitude; H1:  $P < 0.6$ , high attitude and Sig < 0.05) is that domestic tourists are not familiar with the new concept of ICH, and therefore the first hypothesis was rejected (Table 2). However, an analysis of the data with a Binomial Test (Observed Prop < 0.6. and Sig < 0.05) (Table 2) illustrated that, among the intangible heritage activities and attractions, respondents have a high interest in visiting musical instrument workshops and acquiring knowledge about their production; visiting workshops and gaining skills about traditional arts and handicrafts; cooking and tasting local foods; making and tasting local sweets; participating in sacred music of religious minorities; learning about habits and social customs and learning about traditional medicine and medicinal plants. Therefore, the results also illustrated that, based on domestic tourists' perspectives, the above-mentioned attractions and activities are the most suitable for offering in package tours.

Furthermore, a Friedman test was used to analyse the third hypothesis:

**H0.** There are no differences between the variables (attractions and activities of intangible heritage) from the tourists' perspective.

**H3.** At least 2 of the variables (attractions and activities of ICH from the tourists' perspective) are significantly different from each other.

It is noteworthy that a Friedman test was used to analyse the attractions and activities in which tourists were interested. Analysis of the data (Table 3) illustrated that the null hypothesis is rejected and it can be concluded that there are differences between variables. Among the variables, cooking and tasting local foods; making and tasting local sweets; learning about traditional medicine and medicinal plants and visiting workshops and getting to know traditional skill of making arts and handicrafts are those which have the highest scores respectively. It is worth mentioning that the authorities, SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and investors should pay particular attention to the intangible culture heritage which is a priority for tourists in planning and package tours.

Lastly, chi-square tests were used to test the fourth hypothesis:

**H0.** Two variables of gender and awareness of ICH are independent.

**H4.** Two variables of gender and awareness of ICH are dependent.

Some intangible cultural heritage in the destination are associated with gender; Pahlevani and Zoorkhaneh rituals which are allocated to men constitute good examples in this regard. Hence, investigating the relationship between gender and awareness of ICH can be useful for tourism planning and preparing package tours.

The results (sig = 0.002 which is < 0.05); indicated that two

**Table 3**

The result of the Friedman test for the investigation of priority of attractions and activities of intangible heritage from the tourists' perspective.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank	
Musical instrument workshop	384	3.3411	1.04258	3.65	
Traditional art and handicraft workshops	384	3.4948	1.03716	3.89	Chi-Square = 75.241
Cooking and tasting local foods	384	3.8438	1.16590	4.50	
Sacred music of religious minorities	384	3.4323	1.01714	3.75	Asymp. Sig = .000
Making and tasting local sweets	384	3.7839	1.06580	4.44	
Local customs	384	3.4245	1.08372	3.76	
Traditional medicine and medicinal plants	384	3.5156	1.14018	4.02	

**Table 4**

The result of chi-square tests for the investigation of association of gender and the awareness of intangible heritage.

Gender * Awareness of intangible heritage Crosstabulation			Awareness of intangible heritage					Total
			very low	low	moderate	high	very high	
Gender	Male	Count	20	38	54	31	33	176
		Expected Count	19.2	36.1	67.2	32.0	21.5	176.0
	Female	Count	22	41	93	39	14	209
		Expected Count	22.8	42.9	79.8	38.0	25.5	209.0
Total		Count	42	79	147	70	47	385
		Expected Count	42.0	79.0	147.0	70.0	47.0	385.0
Chi-Square Tests			Value		df		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	
Pearson Chi-Square			16.443 <sup>a</sup>		4		.002	
Likelihood Ratio			16.670		4		.002	
Linear-by-Linear Association			2.737		1		.098	
No. of Valid Cases			385					

<sup>a</sup> 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.20.

variables (gender and awareness of intangible heritage) are associated and men (high and very high on the scale (64%)) have more awareness regarding intangible heritage than women (high and very high on the scale (53%)) (Table 4).

## 6. Conclusion

Engaging tourism with ICH includes opportunities and challenges. Tourism may be a commodity for culture. However, in recent decades, the tourism sector has paid particular attention to ICH, which not only promotes local community identity (Gonzalez, 2008; Lenzerini, 2011; Robertson, 2009; Shahi & Khorshid, 2013; Smuka, 2016) but also gives meaning and value to touristic sites and attractions (Robertson, 2009). Furthermore, ICH can be a tool for interpretation in tourism (Deacon, 2004) and can attract tourists to destinations.

The aim of the present paper was to identify Isfahan as a destination that has great potential for ICH and can attract new customers. As mentioned before, Isfahan is a city known for its tangible cultural attractions such as Islamic architecture, handicrafts, palaces, Persian gardens, etc. However, it has much intangible cultural heritage that tourists are not familiar with and is not considered as a tourism attraction.

Obviously, the emergence of a new product (ICH in this research) in the market needs the study of demand, because there is a relation between the demand and the supply. Therefore, this study strived to investigate the tendency of tourists towards ICH in Isfahan. Moreover, this is an initial attempt to measure tourists' awareness of this concept.

On the basis of the results of this research, it can be concluded that men have more awareness regarding intangible heritage than women.

However, altogether, the result indicated that the domestic tourists are not familiar with the concept of ICH and results supported this expectation that intangible heritage is a current consideration in Iran and needs educational activities and storytelling regarding ICH, especially for women. Further analysis illustrated that domestic tourists are interested in ICH in Isfahan, especially cooking and tasting local foods; making and tasting local sweets; learning about traditional medicine and medicinal plants and visiting handicraft workshops and gaining traditional skill in making arts and handicrafts. As mentioned before, Isfahan city is a live museum of handicrafts and was announced as a creative city in the field of crafts. Therefore, according to the high level of interest of tourists in visiting handicraft workshops, we also suggest that organizing art tours and visiting handicrafts workshops can develop as a business in the city. Moreover, the results illustrated that tourists have a high level of interest in making local sweets and cooking local foods. Hence, organizing culinary tours and visiting workshops of sweets such as *Gaz*, an Iranian nougat, can be a strategy for promoting the local economy and safeguarding ICH. Moreover, learning about traditional medicine and medicinal plants was another priority of tourists and provides some support for Torabi Farsani, Zeinali, and Moaiednia (2018) for developing herbal medicine-based tourism in Isfahan. Therefore, our results extend and reinforce of the research of Ma and Wang (2008) which argued that the real-life scenery stage which is based on people's performing activities is the best strategy for transforming ICH into a tourism product. Lastly, on the basis of the results of this research, it can be concluded that tourists welcome ICH in Isfahan package tours and they are interested in culture, art and creative tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning

experiences and acquire knowledge and skills.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2018.11.001>.

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