

UDC: 39+316

DOI: 10.33876/2311-0546/2026-1/84-98

Original article

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IRANIANS' PERCEPTIONS OF MOSCOW AND ITS RESIDENTS

Despite the deepening of bilateral relations between Iran and Russia, negative stereotypes about Russia persist in Iranian society, largely due to a lack of awareness. This article aims to study Iranians' perceptions of the socio-cultural differences between Iran and Russia. The main goal of the study is to identify how Iranians view Moscow and its population. To achieve this goal, several objectives were set: 1) to determine Iranians' expectations regarding interaction with the space and population of Moscow; 2) to identify differences in these expectations among different social groups within Iranian population. The study collected and analyzed data that showed that Iranians' perceptions of Russians and Muscovites are largely based on their perception of cultural differences. The image of Moscow was found to be generally positive and associated with its rich cultural heritage, modern achievements, and the freedoms that the city provides. In addition, the study identified five groups of Iranians who differ in their attitudes toward Moscow and its population, ranging from negative to idealized, depending on their experience of interaction and level of awareness. The article concludes that the presence of personal connections and the experience of successful adaptation in a close social environment contribute to the formation of a positive image of Moscow among Iranians, which emphasizes the importance of intercultural exchange.

Keywords: *Iran, Moscow, autostereotypes, heterostereotypes, image of the city*

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For citation: Pimanov, G. A. 2026. Iranians' Perceptions of Moscow and Its Residents. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 1: 84–98.

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