

Original Research Article

Assessment and Prioritization of Urban Tourism Indicators Affecting the Regeneration of Historical Passages from Tourists' Perspectives

(Case Study: Kouy-e Afshar Passage in the Historical Fabric of Shiraz)

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Abstract | In recent decades, historic urban fabrics in Iranian cities have lost much of their vitality and efficiency under social, economic, and physical transformations, leading to a gradual decline. Despite its historical and cultural assets, the historic fabric of Shiraz is currently confronted with challenges such as a declining native population, insecurity, and stagnation of urban activities. In this context, urban regeneration has emerged as a contemporary approach to addressing the problems of historic fabrics, and the utilization of urban tourism potentials can serve as an effective strategy for revitalizing these spaces. The aim of this study is to identify and prioritize urban tourism indicators influencing the regeneration of historic pathways from the perspective of tourists. The research is applied in purpose and descriptive-analytical in method. In the first stage, the indicators were identified through library studies and documentary analysis. Subsequently, to prioritize them from tourists' viewpoints, field data were collected via questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. The findings show that the indicators of "Retail" and "Presentation of Culture and Rituals," with equal mean ranks, are the most important factors in the regeneration of historic pathways. "Events and Exhibitions" rank third, underscoring the importance of the temporal dimension in revitalizing historic spaces. Other indicators, including "Infrastructure and Transportation Development," "Attractions," "Catering Facilities," "Business and Trade," and "Educational Facilities," appear at lower levels of importance. Overall, the results suggest that tourists' perception of historic corridors relies more on cultural authenticity and lived experience than on physical or service-oriented components.

Keywords | Urban Regeneration, Urban Tourism, Historical Pathways, Kouy Afshar Passage, Old Fabric of Shiraz.

Introduction | The rapid expansion of urbanization in recent decades has exerted significant impacts on the structure and functioning of historic and traditional urban fabrics. The historical cores of cities, which were originally formed in accordance with the socio economic and cultural conditions of their time and possessed a coherent spatial and functional order, are now, in many cases, confronted with challenges

such as physical deterioration, declining functional efficiency, and reduced environmental quality. These transformations have increasingly rendered such areas incapable of addressing the needs of their residents, gradually leading to stagnation and decay (Habibi et al., 2007). Historic urban fabrics, due to their antiquity, architectural and cultural values, strategic connectivity, and the presence of key urban elements such as bazaars, mosques, and public spaces, hold a distinctive

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position within the spatial and identity structure of cities. Nevertheless, over time and as a result of social, economic, and physical transitions, these fabrics have experienced deficiencies in various functional, economic, social, physical, and environmental dimensions. The consequences of these transformations, and their influence across different urban domains, have brought deteriorated and historic areas into the forefront of critical urban issues. Consequently, responsible institutions and organizations have increasingly begun to plan for the rehabilitation and revitalization of such urban areas, emphasizing the necessity of intervention across successive periods (Banari et al., 2018). In this context, the urban regeneration approach has emerged as a contemporary strategy for addressing the challenges faced by deteriorated and historic urban fabrics. This approach, with its emphasis on the simultaneous revitalization of physical, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, seeks to safeguard historical values and identity giving elements while fostering conditions for renewed vitality and dynamism within these areas. Moreover, due to their historical depth, valuable buildings and spaces, and cultural richness, these fabrics have long been significant destinations for both domestic and international tourism. They possess considerable potential for attracting tourists, generating employment, strengthening local economies, and facilitating the transmission of national and local culture across borders. Since the 1990s, tourism has become a prominent field of study, and a substantial portion of global research—particularly within the field of urban tourism—has focused on examining its various dimensions (Pearce, 2001).

The historic fabric of Shiraz represents one of the most densely concentrated historical complexes among Iranian cities, having gradually evolved over centuries and adapted to the living conditions of different historical periods. Nevertheless, in the contemporary era, scattered interventions and incompatible physical transformations have occurred within this fabric, many of which are not aligned with its traditional structure and historic neighborhood patterns. Moreover, with the expansion of urban services and facilities in other parts of the city, a portion of the native residents has gradually left the area and has been replaced by migrant populations. This process has ultimately led to the formation of a heterogeneous social structure and a decline in residents' sense of belonging to the environment. Historically, the old fabric of Shiraz consisted of numerous passageways that, in addition to providing connectivity between major urban elements and neighborhood centers, functioned as vibrant and dynamic spaces within the social life of the city. However, as a result of contemporary physical interventions, many of these historic passageways have disappeared, and the continuity of the traditional street network has been disrupted. Kouy Afshar Passage is one of the few remaining

historic passageways in Shiraz whose physical structure and spatial continuity have largely been preserved. This characteristic represents, on the one hand, a valuable opportunity for safeguarding the historical identity of the urban fabric, and on the other hand, given contemporary urban needs and the necessity of improving safety, security, and environmental quality, it requires appropriate planning and attention. In this regard, utilizing the capacities of urban tourism can be considered an effective strategy for the regeneration of such historic passageways. Accordingly, identifying the indicators and components that influence tourists' attraction to and presence in historic passageways is of considerable importance for the planning and management of these spaces. Therefore, the present study seeks to answer the following questions: which urban tourism indicators can contribute to the regeneration of historic passageways, and what is the priority of these indicators from the perspective of tourists visiting historic urban fabrics? The spatial context of this research is Kouy Afshar Passage, located in the historic fabric of Shiraz. In terms of purpose, the study is applied, and in terms of nature, it adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. To address the research questions, tourism-related indicators were first extracted through a review of the literature. Subsequently, tourists' perspectives were collected in the Kouy Afshar Passage area using a questionnaire based on rating and ranking scales. Data analysis was conducted at two levels: qualitative analysis through content analysis of texts, and quantitative analysis using the non parametric Friedman test in the SPSS environment in order to determine the prioritization and relationships among the identified indicators.

Literature Review

In recent years, urban tourism has been increasingly recognized as a significant instrument for the revitalization and regeneration of historic urban fabrics. Due to their cultural, physical, and identity-related values, historic areas possess substantial potential to attract tourists and can play an important role in fostering economic and social vitality within cities. Within these contexts, historic passageways constitute key structural elements of traditional urban fabrics. Beyond their connective function, they also perform social, cultural, and tourism-related roles; therefore, their regeneration can contribute to improving urban spatial quality and enhancing tourism attractiveness. A number of studies have examined the role of tourism in the revitalization of historic urban areas. For example, Aminzadeh & Dadras (2012), in their study entitled "Culture-Oriented Regeneration in the Historic Fabric of Qazvin with Emphasis on Urban Tourism," investigated the role of tourism in the regeneration process of historic districts. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the study analyzed the cultural and historical capacities

of Qazvin's historic fabric as drivers of urban tourism development. The findings indicated that strengthening cultural identity, preserving historical heritage, improving urban spatial quality, and promoting cultural and tourism activities can significantly contribute to the revitalization and renewed dynamism of historic areas. The study further emphasized that culture-led tourism development not only safeguards historical values but also stimulates economic growth, increases tourist presence, and enhances urban vitality. Similarly, Karimizadeh et al. (2018), in a study titled "An Analysis of Urban Tourism in the Regeneration of Historic Fabrics from the Perspective of Local Residents Using Factor Analysis (Case Study: Shiraz)," explored the contribution of urban tourism to the regeneration of Shiraz's historic fabric. Employing a descriptive-analytical method and utilizing questionnaire surveys combined with factor analysis, the researchers evaluated residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. The results demonstrated that tourism development can improve economic conditions, enhance urban vitality, strengthen historical identity, and upgrade environmental quality in historic districts. Moreover, community participation and appropriate tourism planning were identified as key determinants of successful regeneration processes. Rezaei et al. (2020) examined tourism-based urban regeneration in the historic core of Tehran, focusing on the impacts of urban tourism development over the past 15 years. Their descriptive-analytical study, based on field observations, expert interviews, and analysis of urban plans and programs, revealed that tourism development has increased attention to heritage conservation, improved urban spaces, revitalized historical attractions, and stimulated economic activities within the historic district. The study also identified tourism as a catalyst for reinvestment, spatial renewal, and reinforcement of the city's historical identity, recommending that tourism planning be systematically integrated into urban regeneration policies. In another relevant study, Aghlara et al. (2024) evaluated the role of urban regeneration in the development of heritage tourism in the historic fabric of Tabriz. Using a descriptive-analytical framework and indicators such as heritage conservation, urban environmental quality, economic activity enhancement, and tourism attractiveness, the study found that regeneration programs can significantly improve spatial quality, reinforce historical identity, and strengthen tourism infrastructure in historic areas. The authors further highlighted the critical role of collaboration among urban management authorities, local communities, and tourism investors in ensuring the success of regeneration initiatives. More recently, Ghadari Dehkordi & Nedaei Toosi (2024) investigated sustainable urban regeneration with a heritage-based approach in Shiraz. Their research focused on analyzing the role of cultural heritage in revitalizing historic fabrics and promoting urban sustainability. Based on indicators

including heritage conservation, environmental quality, social participation, economic activity, and tourism development, the findings demonstrated that leveraging cultural heritage assets can enhance urban identity, increase tourism attractiveness, stimulate economic vitality, and improve quality of life in historic districts. The study concluded that regeneration strategies in Shiraz should be designed around heritage conservation principles and sustainable tourism development to effectively revitalize the historic urban fabric. Despite the growing body of research on urban tourism and the regeneration of historic urban fabrics, most existing studies have primarily focused on the overall characteristics of historic districts or on the evaluation of regeneration policies and planning frameworks. A number of these studies emphasize the formulation of strategies and the analysis of cultural and historical capacities, often incorporating the perspectives of local residents in assessing proposed solutions and indicators. Accordingly, the present study seeks to identify tourism-related indicators that can contribute to urban regeneration and apply them within the context of the regeneration of historic passageways in Shiraz. Subsequently, these indicators are prioritized based on tourists' perspectives. The ultimate aim is to propose a framework that can enhance the spatial quality of historic environments and strengthen the role of tourism in the regeneration of Shiraz's historic urban fabric.

Theoretical Framework

• Urban regeneration

To analyze the regeneration process of historic urban fabrics, it is essential to first clarify the concept of "urban regeneration" and its practical application within specific contexts. Korkmaz & Balaban (2020) argue that the term can be applied across building, urban, and regional scales. This article focuses on the urban scale, a scope for which various definitions exist, reflecting the diverse perspectives and approaches adopted by scholars (Mirzakhani et al., 2021). Roberts & Sykes (2000) describe urban regeneration as: "A comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seeks to resolve urban problems and bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social, and environmental condition of an area." In this approach, urban development transcends the mere quantitative expansion of physical structures for housing; it involves enhancing the quality of life through comprehensive urban development strategies and plans. Regeneration essentially refers to the creation of a new spatial organization, shaped by contemporary conditions and emerging characteristics. This new organization facilitates a redefinition of existing or historical urban relationships, or the establishment of entirely new ones (Nourian & Ariana, 2012). Generally, urban regeneration is a process that leads to the creation of a renewed urban space without neglecting the

fundamental physical and functional characteristics of the existing fabric. In this process, new spaces emerge that, while retaining essential similarities to the original structure, exhibit fundamental differences in meaning, function, and spatial organization. The outcome of this transformation is a new spatial arrangement that is aligned with contemporary needs and conditions, playing an effective role in establishing new urban networks or redefining traditional and existing relationships (Habibi & Maqsoudi, 2002).

• Urban tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes for a period of less than one year, without engaging in activities remunerated from within the place visited.” This definition clarifies key dimensions of tourism, including its nature, duration of stay, types of activities, and the groups involved in this process (Evrin Uysal, 2015). Scholars in tourism studies have also categorized tourism types based on spatial contexts into four main groups: rural tourism (often referred to as green tourism), mountain tourism associated with sports and mountaineering activities, coastal tourism characterized by seaside environments, and urban tourism. Among these, urban tourism has become one of the most popular forms due to the central role of cities within contemporary social and economic systems. The development of appropriate urban spaces, the redevelopment of abandoned areas, and the revitalization of the historical and cultural dimensions of cities are among the major outcomes of the expansion of urban tourism. Urban spaces involved in tourism can generally be classified into two categories: (a) modern spaces, such as parks, contemporary shopping centers, cultural centers, squares, and plazas; and (b) traditional spaces, including bazaars, shrines, cemeteries, gardens, mosques, and other historic buildings. From a physical-spatial perspective, the impact of tourism on cities can be examined through two primary dimensions: first, the development and creation of modern and attractive urban spaces, and second, the revitalization and regeneration of historic fabrics and traditional urban spaces (Anvari & Nassaj, 2008). This study focuses specifically on tourism within historic environments—a form of tourism that plays a direct role in the regeneration of historic urban fabrics and the revitalization of traditional urban spaces. Urban tourism is inherently a multidimensional phenomenon that extends beyond the destination itself, encompassing a wide range of activities such as visiting historical and architectural landmarks, participating in cultural and artistic events (including festivals, concerts, and exhibitions), and experiencing diverse urban lifestyles (Evrin Uysal, 2015). Urban areas, due to their rich concentration of historical and

cultural attractions, typically offer a wide range of sightseeing opportunities, including museums, monuments, and historic sites or buildings, each of which can serve as a major tourism destination. Consequently, cities generally possess a high capacity to attract significant numbers of tourists (Hall & Page, 2001).

In the process of urban tourism development, tourism destinations and the way they are developed hold a particularly significant position, to the extent that they can be considered among the most important assets of the tourism industry. In this regard, the development of urban tourism destinations within the framework of tourism planning, and through national policies and strategic programs, can facilitate the achievement of the objectives of this sector. Tourism destination planning refers to the process of planning for places that possess the necessary attractions, facilities, infrastructure, and human resources required to attract tourists (Gunn, 1994). On the other hand, selecting a location as a tourism destination requires consideration of several factors. According to Gee (2003), the most important of these factors include the attractiveness of the destination, ease of access, the availability of appropriate transportation systems, and the level of acceptance by both tourists and the resident population in that area.

Understanding the fundamental components and elements of tourism can contribute to a clearer comprehension of the concept of urban tourism. These elements can generally be examined in several categories. Primary tourism elements include activities and attractions that play a central role in attracting tourists. These include cultural and artistic activities such as theater, cinema, and exhibitions, as well as attractions such as parks, historical monuments and buildings, museums, and natural features such as waterfalls. Alongside these, there are secondary tourism elements that are mainly related to supporting services, including accommodation facilities such as guesthouses, shopping centers, markets, retail stores, and food service establishments. In addition, complementary services and facilities, such as tourism information services, amenities provided in parks, guide maps, and information centers for directing tourists, are also considered important and influential components within the tourism structure (Movahhed, 2007). Bader et al. (2016) categorized the key elements influencing the formation of attractive spaces for tourists into several main groups: a) Historic districts: These areas include historical landmarks and heritage features, buildings, streetscapes, traditional neighborhoods, and distinctive elements that emphasize local identity. Such spaces are usually pedestrian-oriented and offer a combination of attractiveness, desirability, and accessibility. The presence of suitable hotels and accommodation facilities, high-quality restaurants, cafés, shopping centers, villas, luxury offices, archaeological sites, museums, art galleries, cultural centers,

theaters, and cinemas is among the primary reasons for the attractiveness of these areas for tourists. b) Festivals and events: These activities have become effective tools for the rapid development of tourism. Festivals and events vary widely in scale, ranging from major international events such as world expos or the Olympic Games to annual local festivals, music festivals, or artistic programs such as night galleries. c) Shopping and dining facilities: Although shopping and restaurants are classified as secondary tourism elements, they still play a significant role in the tourism industry, as tourists spend a considerable portion of their time and expenditure on shopping and dining experiences. d) Waterfront areas: Urban water spaces, including rivers, coastlines, lakes, or piers, have consistently attracted public attention due to their intrinsic appeal and vital role in urban environments. In some cities, more than 50 percent of tourists visiting such spaces stay overnight, highlighting the importance of these attractions in urban tourism.

Swarbrooke (2000) proposed a typology in the field of tourism and urban regeneration through which five principal approaches or strategies for tourism-based regeneration can be identified. This typology includes the following: strategies focused on business tourism that strengthen the city's position as a destination for conferences and exhibitions; strategies based on special events capable of attracting diverse groups of tourists at different times of the year; attraction-based tourism strategies that seek to increase tourist arrivals through the creation or development of new attractions; strategies centered on retail tourism that emphasize the role of shops, shopping, and leisure activities in tourism development; and finally, strategies based on cultural tourism that aim to promote and highlight various aspects of a city's popular culture. Mikulic & Petric (2014) outlined tourism development strategies in relation to urban regeneration in four main categories. The first is a production-oriented strategy based on attracting large firms. This approach emphasizes the formation of large-scale economies, the establishment of diverse manufacturing industries, and the development of transportation infrastructure and facilities suited to the needs of major enterprises. Within this model, as commercial activities expand, the number of business-related tourists increases, and cities invest in creating and strengthening new attractions. The second is a consumption-oriented strategy based on service industries. In this model, the development of the service sector is prioritized with the aim of increasing the number of tourists and consumers among both residents and visitors. Abandoned production spaces are also converted into tourism and recreational uses such as entertainment, educational, accommodation, commercial, shopping, and information centers. The third is a strategy based on the development of small and medium-scale entrepreneurship. This strategy emphasizes strengthening entrepreneurial

culture at small and medium scales, diversifying industries, expanding tourism and its complementary activities, and attracting alternative financial resources through cultural incentives. The fourth is a consumption-oriented strategy based on the allocation of urban space. In this model, the primary focus is on responding to local community needs and improving the quality of life rather than merely attracting tourists. Despite structural differences, all these strategies pursue a common objective: attracting population and activity to a targeted area. Achieving this goal requires the reorganization of the local labor market and the creation of profound cultural transformations in norms related to employment, working conditions, and lifestyles. The selection of each strategy should therefore be based on the role of decision-makers, existing problems and challenges, previous experiences, local capacities, and especially the characteristics of target groups. Medlik (2003) identified nine key factors influencing the development and promotion of urban tourism. According to this perspective, elements such as the quality of the urban environment, the presence of historical and cultural heritage, museums, tourism attractions, and cultural activities and events play an important role in attracting tourists. In addition, price levels, security conditions, the diversity and quality of restaurants, and the efficiency of public transportation systems are also considered essential components that can significantly enhance the attractiveness of cities as tourism destinations. Table 1 presents the indicators of urban tourism that influence the regeneration of urban spaces, which have been extracted and categorized. Based on the theoretical foundations derived from relevant sources and documents, this study developed a conceptual model of the role of factors affecting tourism development in advancing the objectives related to different dimensions of regeneration in historic fabrics. This model was employed as the research framework in the field study (Fig. 1).

Research Method

The study area of this research is the historic Kooy-e Afshar passage located within the old urban fabric of Shiraz (Fig. 2). The historic fabric of Shiraz consists of numerous neighborhoods, and the Kooy-e Afshar passage runs between the Sang-e Siah and Sardozaq neighborhoods. With an approximate length of 820 meters, this passage functions as an important urban corridor, connecting the holy shrines of Shah-Cheragh and Seyed Taj-al-Din Gharib. Despite the presence of valuable elements along the passage, such as registered historic houses, Haj Bagher Mosque, and the Haj Zeynal Bazaar, the existing spaces have received limited attention and are in need of revitalization and urban regeneration (Fig. 3).

In this study, data were collected through two methods: library-based research and field surveys. Accordingly, the

Table 1. Urban tourism indicators influencing regeneration, extracted from theoretical foundations. Source: Authors.

Number	Indicator	Theorist
1	Places with Tourism Visitation Potential	Law, 1996; Swarbrook, 2000; Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Hall & Page, 2001; Medlik, 2003; Hall & Page, 2006; Xie, 2006; Movahhed, 2007; Sharbatian, 2011; Mikulic & Petric, 2014; Evrim Uysal, 2015; Bader et al, 2016
2	Service and hospitality facilities associated with tourism attractions	Movahhed, 2007; Shahabian, 2011; Sharbatian, 2011; Mikulic & Petric, 2014; Evrim Uysal, 2015; Bader et al, 2016
3	Educational and information infrastructure related to attractions	Movahhed, 2007; Sharbatian, 2011; Mikulic & Petric, 2014
4	Exhibition and event programs	Bramwell, 1997; Swarbrook, 2000; Gladblatt, 2007; Dimmock & Tiyce, 2001; Getz, 2008; Shahabian, 2011; Getz et al, 2012; Hernandez- Mogollon et al, 2014; Bader et al, 2016
5	Commercial and economic activities	Law, 1993; Swarbrook, 2000; Medlik, 2003; Hall & Page, 2006; Mikulic & Petric, 2014; Bader et al, 2016
6	Retail activities	Jansen-Verbeke, 1988; Swarbrook, 2000; Medlik, 2003; Timothy, 2005; Movahhed, 2007; Shahabian, 2011; Sharbatian, 2011; Mikulic & Petric, 2014; Bader et al, 2016
7	Presentation and promotion of traditions, rituals, and cultures	Richards, 1996; Swarbrook, 2000; Medlik, 2003; Movahhed, 2007; Smith, 2007; OECD, 2008; Shahabian, 2011; Bader et al, 2016
8	Expansion of transportation infrastructure and systems	Medlik, 2003; Shahabian, 2011

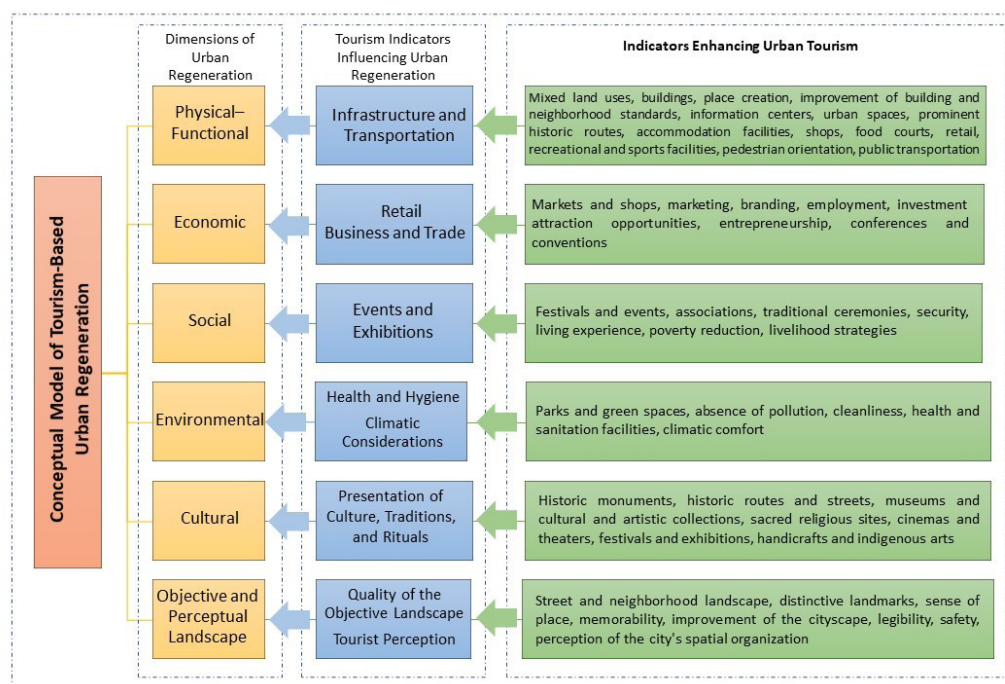


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of tourism indicators influencing urban regeneration. Source: Authors.

present research is categorized as a documentary–field study in terms of data collection. For data analysis, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed. In the qualitative phase, information extracted from the theoretical foundations was examined through logical analysis and inductive reasoning. In the quantitative phase, data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software. Based on the findings derived from the theoretical framework, a set of tourism indicators influencing the regeneration of historic

passages was identified. Since the formation and development of tourism in any geographical space occur through a process grounded in the alignment between attractions, settlements, and the facilities required for daily life, the starting point of tourism planning is the understanding of tourist behavior at a destination. Such understanding, achieved through assessing existing conditions, identifying local potentials, and examining their compatibility with tourists' needs and preferences, provides a foundation for more effective tourism development

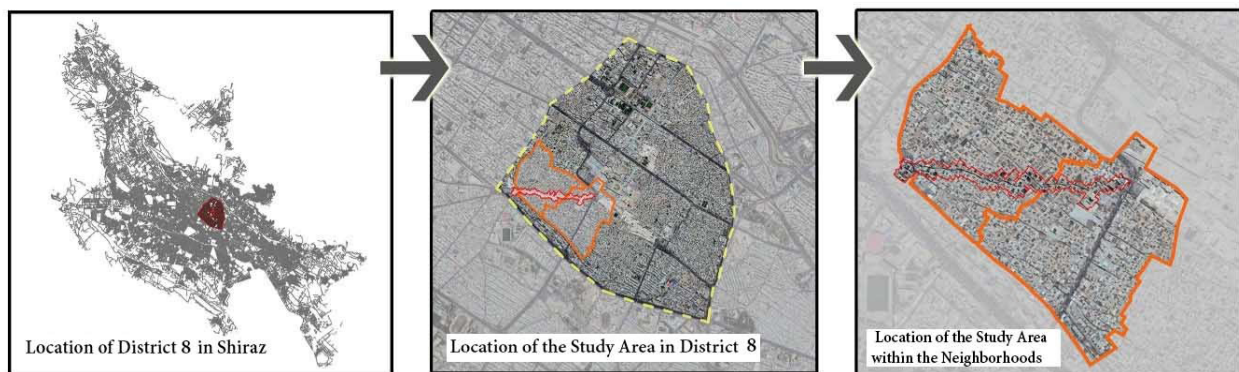


Fig. 2. Location of Kooy-e Afshar Passage within the Neighborhoods of the Historic Fabric and the City of Shiraz. Source: Authors.



Fig. 3. Spaces of Haj Zeynal Bazaar and the historic building of Haj Bagher Mosque Tekyeh in Kooy e Afshar passage. Source: Authors' Archive.

planning (Kadivar & Saqaee, 2006). Moreover, tourism development will be successful and sustainable only when all social groups, particularly those who have historically had limited roles and influence in society, are included in decision-making processes, tourism planning, and the distribution of its benefits. These groups include women, youth, the elderly, and ethnic and religious minorities (Hajian, 2013). Therefore, given that the primary impacts of urban tourism affect both destination residents and visiting tourists, and considering that civic participation constitutes a fundamental pillar of sustainable development, this section seeks to identify and prioritize the significance and degree of influence of tourism indicators from the perspective of visitors to the historic passages of Shiraz's old urban fabric.

For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions was designed and distributed among 51 tourists visiting the historic passages of Sang e Siah and Kooy e Afshar. To assess the validity of the questionnaire, the opinions and guidance of academic supervisors, advisors, and experienced experts in the field of urban design were consulted, and their suggestions and revisions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. Furthermore, since the questions were multiple

choice, the Kuder–Richardson test was used to evaluate the reliability of the research instrument. The obtained reliability coefficient was 0.707, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.700, indicating that the questionnaire has satisfactory reliability. The questionnaire was designed with consideration of tourists' characteristics; therefore, in addition to collecting respondents' demographic information, it also examines travel purposes and features related to travel patterns. Subsequently, based on tourism sub indicators, spatial characteristics suitable for tourism development, and the level of priority of each indicator are analyzed and evaluated from the perspective of tourists.

To prioritize the tourism indicators influencing urban regeneration, the non parametric Friedman test was employed. In the first step, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied to examine the normality of the data distribution. The results indicated that the significance level was less than 0.05; therefore, the data distribution was not normal, and the use of parametric methods was not appropriate. Accordingly, the Friedman test was used to analyze and determine the priority of the indicators. The results of the Friedman test showed that the significance level was 0.00, which is less than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the indicators do not have equal priority and can be ranked. After ranking the main indicators, the Friedman test was also conducted separately for each set of sub indicators. The final outputs of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

Findings

Based on the statistical tests conducted and the analysis of information obtained from questionnaires completed by tourists and visitors in the Kooy e Afshar passage, the tourism indicators influencing the urban regeneration of this corridor are as follows:

1) Retail: Considering the equal importance and priority of the sub indicators related to retail activities, achieving this indicator requires simultaneous actions such as strengthening and revitalizing traditional markets, including

Table 2. Prioritization of urban tourism indicators influencing urban regeneration. Source: Authors.

Indicator	Mean	Priority	p	Subindicator prioritization			
Retail	5.23	1	0.456	The following sub-indicators share the same level of priority and therefore cannot be ranked based on the Friedman test.			
				Old bazaars	Rows of shops selling indigenous products	Discount-priced stores	Recreational facilities
Presentation of culture, traditions, and rituals	5.23	2	0.216	The following sub-indicators share the same level of priority and therefore cannot be ranked based on the Friedman test.			
				Indigenous art and cultural heritage	Cinemas, theaters, and galleries	Handicrafts exhibitions	Traditional and religious ceremonies and performances
Events and exhibitions	5.15	3	0.000	Sub-Indicator		Priority	p
				Seasonal and annual exhibitions		1	2.35
				Significant national and international events		2	2.03
				Special religious events		3	1.63
Business and trade	5.08	4	0.000	Attracting investors		1	2.90
				Large-scale commercial centers		2	2.71
				Marketing and employment opportunities		3	2.71
				Hosting major conferences and conventions		4	1.68
Infrastructure and transportation development	4.95	5	0.000	Security and safety		1	4.27
				Convenient and appropriate accessibility		2	3.87
				Green spaces		3	3.77
				Essential urban infrastructure		4	3.57
				Accessibility via public transportation		5	2.87
				Attractive pedestrian pathways		6	2.67
Places to visit	3.95	6	0.000	Valuable historic buildings		1	3.73
				Urban squares and public spaces		2	3.48
				Museums		3	3.08
				Historic pedestrian pathways		4	2.52
				Mosques and churches		5	2.19
Hospitality facilities	3.23	7	0.000	Accommodation facilities		1	3.68
				Restaurants, cafes, and traditional eateries		2	3.52
				Public restroom facilities		3	3.27
				Traditional hotels located in historic houses		4	2.79
				Healthcare centers		5	1.74
Educational facilities	3.19	8	0.000	Signage boards		1	3.76
				Tour guides		2	3.27
				Wayfinding maps		3	3.11
				Management and information centers		4	2.87
				Staff of hotels and tourism centers		5	1.98

the Haj Zeynal Bazaar, establishing retail corridors for local products, providing numerous discount shops, and creating entertainment facilities.

2) Presentation of culture, traditions, and rituals: Achieving this indicator can lead to the cultural regeneration of the area. In this regard, it is necessary to promote local arts and cultural

heritage, introduce cultural functions such as cinemas, theaters, and galleries, create opportunities for handicraft exhibitions, and organize traditional and religious ceremonies.

3) Events and exhibitions: Social regeneration of the passage can be supported by facilitating the organization of seasonal and annual exhibitions, major national and international

events, as well as special religious events. Given that the entrance and exit points of Kooy e Afshar passage are marked by two prominent religious landmarks at both the neighborhood and city scales of Shiraz, the holy shrines of Shah Cheragh and Seyed Taj al Din Gharib, organizing religious ceremonies and branding the passage as a pilgrimage route could play a significant role in its regeneration.

4) Business and trade: This indicator can contribute to the economic regeneration of the neighborhood through attracting investors, developing large commercial centers, promoting marketing initiatives, generating employment for local residents, and hosting conferences and major meetings, in order of priority.

5) Development of infrastructure and transportation: From the visitors' perspective, factors such as security, convenient accessibility, availability of green spaces, provision of essential urban infrastructure, access to public transportation, and attractive pedestrian routes can significantly contribute to attracting tourists and consequently facilitate neighborhood regeneration.

6) Visit-worthy places: Within this indicator, priorities include the restoration and rehabilitation of historic and valuable buildings; improvement, development, and reuse of urban squares and public spaces; introducing functions such as museums into valuable existing buildings along the passage, such as Basir al Saltaneh House, Shafi' Ardakani House, and Bayatpour House; developing historic pedestrian routes; and preserving and utilizing existing religious buildings within the area, including Haj Bagher Bolbol Mosque and Imam Ali Mosque.

7) Hospitality facilities: Accommodation spaces, restaurants, cafés, and traditional food courts, sanitary facilities, traditional boutique hotels established in historic houses, and healthcare centers are among the facilities required to support tourism based regeneration.

8) Educational and information facilities: Finally, it is important that the study area be equipped with tourism related facilities such as information boards, guides, tourist maps, management and information centers, and trained and specialized staff in hotels and tourism centers.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The results of the Friedman test indicate that the tourism indicators influencing the regeneration of the historical Afshar Alley are not perceived as equally important by tourists, and therefore can be ranked (significance level < 0.05). However, a closer examination of the mean ranks reveals that the numerical differences among several indicators are not particularly substantial. This is especially evident for the two indicators "retail" and "presentation of culture, traditions, and rituals," which share the same mean rank (5.23) and jointly occupy the highest level of importance. This overlap in scores

supports the notion of interdependence among indicators; in other words, within Afshar Alley, shopping and cultural experience do not function as separate activities but rather operate as a synergistic system. This finding is consistent with the results of Aminzadeh & Dadras (2012) in the historical fabric of Qazvin, who emphasized the role of culture-oriented tourism as a driving force for urban regeneration. It also aligns with contemporary approaches in urban tourism studies. Ashworth & Page (2011) argue that in historic urban environments, the atmosphere of place emerges from the interaction of small-scale economic activities, cultural events, and identity-related symbols rather than from a single component. From this perspective, retail activities in Afshar Alley should not be viewed merely as economic transactions but as part of the representation of local culture and a platform for tourists' lived experiences. The Haj Zeynal marketplace and the linear clusters of local product vendors, if revitalized and strengthened, could function as interactive spaces where economic exchange is intertwined with social interaction and cultural transmission. The placement of the indicator "events and exhibitions" in the third rank also highlights the importance of the temporal dimension in tourism-led regeneration. According to Richards (2011), events play a significant role in city branding and in creating competitive differentiation. In the case of Afshar Alley, its proximity to the shrines of Shah Cheragh (PBUH) and Seyyed Taj al-Din Gharib provides substantial potential for the development of religious and ritual events. This finding suggests that tourists perceive the religious-cultural identity of the alley as one of its comparative advantages, which could serve as a basis for designing seasonal and event-based programs aimed at attracting a larger number of visitors. A comparison of the mid-ranked indicators (ranks 4 to 8) reveals smaller differences among their mean scores. For instance, the difference between "infrastructure and transportation development" (mean 4.95) and "places to visit" (mean 3.95) is noticeable, yet the gap between "places to visit" and "hospitality facilities" (3.23) is not large enough to clearly distinguish them. This pattern highlights the complexity of the tourist experience in historic urban fabrics, where various elements, from physical spaces to services and activities, are interconnected within a complex and non-linear network. Contrary to the traditional hierarchical perspective, the results of this study suggest that lower-ranked priorities such as "educational facilities" or "hospitality services," although essential for the proper functioning of the space, are not usually perceived as primary elements in tourists' initial impressions. These services tend to play a supportive role in the tourism experience rather than acting as the main drivers of place attractiveness. Therefore, the lower ranking of these indicators does not imply that they are unimportant; rather, it indicates that in the hierarchy of tourist experience, identity-

based and cultural elements are perceived first, followed by supporting services. This interpretation is consistent with the views of Ashworth (2009) and Richards (2011), who argue that in historic urban contexts, tourists primarily seek authenticity, cultural experience, and the atmosphere of place, while welfare and service facilities function mainly as complementary components of that experience. Overall, the findings of the study indicate that “retail” and “culture and rituals” act as the primary driving elements, exerting the greatest level of influence and interaction with other indicators. “Events” also function as a temporal component that reinforces the cultural–social atmosphere of the alley. Meanwhile, the indicators of “infrastructure and transportation,” “business and commerce,” “places to visit,” “hospitality facilities,” and “educational facilities” operate within a supportive layer and, through systemic linkages, contribute to completing the tourists’ lived experience (Fig. 4). In the present study, although a quantitative questionnaire was employed to measure the relative importance of the indicators, the research also sought to explore tourists’ perceptions of the overall experience and to identify key influencing factors. Considering the sample size used in this study, generalizing the results to the entire city of Shiraz or to other historic districts should be approached with caution. The study, therefore, has a qualitative–exploratory character focused on a specific historical passage. Nevertheless, the in-depth analysis of the patterns observed among the respondents can provide a basis for future research with a broader scope and larger samples. These findings, similar to those reported by Ghaderi Dehkordi & Nedaei Tosi (2024), emphasize

the importance of locally grounded and community-based approaches alongside tourists’ needs within regeneration processes. In comparison with the study by Karimizadeh et al. (2018), which stressed the importance of infrastructure from the perspective of residents, the present research indicates that tourists’ priorities in Afshar Alley are more closely associated with experiencing authenticity, retail activities, and cultural events. This divergence between the priorities of residents and tourists highlights the necessity of adopting a comprehensive and balanced approach in the planning and management of historic urban fabrics—an approach capable of integrating the interests of all stakeholders within a shared vision for sustainable regeneration. Finally, the qualitative content analysis and the comparative interpretation of these findings in relation to the theoretical literature suggest that the regeneration of Afshar Alley should not focus solely on physical or infrastructural improvements. Rather, it requires the creation of meaningful experiences for tourists—experiences in which retail functions as a cultural showcase, while cultural events provide a platform for interaction and active tourist engagement.

Conclusion

Urban regeneration, as a comprehensive and integrated approach, aims to improve quality of life and enhance the economic, social, physical, and environmental conditions of cities. This process emphasizes the transformation of the spatial structure of urban areas through the creation of new relationships or the redefinition of existing ones. Urban regeneration, therefore, extends beyond physical renewal and encompasses the functional and symbolic reproduction of urban spaces. In this context, urban tourism, particularly within historic urban fabrics, has emerged as one of the key capacities for regeneration. Cities, due to their rich cultural and historical assets, possess significant potential to attract tourists. Urban tourism includes a wide range of activities such as visiting historical monuments, participating in cultural events, shopping, experiencing local lifestyles, and engaging with urban public spaces. According to urban tourism theorists, tourism can serve as an effective instrument for urban regeneration because it contributes to the revitalization of historic buildings, job creation, the improvement of urban infrastructure, the reuse of abandoned spaces, and the stimulation of local economic vitality. In the literature, several strategies have been proposed in this regard, including business tourism, cultural tourism, event-based tourism, attraction-led tourism, retail-oriented tourism, and entrepreneurship-driven tourism. In general, urban regeneration and urban tourism have a reciprocal and mutually reinforcing relationship. The development of tourism can contribute to achieving urban regeneration goals across multiple dimensions, while regeneration processes



Fig. 4. Conceptual model of the interaction of urban tourism indicators influencing the regeneration of historical alleys from the perspective of tourists. Source: Authors.

can, in turn, create favorable conditions for the expansion of tourism. Therefore, identifying the key elements of tourism and understanding how they influence the regeneration process can support more effective planning for the revitalization of historic urban areas. The urban regeneration approach, as a comprehensive and practical framework, has emerged in response to the numerous challenges faced by historic urban fabrics in contemporary cities. Given the multidimensional nature of this approach, selecting strategies that are compatible with the potentials and characteristics of the target area is essential. In this regard, due to the abundance of valuable tourism attractions within historic districts, and specifically within the study area, the urban tourism development approach can be considered an appropriate strategy for achieving regeneration objectives. In the present study, in order to address the existing problems of the historic Afshar passage located in the historic fabric of Shiraz, the indicators of urban tourism influencing regeneration were first identified and conceptualized through library-based research and a review of the theoretical literature. Subsequently, these indicators were prioritized using statistical and field-based methods. Based on the literature review, the framework consists of eight main indicators and twenty-three sub-indicators, including retail activities, presentation of culture, traditions and rituals, events and exhibitions, business and commerce, infrastructure and transportation development, places to visit, hospitality facilities, and educational facilities. Considering the

importance of citizen participation in achieving sustainable tourism and the necessity of addressing visitors' preferences in historic environments, the prioritization of indicators in this study was conducted from the perspective of tourists visiting the historic fabric and its alleys. The findings ultimately indicate that the prioritization of tourism indicators in the context of urban regeneration cannot be interpreted merely as a fixed and linear hierarchy. The close proximity of mean ranks and the equivalence observed among certain components, particularly those related to retail and cultural presentation, suggest that these dimensions are perceived in practice as an integrated experiential package characterized by interrelated and synergistic relationships. Therefore, rather than demonstrating the absolute superiority of one indicator over another, the results emphasize the networked and multidimensional nature of the tourism experience in historic urban environments, an experience in which the quality of place presence, cultural attractions, recreational activities, and supporting services gain meaning through their interaction. Accordingly, it is recommended that urban tourism policies and interventions in historic districts adopt an integrated and synergistic approach to organizing tourism elements, rather than focusing on the isolated strengthening of individual indicators.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the conduct and publication of this study.

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