

# Phenomenology of urban economy based on public transportation in tourist-oriented islands (Kish Island)

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## Case study

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## Abstract

The transport-based economy in island cities is intrinsically linked to the volume and intensity of tourism inflows and outflows, acquiring its identity in accordance with its functional scale. This study aims to examine the lived experience of the transport-based economic structure on the tourist island of Kish. Adopting a qualitative approach, the research was conducted using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the public transport fleet (taxis) and analyzed using coding, conceptualization, categorization, and interpretative analysis. The results, derived from 211 final codes, 18 concepts, and 4 categories, indicate that the public transport-based economy of Kish has emerged within an insular lifeworld, heavily dependent on the volume and intensity of tourism. Geographic constraints, the economic focus on tourism, and the status of Kish as a free zone have shaped a distinctive operational structure for the transport fleet, while seasonal fluctuations in tourism directly affect its economy. Findings further reveal that a profound, latent concern about the fragility of the island's economy rooted in lived experiences of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the twelve-day war has, as collective memories, reinforced perceptions of vulnerability among public transport stakeholders. Consequently, the public transport economy of Kish, as experienced by its operators, is one shaped by the coexistence with the island's capacities and limitations, oscillating between the relative calm of daily life and the apprehension of future instability.

**Keywords:** Island, Kish, Local Economy, Public Transportation, Tourism

## 1.Introduction

Public transportation networks are of critical importance for sustainable development, public health maintenance, and societal security (Chow et al., 2016). Public transportation systems encompass collective-use services designed to transfer individuals to various destinations within established networks. Buses, taxis, aircraft, trains, passenger motorcycles, and goods and services transfer services constitute examples of public transportation modes (Daviran, 2026). The operational efficiency of this system depends, on the one hand, upon various supporting factors (such as vehicle quality, updating services, maintenance systems, and transportation network quality and safety) and, on the other hand, upon the temporal scheduling system governing traffic flow within transportation networks. Intra-urban trips account for a substantial volume of public transportation traffic, primarily dependent upon urban transportation networks, work scheduling systems, and residents' activity patterns (Ramezanzadeh et al., 2015). In an urban system, easy, safe, comfortable, and economical mobility is paramount, and with economic growth in cities, the need for human and goods mobility increases (Ahmadzadeh, 2023).

One of the significant components in this domain is the relationship between public transportation accessibility and urban economic activities. Studies have demonstrated that improved access to public transportation can directly influence local economic development, including increasing the number of economic activities, employment generation, and developing the retail and services sectors. In fact, investment in public transportation aimed at enhancing sustainable mobility can create significant positive spillover effects on the local economic fabric, in addition to transportation benefits (Marzolla et al., 2025). Tourism studies indicate that public transportation plays an important role in increasing tourist mobility at destinations and enhancing the quality of the tourism experience. These services are associated with reduced transfer costs, improved access to cultural and natural attractions, and more balanced distribution of tourists throughout the city. Research evidence also suggests a positive relationship between transportation infrastructure development and tourism growth. In such a manner that improved transportation networks and reduced access time to scenic destinations lead to increased tourist satisfaction and longer duration of stay (Orujov, 2025). Similarly, from the perspective of urban economics, public transportation creates an intermediary relationship among residents, tourists, and the local economic environment. This is particularly significant in tourist cities where accommodation and transportation costs constitute a large portion of tourist expenditures; increased access to public transportation can play a decisive role in tourist experiences and increased expenditure, and function as a demand-driven economic factor against tourism intensity and concentration. Island cities with recreational and tourism functions in southern Iran, such as Qeshm, Kish, Hormuz, and Lavan, are recognized as cities where public transportation performance holds particular importance. The insular nature of these cities and the limitations on transfer and use of private vehicles have led tourists to utilize public transportation networks, particularly taxis. This very matter has expanded the economy based on public transportation within the urban network and created a structure of supporting services and businesses related to passenger transfer. Specifically, the development of this structure has led to increased employment in the transportation and related services sectors and strengthened tourist access to tourism sites. Kish Island, as one of the island cities with primarily tourism functions, hosts more than three million tourists annually who primarily access the island via air transportation and subsequently maritime transport. The insular nature and limitations on the use of private vehicles have resulted in tourists utilizing public transportation networks, particularly taxis and organized transfer services, more than ever before. This significant development has led to the formation of an economy based on public transportation, in which transportation services function not merely as tourist transporters, but

as shapers of a portion of the local urban economic structure that systematically endeavors to develop the level of services and the economy dependent upon it.

Nevertheless, despite this structural dependency, existing studies have predominantly focused on managerial, infrastructural, or functional aspects of transportation, and the mechanisms of formation and sustainability of the economy based on public transportation networks have been less examined from the perspective of the lived experiences of its beneficiaries. Consequently, how actors make meaning, internal relationships, interaction patterns, adaptation methods to tourism fluctuations, and informal mechanisms supporting this economy remain systematically understood. In fact, the principal concern of the present research is not merely public transportation efficiency, but rather the lack of deep understanding of the structure and functioning of the local economy formed around it within an insular and tourism context. An economy that acquires and reproduces meaning through the lived experiences of its beneficiaries. Therefore, this research, with the objective of examining the local economy based on public transportation in island cities with tourism functions, endeavors to structurally analyze the lived experience of the local economy based on public transportation networks (with emphasis on taxis). The innovation of this research lies in its focus on the local economy based on public transportation networks, in such a manner that the functional structure of this economy is explained from the perspective of beneficiaries lived experiences and through a phenomenological approach. Such an approach has not been addressed in related studies to date. Hence, the main research question is as follows: How is the structure and functioning of the economy based on public transportation networks formed and operationalized in tourism islands from the perspective of beneficiaries lived experiences?

## **2. Research Background**

Tourism in recent decades has experienced remarkable growth as an economic and social activity, serving as an effective factor in enhancing livelihood conditions, employment, and culture (Kachniewska, 2015). A significant portion of tourism revenue is allocated to regions with superior economic and welfare conditions, functioning as a catalyst for their economic growth. Revenue growth accompanying tourism development increases incentives for capital attraction and, consequently, elevates welfare levels (Bahmani & Namamian, 2020). Given that urban economics examines the distribution of economic activities, resources, and services within urban space, and analyzes the relationships among spatial structures, market functions, and policy-making decisions, public transportation stands as one of the pillars of urban economics. It is recognized as one of the key infrastructures for economic growth of destinations in both urban development theories and tourism theories (Jara Díaz, 2007). These infrastructures play a significant role in shaping tourism demand and strengthening urban economics by increasing tourist access to tourism sites, reducing transfer costs, and improving the visitation experience. Reviews indicate that studies concerning tourism economics based on public transportation have been limited, with the majority of research confined to their infrastructural development rather than the micro-economy derived therefrom. Nevertheless, among the studies conducted corresponding to the topics of transportation, economics, and tourism, the following may be noted:

Taghizadeh Farahmand (2020), in a study entitled "Examining the Impact of Urban Tourism on Urban Economy with Emphasis on Public Transportation Systems," demonstrates that urban tourism strengthens city economies by attracting visitors and creating employment and income opportunities, and that the existence of an efficient transportation network and easy access for tourists is a key factor in tourism prosperity and urban economic development.

Bahmani and Namamian (2020), in a research on "Designing an Urban Tourism Economy Model with a Structural-Interpretive Approach," concluded that among the dimensions of

indigenous and local production, and subsequently investment, income generation and foreign currency inflow from tourism sources possess the greatest penetration power.

Rajabi et al. (2022), in a study entitled "Presenting a Model for Sustainable Tourism Development in Qeshm Island with Focus on Visions and Challenges of Natural Tourism," addressed the topic of infrastructures and public transportation systems and their effect on tourism prosperity and development.

Garau et al. (2022), in a study entitled "Accessibility and Mobility of Public Transportation for a Smarter Island," concluded that improving public transportation systems can simultaneously reduce dependency on private vehicles and strengthen local economic activities in tourism destinations.

Bausch et al. (2024), in a research entitled "Factors Affecting Encouraging Tourists to Use Public Transportation at Holiday Destinations with Focus on Tourism Sustainability," conclude that the existence of guest cards with the possibility of free use of public transportation and tourists' habits of daily use of public transportation in their place of residence significantly increase their use of public transportation at the destination, whereas preference for using private vehicles has a negative effect on this choice.

Karabulut and Özün (2024), in a study on "The Role of Taxi-Based Public Transportation in the Local Economy," concluded that taxis indirectly increase the income of local businesses by enhancing citizens' and travelers' access to businesses, markets, and urban services. The role of taxis is particularly remarkable in less accessible urban neighborhoods and for the employment of local drivers.

### 3.Theoretical Framework

The economy based on public transportation at the urban scale can be examined within the frameworks of urban economics and welfare economics. In these theories, transportation is regarded not merely as a technical activity, but as an economic–spatial phenomenon that affects resource allocation, activity distribution, and social welfare. Small and Erik Verhoef, in their derived demand theory, state that the demand for transportation is neither independent nor final; rather, it is derived from the demand for other economic and social activities (Small & Verhoef, 2007). From this perspective, individuals and firms do not desire travel per se; rather, they undertake travel as a means of accessing employment, education, services, shopping, and recreational activities (Button, 2010). Travel and mobility cannot be considered as a final consumption good; rather, it is an intermediate good whose economic value is directly linked to the value created by the activities performed at the destination. For instance, the demand for using the metro or taxi does not arise from the act of traveling itself, but from individuals' need to access workplaces, commercial centers, or tourism attractions (Ortúzar & Willumsen, 2011). In urban tourism, particularly in islands where private transportation is constrained, the derived demand for public transportation is primarily not for the independent use of transportation modes such as taxis, but rather stems from tourists' need to access various parts of the city. Tourists rely on public transportation to reach scenic attractions, shopping centers, hotels, and urban events; therefore, their demand for transportation services is directly derived from the demand for tourist trips. Factors such as travel time, travel cost, group composition, travel purpose, physical fitness level, knowledge about transportation options at the destination, and weather conditions significantly influence the choice of transportation mode (Bursa et al., 2022). At the urban economics level, derived demand enables the prediction of the effects of public transportation on the local economy. Increased tourist access to urban attractions and facilities leads to revenue growth for hotels, restaurants, and shops; thus, public transportation functions not merely as an urban service, but as a catalyst for economic development in tourism-oriented areas. From this perspective, tourism can operate through the utilization of existing capacities and increased revenue for transportation services (Albalate & Bel, 2010).

The decision-making regarding the development of public transportation infrastructure is further elaborated within the theory of transportation investment. According to this theory, investment in transportation should be based on social cost–benefit analysis, the value of users' time, and long-term spatial effects. Increasing public transportation capacity without attention to induced demand and behavioral changes can lead to the reproduction of congestion, reduce transportation benefits for users, and diminish economic efficiency (Litman, 2023). Cost and performance studies indicate that public transportation networks can reduce average operational costs by increasing production volume (e.g., increasing passengers or the volume of services provided). This is because many costs, such as capital and management costs, are distributed over a larger scale, and this cost sharing increases operator efficiency. When operators provide services at a larger scale, the opportunity for optimal utilization of fleet and infrastructure increases, and the additional cost per trip decreases; this effect is recognized in the literature as economies of scale in the public transportation sector (Makhlouf & Helali, 2024).

In addition to economies of scale, the unique characteristics of service provision costs and market structure play a key role in determining operator efficiency (Hörcher & Tirachini, 2021). The Mohring effect is a term widely applied to economies of scale in public transportation. This effect demonstrates that if demand for public transportation increases and service supply is coordinated accordingly, increased service frequency leads to a reduction in passengers' average waiting time (Van Reeve, 2008; Mohring, 1972). The application of the Mohring effect in public transportation, particularly in tourist cities, becomes meaningful because travel demand in these cities is considerably variable and seasonal, and optimal management of service frequency, passenger waiting time, and capacity utilization acquires significant importance. According to the Mohring effect, an increase in the number of passengers compels transportation operators to provide higher-frequency services, which in turn leads to reduced average waiting time and travel cost (Silva, 2021).

In the literature of urban economics and transportation, the economy based on public transportation is defined as an infrastructure transcending mobility services, linked to increased accessibility, productivity, and local economic interactions. According to recent studies, investment in public transportation not only results in improved passenger mobility and reduced travel costs, but also systematically exerts positive spillover effects on urban economic development; such that in areas covered by increased transportation services, the number of economic activities, employment, and business growth have increased, which is itself a clear manifestation of the role of transportation in urban economics (Albalade & Bel, 2010). Moreover, from the perspective of the city or region, the transition from a system based on private vehicles to one based on public transportation and active travel is also economically beneficial, as it reduces average travel costs, frees land used for multi-lane roads or parking facilities, and decreases congestion, air pollution, noise, and urban sprawl costs (APTA, 2020). In a sense, access to public transportation in an area can also increase economic activity and can have extensive economic, social, and health benefits for individuals' lives. The ability to travel and connect with others is also a fundamental human capability and can itself be regarded as an indicator of welfare (Anciaes & Alhassan, 2024).

On the other hand, tourism intensity, as a demand-generating factor, increases pressure on public transportation networks, such that tourism destinations face increased trips during peak seasons, and this additional demand highlights the necessity of appropriate service and operational frequency adjustment (Albalade & Bel, 2010). Understanding the factors influencing transportation mode choice is important, as it also affects destination and accommodation choices. From this perspective, transportation is a supporting resource that influences access to tourism destinations and constitutes an inseparable part of the core tourism activity (Samková & Navrátil, 2023).

Therefore, with regard to the theoretical literature, the urban economy based on public transportation can be founded upon three main pillars: derived demand from economic and tourism activities, network and driver productivity, and optimal capacity and service frequency management. In tourist cities, tourists' demand for access to attractions, accommodation centers, and urban facilities leads to increased trips and productivity, which in turn results in revenue growth for local businesses and welfare for public transportation service operators. These relationships constitute the conceptual framework of the research and are analyzed through the theories of urban economics and welfare economics (Table 1).

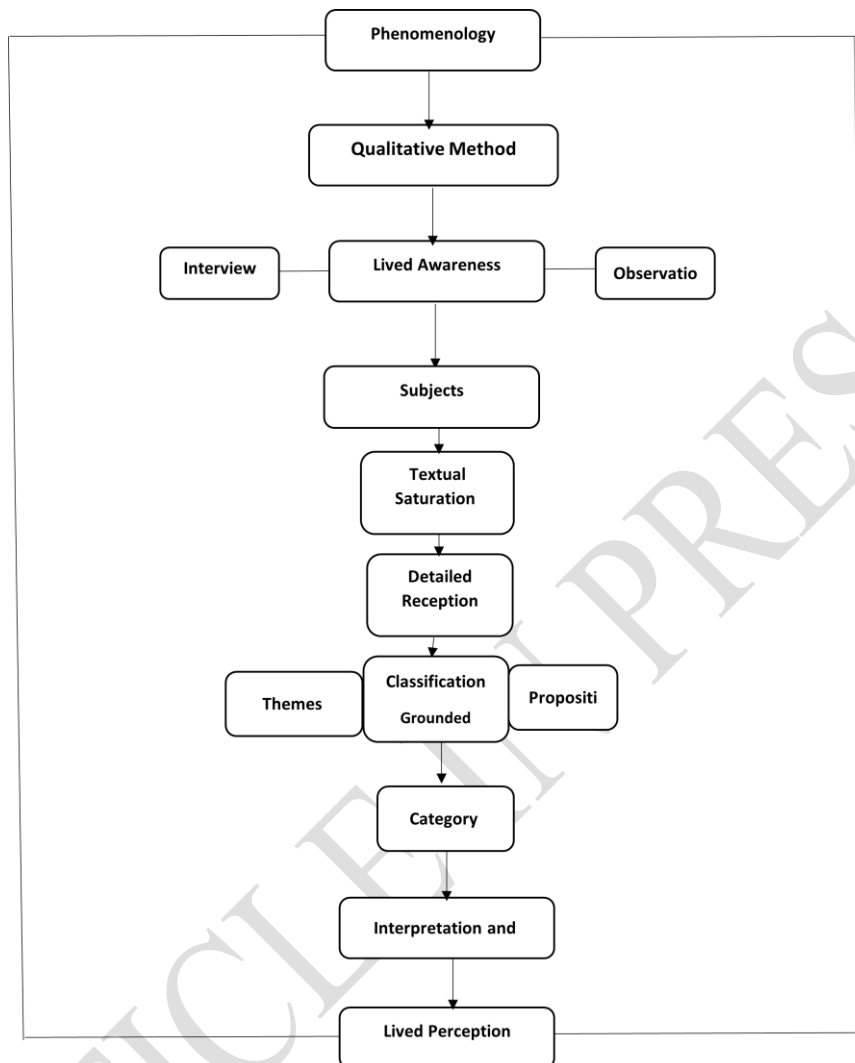
**Table 1. Documentation of the Conceptual Framework of the Urban Economy Based on Public Transportation in Tourism Destinations**

Conceptual Framework	Theoretical Concept	Scholarly Documentation
Derived demand for transportation	Derived demand theory; travel as an intermediate good	Small & Verhoef, 2007; Button, 2010; Ortúzar & Willumsen, 2011
Tourist demand for public transportation	Tourists' travel mode choice	Bursa et al., 2022; Samková & Navrátil, 2023
Economic role of public transportation	Economic spillover effects and local development	Albalate & Bel, 2010
Network and driver productivity	Economies of scale in public transportation	Makhlouf & Helali, 2024; Hörcher & Tirachini, 2021
Waiting time and service frequency	The Mohring effect	Mohring, 1972; Van Reeve, 2008; Silva, 2021
Capacity management in seasonal demand	Induced demand and transportation planning	Litman, 2023; Albalate & Bel, 2010
Welfare and urban accessibility	Welfare economics and mobility capability	Anciaes & Alhassan, 2024; APTA, 2020

#### 4. Materials and Methods

One of the most appropriate approaches for examining the effects of tourism-based public transportation on the local economy of tourist islands, particularly in spaces with distinctive spatial and economic structures such as Kish Island, is the phenomenological investigation of actors' lived experiences. The local economy in such cities is not merely the product of objective indicators such as travel volume, income, or employment, but rather the outcome of how beneficiaries, users, and actors in the public transportation sector perceive, experience, and live their daily lives within the tourism context. From this perspective, phenomenology provides the possibility of understanding this complex nexus among transportation, tourism, and the local economy at the level of human consciousness and experience. Phenomenology is the direct and unmediated understanding and intuition of objects and phenomena in order to express their essence (Vasegh et al., 2020). In other words, the study or knowledge of phenomena encompasses everything that appears to the mind and that humans experience. In fact, phenomenology is formed around the axis of consciousness and encompasses what is recognized as primary insight (Daviran, 2026). Lived experience is one of the most important and foundational concepts in phenomenology. In fact, phenomenological research is a method concerning human experience and the ways in which things, through and within it, bestow their experience upon us. In this approach, the exploration of phenomena—or rather, the lifeworld in which space dwellers, space wanderers, and space thinkers live—records the learned lifeworld and experiences that occur in the realm of the mind. Phenomenology endeavors to study phenomena such as the role of public transportation in livelihoods, economic productivity, and tourism dynamics as they appear in the minds and experiences of local actors. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding the local economy based on public transportation in island cities: a framework that makes possible the explication of hidden

meanings, economic perceptions, and lived logics of actors in relation to tourism and the urban mobility system(Figure 1).



**Figure 1. The Phenomenological Method Process in the Study of Lived Perception**

The present research is qualitative in nature and interpretive phenomenological in approach. The phenomenological approach was selected because the local economy based on public transportation in tourist islands is a multidimensional phenomenon dependent on the lived experiences of its primary actors, and its understanding is not possible merely through quantitative indicators. Phenomenology provides the possibility of revealing the economic meaning of public transportation as it is understood and experienced by beneficiaries and stakeholders. The main focus of the research is on the lived experience of public transportation drivers (white taxis) as the target community. An experience in which concepts such as seasonal tourism demand, trip frequency, income, productivity, and livelihood security are formed within the framework of daily perceptions. These experiences acquire meaning in the specific lifeworld of the island, which is accompanied by spatial constraints, tourism dependency, and activity density. Given that in phenomenological research the objective is not statistical generalization but rather achieving experiential richness and conceptual saturation, the sample size was determined based on the principle of theoretical saturation at 20 participants. In such a manner that with the repetition of similar data and the lack of access to new responses, the data collection process was halted and the data were categorized and

organized. Thus, theoretical saturation was relatively achieved after the 15th interview. Nevertheless, to ensure greater data stability and complete thematic coverage, the data collection process continued until the assurance of concept repetition was reached at the 20th participant. The sampling method in this research was convenience sampling, and snowball sampling was also employed to access more diverse experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Data analysis in this research was conducted based on the interpretive phenomenological approach, and its objective was the explication of the meaning of public transportation drivers' lived experience of the role of this sector in the local economy of Kish Island. After full transcription of the interviews, the texts were studied multiple times to obtain a general understanding of the participants' experiential content. Subsequently, meaningful propositions related to the economic dimensions of public transportation and tourism demand were identified and analyzed in the form of meaning units. The extracted meaning units were organized into main themes through an interpretive process and were interpreted within the framework of the theoretical foundations of urban economics and public transportation. The result of this process was the explication of the semantic structure of the local economy based on public transportation from the perspective of local actors lived experience in an island tourism destination. In order to enhance the credibility of the findings, data were analyzed through repeated study and continuous interpretive review to achieve a deep understanding of participants lived experience. The dependability of the research was ensured through transparent documentation of data collection and analysis stages and precise recording of the theme extraction process. Furthermore, to enhance confirmability, interpretations were grounded in participants' direct evidence and theoretical preconceptions were avoided. The transferability of the findings was also provided through contextual description of the research setting and the characteristics of Kish Island. Given that in phenomenology interview questions are not why-centered but rather experience-centered, the interviews were focused on drivers' lived experience of their daily economy, and the basis of the questions was aligned with the theoretical literature, focusing on items such as: drivers' economic lived experience, the effect of tourism seasons on the number of trips and productivity, changes in waiting time and the role of public transportation as an economic-intermediary activity, the effect of island characteristics and tourists' limitations in using private vehicles on work and income, their economic relationships with other local occupations, and personal perception of work and the role of public transportation in the island's economy.

## 5. Findings

Kish Island is located in southern Iran as one of the country's island cities. The area of this city is approximately 91 square kilometers with a relatively oval geometric shape (Figure 2). Kish is a relatively flat island, and its elevation above sea level does not exceed 10 meters. This characteristic has rendered most of the island suitable for urban development, tourism, and recreational infrastructure. The island possesses sandy and coral coasts. Its surrounding waters are shallow and transparent, and marine vegetation such as corals and seaweeds is observable in certain areas. This island has a hot and humid climate. Temperatures in summers exceed 40 degrees Celsius, while in winters they are moderate and range between 18 to 25 degrees Celsius. Relative humidity is high in most seasons, and rainfall is limited to winter months. According to the latest national population and housing census (2016), the population of this island city was approximately 40 thousand persons, which compared to 2011 (approximately 24 thousand persons) exhibited a growth rate of more than 11 percent. According to statistics received from Kish Free Zone in 2024, the population of this island has reached approximately 50 thousand persons, indicating rapid growth. Investigations indicate that the indigenous population of this island currently numbers approximately seven thousand persons, who are

predominantly settled in the Safin district and are mainly of Arab ethnicity. The demographic structure of Kish is immigrant-receptive from all parts of the country, particularly southern provinces such as Khuzestan, Fars, Sistan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kerman, who have migrated to this island for reasons of investment and employment and have gradually obtained permanent settlement. Functionally, this island is a tourism and commercial island that relatively hosts more than 3 million tourists annually.



Figure 2. Location of Kish Island in Iran

### 5.1. Transportation Structure of Kish Island

Kish Island possesses more than 50 hotels and over 12 thousand accommodation beds, with an average annual occupancy rate of approximately 70 percent (Kish Free Zone Organization, 2024). Given the limitations on the transfer and movement of private vehicles from other parts of the country to this island, the public transportation system based on taxis and vans has become highly functional on the island. According to the announcement of Kish Public Transportation Management, 700 taxis (white and yellow (line) and 80 minibus vans operate with approximately 1,300 drivers, a significant portion of whose fleet has been renovated through modernization schemes. It should be noted that a limited number of luxury taxis, known as London taxis, also operate, which are designated for the transportation and boarding of disabled and elderly persons with wheelchairs (Kish Water and Services Company, 2024). It is noteworthy that other transportation modes such as bicycles, electric motorcycles, and car rentals are also active in Kish. According to information from the Kish Free Zone Organization and field observations, at present most taxi vehicles are manufactured by Toyota and are imported, operating in Toyota Elantra, Toyota Corolla, and Toyota Camry models, which predominantly include models from 2016 onward.

In the direction of phenomenological investigation of the lived experience of the local economy based on public taxi transportation, the positioning of taxis within the island's boundaries was first examined. The results of field observation indicate that the deployment locations of white taxis are predominantly adjacent to hotels, urban commercial centers, the airport, the seaport, recreational and tourism sites, and restaurants, with limited circulation along urban axes as

well. Taxis are primarily stationed in rows at the aforementioned locations and, in turn, perform transfer services by boarding passengers (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Location of Public Transportation (White Taxi) in the Urban Fabric of Kish Island**



The findings derived from interviews with the target community indicate that the average age of drivers is 52 years, with an average residence history of 10 years on the island, and they have been relatively active in the public transportation (taxi) sector for approximately the same duration. The target community is predominantly immigrant, with dispersion across neighboring and southern provinces of Iran such as Sistan, Khuzestan, Fars, Kerman, Bushehr, and Hormozgan. The target community is married and has at least one child.

The findings resulting from the interview process encompass more than 211 shared propositions (final open codes), which through classification and conceptual sharing were reduced to 12 concepts and 6 categories. The phenomenological interpretation of propositions, concepts, and categories is as follows:

#### *5.2. Category: Season and Demand*

This category is the product of 43 propositions (open codes) and 4 concepts, constituting the effect of season and passenger demand on the public transportation economy. The interpretive content of this category addresses how white taxi drivers on Kish Island perceive and experience temporal fluctuations in travel demand and their economic consequences on their occupational status. The findings indicate that the public transportation economy based on white taxis on Kish Island is not a static and uniform matter, but rather a time-bound experience that acquires meaning through seasonal changes. The lived experience of public transportation beneficiaries demonstrates that the tourism nature of Kish Island and the presence of tourists shape the lifeworld of public transportation work. In such a manner that high-demand and low-demand seasons determine not only the amount of income but also the rhythm of daily life and future economic planning based on public transportation. Taxi beneficiaries experience their economy as a cycle—a cycle oscillating between effective prosperity and relative recession. Although Kish Island management has attempted to reduce relative recession during certain

periods of the year by organizing festivals, tourism tours, and diverse passenger attraction programs, nevertheless in the lived narratives of beneficiaries, peak travel months, particularly from January to March, are described as periods when the city is alive, active, and dynamic, and continuous activity is in progress. In these intervals, a noticeable increase in income is experienced. Fleet beneficiaries stated in their lived experience that the concentration of a major portion of annual income in a few limited months prevents them from having secure financial planning for the future, and during recession periods they turn to other occupations or temporarily migrate to other cities. This very matter has caused household livelihood dependency on short periods to conceal mental and economic pressure behind the experience of higher income, and to engage in economic planning for different periods.

From mid-spring to the end of summer, particularly the months of May, June, and July, in the public transportation experience of Kish acquire meaning as times of recession, waiting, and indeed renovation. During this period, with a noticeable decrease in the number of passengers, a type of hidden unemployment is observed in the economic lifeworld of public transportation beneficiaries on the island, such that despite continuous presence at the workplace, economic returns and, proportionally, income decrease. Due to the persistence and increase of living costs in Kish and the mismatch between work and income, occupational change or temporary migration to other cities is a common practice for public transportation beneficiaries on Kish Island.

The economic activity pattern of public transportation is directly influenced by seasonal fluctuations. Such that during high-tourist seasons (December to March), the work experience involves increased hours of activity, reduced rest time, and predominantly round-the-clock operation (with driver rotation). Although the geographical and climatic structure of tourist reception on Kish Island leads to the formation of peak and decline tourism periods, nevertheless the taxi transportation fleet attempts to secure the minimum economic requirements of beneficiaries by reducing the level of activity. However, with decreased demand, concern regarding livelihood cost provision increases. The lived experience of the economy based on public transportation among beneficiaries demonstrates that in addition to climatic issues affecting tourist attraction, during the occurrence of social, political, and security crises (such as the 12-day war, COVID-19 disease, influenza) or related political rumors, with severe reduction of tourists on the island, the economy of public transportation beneficiaries on the island also faces serious challenges. The lived experience of beneficiaries demonstrates that the economy based on public transportation on Kish Island is strongly dependent on tourism. Nevertheless, given the temporal patterns of tourist decrease and increase on the island, taxi beneficiaries are not passive actors in facing these conditions. They employ multiple adaptive strategies in their daily lives to manage their occupational economy. Saving and investing income derived from high-demand seasons, temporary employment in other occupations during summer, temporary migration to other cities (primarily migration origin cities), and temporary trade in certain goods are among the methods that drivers resort to in order to pass through recession periods. The lived experience of white taxi drivers on Kish demonstrates that the category of season and tourism demand is not an external variable, but an inseparable part of their economic lifeworld. The local economy based on public transportation on this island is a time-bound, fluctuating, and tourism-dependent economy in which drivers are constantly moving among effort, waiting, and adaptation. The category of season and demand is intertwined with the concepts of income fluctuation, temporal dependency, activity intensity, occupational security, and adaptability (Table 2).

**Table 2. Concepts and Final Propositions of the Season and Time Category in the Public Transportation Economy of Kish Island**

Concepts	Propositions (Open Codes)
<b>Income and Temporal Fluctuation</b>	Noticeable increase in income during peak travel months, particularly from January to March. Severe income decreases during May, June, and July. Household livelihood is highly dependent on high-demand seasons. Concentration of a major portion of annual income in a few limited months. Difficulty in monthly income prediction. Fluctuations related to security and political issues and severe tourist reduction. Vulnerability of the public transportation economy. Increased financial pressure. Growth of livelihood costs during low-income periods. Feeling of income inequality throughout the year.
<b>Work and Activity Intensity</b>	Increased working hours during high-tourist seasons and reduced rest time. Intensive daily and nightly activity (December to March). Long waiting for passengers. Decrease in daily trip numbers (low-demand months). Experience of hidden unemployment. Physical exhaustion during peak travel periods. Waste of working time during recession season. Instability of daily work patterns.
<b>Continuity and Security</b>	Drivers' feeling of occupational security is predominantly limited to tourist seasons. Increased concern during low-demand periods and fear regarding livelihood cost provision. Dependency of future occupational prospects on tourism. Lack of stable annual income. Economic anxiety and feeling of occupational vulnerability. Absence of institutional support during recession season. Reinforcement of long-term occupational instability feeling among taxi drivers.
<b>Economic Adaptability</b>	Saving and investing income from high-demand seasons to compensate for seasonal fluctuations. Increasing personal working hours. In some cases, temporary employment in other occupations. Reduction of household expenses during recession season. Focus on high-tourist-traffic routes. Selection of more profitable working hours. Endurance of difficult economic conditions. Hope for the next prosperous peak season.

*5.3. Category: Waiting and Productivity*

The findings derived from interviews with white taxi drivers on Kish Island indicate that the public transportation activity pattern in this island city is strongly influenced by tourism and the temporal rhythm of passenger entry and exit, as well as their movement and excursion patterns on the island. As mentioned, the public transportation fleet is predominantly stationed at locations such as hotels, the airport, commercial centers, and tourism sites, and given the volume and number of the fleet, with the exit of tourists from these spaces, passengers are boarded almost immediately and the trip commences. Based on field observations and interviews with taxi beneficiaries, taxi fleet movement is limited to linear and route-based traffic on main urban axes, and stations and stopping locations exist as formally predetermined (such as taxi stations located at Kish Airport) or conventionally established (at hotel entrances, commercial complexes, etc.), with passenger boarding predominantly performed on a turn basis. According to observations made and the use of taxi transportation, as well as interviews with fleet beneficiaries, the continuous presence of the fleet at conventionally and formally designated locations (stations) during most times, particularly during high-traffic periods, has resulted in the absence or extreme brevity of waiting time for passengers. This very matter has greatly facilitated tourist access to public transportation fleet at various hours of the day and night.

The findings derived from interviews and observation indicate that public transportation based on taxis on Kish Island is predominantly performed as private hire (darbasti) with predetermined (official and conventional) rates, and relatively fleet beneficiaries also demonstrate full cooperation and fairness in adhering to established fares. Unlike some other cities in the country where private hire rates are subject to the driver's and passenger's opinion, request, negotiation, and bargaining, on Kish Island fleet rates are subject to fleet adherence to established fares, which rarely leads to dialogue or negotiation between drivers and passengers. Field findings indicate that for short routes, primarily under two kilometers, the fare is

approximately 150 thousand; for routes between two to five kilometers, the fare is 200 to 250; and for longer routes, the fare ranges between 250 to 300 thousand tomans. The findings indicate that shared fares resulting from route-based traffic constitute a small share in passenger transfers, and most fleet transfers are of a private hire nature. Interpretation of interviews regarding the concept of temporal periods of waiting and fleet economic productivity indicates that during seasons and months (such as mid-spring to mid-autumn) when the island receives fewer tourists and is colloquially referred to as "dead" and low-demand tourism months, due to decreased tourist entry to the island, waiting time for finding passengers has increased and sometimes longer intervals between trips are created. Under these conditions, due to decreased fleet economic productivity, inevitably some fleet and beneficiaries exit and rest from the service provision cycle, and the local economy based on public transportation experiences fluctuation and temporary damage. Interviews with fleet beneficiaries indicate that during times of decreased tourism, waiting time for receiving passengers reaches approximately 20 to 45 minutes and sometimes longer, and the number of fleet services per working shift decreases (3 to 4 services per working shift), affecting the economy. On the opposite side, during peak tourism times and periods on the island, particularly in the months of December, January, February, and early March, this situation is reversed and drivers usually board a new passenger within an interval of approximately 5 to 15 minutes and depart. The findings derived from interviews indicate that the number of services provided by drivers during peak tourism times per working shift averages between 8 to 10 services.

The lived perception of taxi fleet beneficiaries on Kish Island demonstrates that beneficiaries, through the lived experience derived from continuous activity, clearly connect temporal fluctuations with daily and seasonal tourism cycles. In such a manner that they align daily and seasonal peak times requiring fleet presence with the commencement times of commercial center activities, flight arrival times at the airport, hours following hotel breakfasts, as well as the opening and closing times of tourism sites, and sunset times on the island (tourist traffic to island beaches—such as Greek Ship Beach, Coral Beach, etc.), and coordinate their activity concentration accordingly. The perceptual experience of the Kish taxi fleet demonstrates that peak demand intervals and increased trip numbers not only lead to improved daily income but also render the work flow smoother, and despite coinciding with increased work fatigue, create a greater sense of productivity in fleet economic activity and generate a positive feeling in the economy dependent on the island's public transportation fleet.

On Kish Island, the economic activity of the public transportation fleet based on white taxis is directly correlated and coordinated with tourism fluctuations and the scheduling of tourist entry and movement. During high-traffic periods, driver productivity increases and waiting time is minimized, whereas low-demand seasons lead to decreased trips, prolonged waiting time, and income decline. This dual pattern, from an analytical perspective, is consistent with the logic of the Mohring effect in public transportation. In such a manner that increased demand not only leads to increased workload but also to reduced waiting time and enhanced transportation system efficiency, creating simultaneous benefits for driver and passenger in the local tourism-based economy of Kish Island. Therefore, from a phenomenological perspective, waiting time and productivity are experiential and perceived concepts that have a direct relationship with tourism rhythm and local economic performance. This emphasizes that public transportation in tourism-oriented islands, in addition to service provision, plays a central role in the dynamism and stability of beneficiaries' economy (Table 3).

**Table 3. Concepts and Final Propositions of the Waiting and Productivity Category in the Public Transportation Economy of Kish Island**

Concepts	Propositions (Shared Codes)
<b>Waiting Time and Demand Rhythm</b>	Drivers experience a noticeable decrease in waiting time for finding passengers during tourist seasons. The temporal interval between trips at high-traffic stations shortens. Proximity to hotels, the airport, and tourism sites minimizes waiting time. Simultaneous flight arrivals create temporary demand peaks. Waiting time is a function of daily hours and tourism site activities. During low-demand periods, long waiting for passengers is formed. A portion of working time is spent without trips. Long waiting is perceived as economic waste of time.
<b>Productivity and Economic Efficiency</b>	Increased demand leads to increased daily trip numbers. Reduction of vehicle idle time increases productivity. Drivers feel that their daily effort yields returns. Continuous passenger flow makes work smoother. Income per unit of time increases. More effective fleet utilization is experienced during busy periods. Simultaneity of increased income and work fatigue is observed. Occupational productivity is directly linked to tourist density. Decreased demand causes noticeable productivity decline.
<b>Economic Perception</b>	Drivers consider decreased waiting time as a result of increased passengers. Increased demand improves taxi system efficiency. Benefits of increased passengers are experienced simultaneously for driver and passenger. Economic efficiency is more perceived on busy days. The positive effect of demand concentration on income is understood as lived experience. The experience of busyness is accompanied by a feeling of economic prosperity. Drivers regard decreased waiting as a sign of system functioning. Positive work feeling is created, and increased demand does not lead to negative congestion but rather reinforces productivity.

*5.4. Category: Meaning and Personal Perception*

The findings derived from this category encompass 4 concepts with 50 final propositions. The lived experience obtained from interviews demonstrates that in the lived experience of white taxi fleet drivers on Kish, public transportation acquires meaning beyond an occupational activity, as a central infrastructure of the urban economy and the main axis of the island's livelihood. The specific geographical and institutional conditions of the island (including limitations on the entry and transfer of private vehicles) and the dependency of mobility on tourism have caused public taxis to play the role of a substitute for private transportation and a key element in the continuation of the city's economic life. The lived experience of beneficiaries demonstrates that public transportation is not merely a facilitator of tourism, but part of the mechanism of local economic reproduction, and drivers, alongside passenger transfer, perform extensive service roles such as procuring and selling tickets for tourism sites, guiding tourists, providing tour and island excursion services, and performing personal requests on a case-by-case basis, which services, alongside tourist transfer services, lead to the creation of income and better circulation of the public transportation economy. Such that some drivers introduce island tourism tours to passengers (tourists) at their request and guidance, and procure tickets for them through coordination. In this process, drivers refrain from charging any additional fees for guidance or purchasing island tourism tours, tourism site tickets, and other items, and receive their commission from the service providers. In fact, drivers do not receive additional compensation for guiding and directing tourists, but by introducing them to places that provide tours and various island programs, they endeavor to obtain economic benefits from the service providers. This matter is performed in the best manner as a convention among taxi drivers and tourism service providers on Kish Island.

As mentioned, drivers' livelihood economy is perceived in a direct relationship among tourist volume, fleet balance, and household economic stability. This perception demonstrates that the public transportation economy in Kish has a relatively unstable structure that shows vulnerability both against demand decrease and against supply disproportionality. Simultaneously, the high costs of living on the island (resulting from land limitation, high

housing prices, and dependency of goods supply on air and maritime transportation) intensify this dependency and transform tourism fluctuations into a livelihood and psychological issue. The findings demonstrate that the daily life of fleet beneficiaries is intertwined with the cycle of tourist entry, stay, excursion, and exit. White taxi activity is adapted from the time of tourist entry from the airport or seaport, transfer and accommodation, movement to tourism and commercial sites, until their exit from the island, and organizes the work rhythm of drivers. During peak tourism days, their activity predominantly continues until midnight at high-traffic locations, and the work system is generally organized in a shift-based and rotational manner (two drivers for one vehicle) in order to maintain balance between work requirements and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, daily life scheduling remains strongly subject to the tourism rhythm, and opportunities for attending to family and personal matters are limited during peak periods. The geographical limitation of the island and the short distance between residence and activity points provide the possibility of short-term returns for meals or essential family matters, and create a type of practical adaptation between work and family life. Drivers' perception demonstrates that the horizon of future planning is also dependent on the island's tourism economy. Surplus income derived from activity during high-demand periods is managed in commercial sectors, small investments, or savings. Given that a considerable portion of drivers are immigrants who initially entered the island individually and subsequently transferred their families, housing provision has become a primary concern for them. High rental costs and land limitation have made planning for housing purchase and ownership necessary, and the findings demonstrate that many drivers with less than five years of experience are still tenants and direct their income investment toward family housing security. The category of meaning and personal perception demonstrates that white taxi drivers on Kish see public transportation not merely as a job, but as a meaning-making element in the economy, occupational identity, and daily life. They are situated at the intersection of job satisfaction, service role in tourism, economic dependency, and structural vulnerability, and their activities at the personal, family, and economic levels are entirely intertwined with the flow of tourism and island dynamics (Table 4).

**Table 4. Concepts and Final Propositions of the Meaning and Personal Perception Category in the Public**

Concepts	Propositions (Open Codes)
<b>Role in the Island Economy</b>	Public taxi is the main pillar of tourism and the island economy. Passenger transfer causes the flow of life in the city. Fleet activity is the main infrastructure of the urban economy. Without taxis, tourism slows down. With more tourists, the family economy improves. Our services beyond transfer strengthen tourism. The quality of our fleet attracts tourist trust. Our continuous presence stabilizes the island's economic flow. Even on busy days, our role is key. The taxi system is a substitute for private transportation. The fleet is coordinated with tourist entry and exit. Every activity of ours on the routes is related to the island economy. With tourism, family income and job are stabilized.
<b>Life Management and Balance</b>	By working in shifts among colleagues, we manage family life and reach our families even during peak passenger periods. Daily scheduling is subject to the tourism rhythm. During peak periods, we work until midnight. Through coordination and colleague rotation, we mainly eat meals at home and adjust personal life with shift work. Tourist excursion and accommodation shape the daily program. Family future planning is dependent on taxi income. We save and invest at least the surplus income. We manage income for housing ownership and family future. High living costs cause us to have more precise planning. Family life is intertwined with high-traffic routes and shifts. Time limitation causes us to weigh work and family priorities.
<b>Complementary Tourism Services</b>	Guiding passengers to procure tickets for tourism sites is our duty. We endeavor to guide tourists on routes and, through coordination with agencies and island tours, introduce and provide tour and island excursion services. We do not charge passengers and tourists any fees for providing services. We receive commission from service providers (agencies, tourism sites, etc.). The amount of commission depends on the

	<p>passenger's purchase amount. We perform some personal requests of tourists such as buying fruit, etc. With our guidance and services, tourists have a better experience. Activities beyond driving increase income and job satisfaction. Complementary services cause economic flow in the island. Cooperation with tourism centers is part of our daily work. Even our small activities are effective in attracting tourists. Our services cause tourism and family job continuity. Drivers are coordinated in providing complementary services. Our role in tourism has gone beyond mere transportation, and with knowledge of the island, our services strengthen the tourism experience and local economy.</p>
<p><b>Lived Perception of Occupation</b></p>	<p>We consider the taxi occupation as our identity. Our work creates a sense of usefulness. Continuous presence in the tourism cycle gives meaning and satisfaction. Activity during tourism peaks creates a sense of efficacy. We understand our family economy's dependency on tourism. Our occupation is always in the stress of psychological security and hope for the future. Increased tourists bring us a feeling of satisfaction and productivity, and their decrease leads to anxiety and psychological pressure. The taxi occupation is part of our identity and daily experience. Our activity creates a feeling of role in the island economy. Tourism fluctuations change the meaning of the occupation. Every daily service is part of my economic responsibility. Our occupation shapes family opportunities and limitations.</p>

*5.5. Category: Capacity and Limitation*

Capacity and limitation of Kish Island and its relationship with the lived experience of the public transportation fleet is a category explained in the form of 7 concepts and 82 propositions. The phenomenology of interviews with the public transportation fleet (white taxis) of Kish Island demonstrates that the work experience of drivers in this space is intertwined with island-specific characteristics, spatial and institutional limitations, and economic–tourism capacities. The lived perception of drivers considers Kish not merely as a place of employment, but as a lifeworld enclosed by waters and controllable, whose laws, opportunities, limitations, and threats fundamentally differ from cities in other parts of Iran.

The insularity of Kish and its location within a closed and enclosed area in the southern waters of the country, together with maritime trade and tourism connections with neighboring countries such as the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain, has led to the formation of a special structure in the flow of goods, vehicles, and tourist entry. The existence of a seaport and commercial harbor for the transportation of private vehicles (Iranian-plated), imported vehicles, and other goods, alongside the island's free zone status and free entry of many commodities, has created a different economic space that directly affects the public transportation demand pattern.

Land and space limitation, the small and round shape of the island, and the possibility of traffic control due to these characteristics, alongside health and environmental controls and attention to the island's fragile ecosystem, have created a type of spatial order and discipline that in drivers' experience acquires meaning as high safety, environmental cleanliness, traffic quality, and relative predictability of daily work. The intelligence of many urban and transportation services, the relative security prevailing on the island, and integrated management have reinforced the feeling of working in a relatively smart and controlled system in drivers' minds. In this context, the limitation on the transfer and use of private vehicles (Iranian-plated) for tourists has consolidated the position of the public transportation fleet as one of the main pillars of the local economy. This matter has caused drivers to not see themselves merely as passenger transporters, but to be considered as part of the island's tourism experience. An experience that acquires meaning with the entry of domestic and foreign tourists, sports teams, the holding of festivals, ceremonies, and diverse cultural programs, and the development of maritime and land tourism. The intense concentration of the island's economy on tourism has caused the work rhythm of drivers to be directly adjusted with seasons, events, and the volume of tourist entry.

Nevertheless, despite existing limitations, interviews with public transportation fleet beneficiaries demonstrate that despite high living costs, hot and humid climatic conditions for at least seven months of the year, and decreased tourist entry during these periods, they have relative satisfaction with their presence and employment in the island fleet. Appropriate fleet vehicle quality, respectful and professional driver conduct, relative island tranquility, security and safety, the holding of tourism-related training courses, and the relatively participatory and coherent management of the Kish Free Zone Organization with the public transportation fleet constitute the most important factors of satisfaction. These factors collectively have led to the creation of relative occupational tranquility and a sense of professional dignity among drivers. However, in the mental and perceptual layer of lived experience, there exists a type of hidden concern regarding the fragility of the island's economy. Drivers clearly state that Kish's economy is strongly affected by the country's macroeconomic, political, and security conditions, and any crisis can quickly disrupt the tourism flow and, consequently, the public transportation economy. The lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic period and also the twelve-day war, as shared collective memories, remind the fleet of this limitation in their minds. Periods in which many hotels were closed, tourist entry severely decreased, the island's economy experienced noticeable decline, and the public transportation fleet and its dependent economy were directly and severely damaged. Therefore, the public transportation economy of Kish in drivers' experience is an economy that is intertwined with the island's limitations and capacities and has acquired identity from coexistence with them. This economy, on the one hand, provides order, relative security, job satisfaction, and work tranquility, and on the other hand, due to its strong dependency on tourism and exogenous factors, is always accompanied by fear of instability. This duality between daily tranquility and future concern shapes the core semantic experience of white taxi drivers on Kish in the category of island characteristics and limitations (Table 5).

**Table 5. Concepts and Final Propositions of the Capacity and Limitation Category in the Public Transportation Economy of Kish Island**

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Propositions (Final Open Codes)</b>
<b>Island Lifeworld</b>	The island is located in a closed area in the south of the country. The round and small shape of the island enables control and management. The existence of the seaport and airport determines passenger and goods entry and exit conditions. The fragile island ecosystem requires protection. Relative security prevailing on the island affects the work experience. Limitation on private vehicle entry has made passenger and tourist movement dependent on the public fleet. The majority of people are immigrants from other cities in the country. The existence of limitations and capacities shapes drivers lived experience.
<b>Island Ecology and Space</b>	Land and space limitation restricts fleet activity. Hot and humid weather for more than 7 months of the year affects drivers' traffic and activity. Resource limitation and environmental management determine the framework of fleet activities. Limited island capacity causes the fleet to acquire identity through coexistence and proportionality with these limitations. Health and environmental controls affect the manner of service provision. Ground traffic limitation and entry and exit during crisis times such as the 12-day war or COVID reduce fleet activity.
<b>Tourism and Commerce Nexus</b>	The island as a regional tourism and trade center shapes fleet activity. Entry of foreign tourists, sports teams, and the holding of festivals affect driver activity. The fleet overlaps with hotels, shops, and tourism sites in the route of tourist entry, excursion, and exit. The island's concentration on tourism determines the fleet economy. The fleet strengthens tourism through complementary services (tickets, tour guiding, guidance). Active fleet participation in tourism gives meaning to drivers' livelihood and occupational experience.
<b>Public Transportation Dominance</b>	Public taxi is a substitute for private vehicles and the axis of passenger mobility. Continuous fleet presence stabilizes the island's economic flow. Vehicles with appropriate quality, drivers with respect and training courses provide a standard experience. Complementary activities cause tourism and island economic flow

	continuity. The fleet is coordinated with tourist entry and exit. Even drivers' small activities are effective in attracting tourists. Drivers strengthen the local economy by providing complementary services.
<b>Perceived Institutional Order</b>	The island's management system and free zone policies facilitate drivers' activity conditions. Continuous presence in the tourism cycle creates meaning and satisfaction. Training courses and organizational order contribute to productivity and service quality. Island management cooperation is appropriate. Necessary facilities are provided. Island management effort for fleet modernization. Complaint and participation system. Kish Drivers Community Institution.
<b>Tourist-Centric Livelihood Limitation</b>	Family economy dependency on tourist volume and fleet balance is evident. Decreased tourist entry causes income declines and livelihood pressure. High living and housing rental costs intensify the pressure. Tourism instability in economic, political, and health crises affects drivers. Drivers facing decreased tourism are forced to change occupation or temporarily migrate. Livelihood dependency on tourism makes the public transportation economy vulnerable.
<b>Stability–Anxiety Duality</b>	Drivers have relative job satisfaction experience. Occupational meaning and motivation go beyond income. In stable tourism conditions, hope and motivation increase. In macro crises (war, COVID, decreased tourism), psychological pressure and job insecurity are noticeable. Drivers lived experience oscillates between continuous activity flow and anxiety of tourism dependency. Planned future is dependent on income derived from tourism and investment in housing and commerce. Drivers endeavor to create balance between personal and occupational life through intelligent management and rotational planning.

### 5.6. Tangible Findings

Given the topic, problem, and research question—that is, how the economy based on the public transportation network in tourist islands is formed, structured, and functions from the perspective of beneficiaries lived experiences—it can be stated in the conceptual model that categorical elements and concepts have operated in an interactive network with one another (Figure 4). The most important research findings indicate:

- Public transportation based on white taxis in Kish operates beyond an occupation, as a vital infrastructure for the tourism economy and the daily life of island residents.
- The economy of the Kish taxi fleet has a time-bound, seasonal, and fluctuating nature, and is directly coordinated with the daily and seasonal rhythm of tourism.
- The island characteristics of Kish, including space limitation, traffic control, and the prohibition of private vehicle entry for tourists, have increased public transportation efficiency, reduced passenger waiting time, and consolidated the position of this fleet on the island.
- White taxi drivers, in addition to passenger transfer, play an active service role in the tourism chain and consider themselves part of the tourism experience.
- Despite relative satisfaction resulting from occupational security, order, and professional dignity, the fleet economy is vulnerable to exogenous shocks, such as decreased tourist numbers or political and security crises.
- This duality between work tranquility during prosperous periods and constant concern regarding livelihood instability shapes the core semantic experience of drivers.
- In facing seasonal fluctuations, drivers are active and adaptive actors, and manage their livelihood through strategies such as saving, complementary employment, and temporary migration.
- The operational pattern of the white taxi fleet is consistent with the logic of the Mohring effect. In such a manner that increased demand simultaneously enhances driver productivity and passenger welfare.

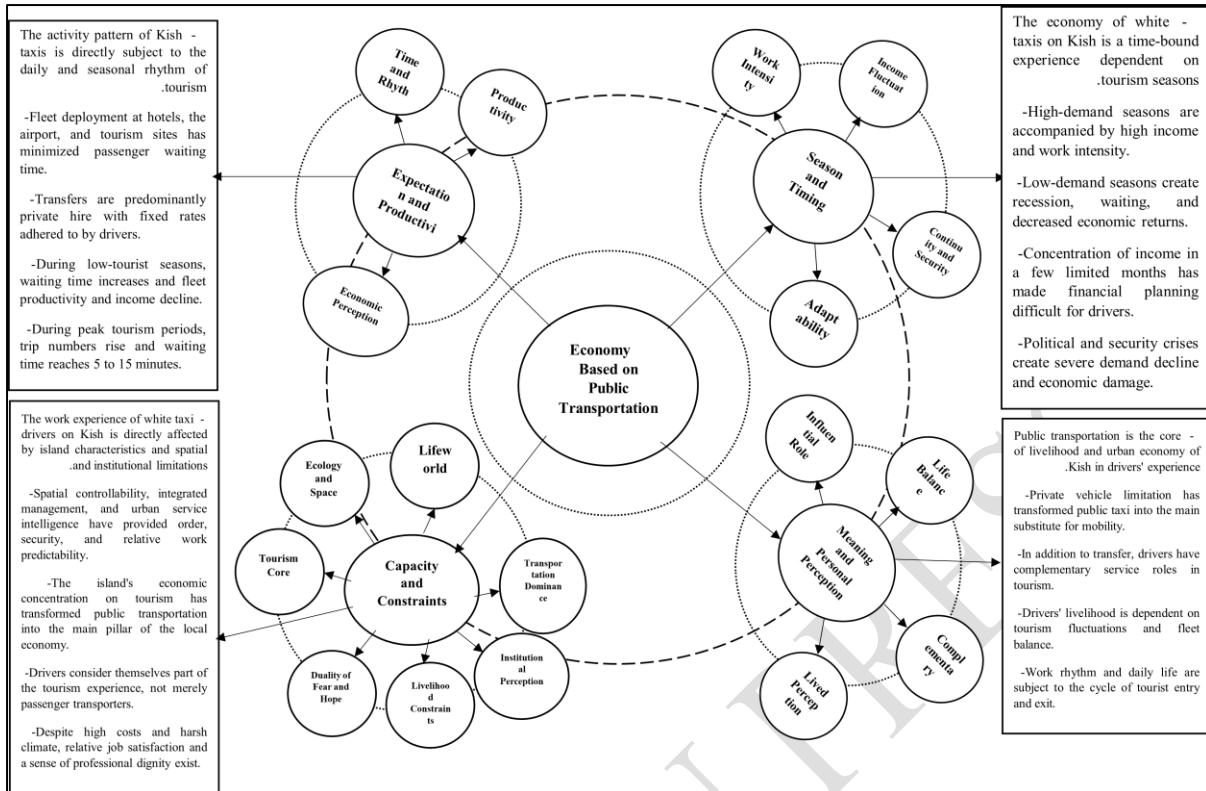


Figure 4. Phenomenological Findings of the Urban Economy Based on Public Transportation on Kish Island

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

The explication and perception of the role of public transportation in the urban economy, particularly in island tourist cities, necessitates attention to the lived logics of its actors. Island cities, with spatial limitations, strong dependency on tourism, and temporal demand fluctuations, provide a context in which public transportation is considered not merely an urban service, but a fundamental mechanism of local economic reproduction. The present research, utilizing the interpretive phenomenological approach, explored the urban economy based on public transportation from the perspective of its beneficiaries lived experience on Kish Island. The research findings, consistent with four categories, 18 concepts, and 211 shared propositions (codes), demonstrate that the economy based on public transportation on Kish Island has a time-bound, fluctuating, and strongly tourism-dependent nature. In the lived experience of beneficiaries, tourism seasons operate as the main framework organizing economic activity, and determine not only the level of income but also work intensity, occupational security, livelihood planning, and even the decision to stay or temporarily migrate. During peak tourism periods, increased demand leads to reduced waiting time, increased fleet productivity, and the formation of a feeling of economic prosperity. Whereas during recession periods, long waiting, decreased trip numbers, and income decline lead to the emergence of a type of hidden unemployment and psychological–livelihood pressure. This dual pattern, from an experiential perspective, is consistent with the logic of derived demand and the Mohring effect. In such a manner that increased demand not only enhances the volume of activity but also improves system efficiency.

On the other hand, white taxi drivers on Kish Island are not passive actors in facing economic instability, but by employing adaptive strategies such as seasonal saving, temporary employment, work hour adjustment, and short-term migration, they endeavor to maintain their livelihood balance. Furthermore, public transportation in their perception acquires meaning beyond passenger transfer, as part of the tourism service chain and one of the pillars of the

island's economic identity. Given the dissimilarity of this research with related backgrounds and the impossibility of establishing conceptual comparison between them, detailed alignment cannot be established. Nevertheless, at the general level, the findings of this research are consistent with the studies of Taghizadeh Farahmand (2020), Bahmani and Namamian (2020), Rajabi et al. (2022), Garau et al. (2022), Bausch et al. (2024), and Karabulut and Özün (2024). The difference lies in the phenomenological approach of this research, which explains the relationship not merely at the level of economic structures, but at the level of drivers lived experience. In such a manner that reduced waiting time, increased trip continuity, and perceived occupational productivity acquire meaning in the daily life of the fleet as objective signs of tourism prosperity.

The phenomenological study of the economy based on public transportation on Kish Island demonstrates that the limitation on private vehicle use and tourists' reliance on public transportation leads to increased economic efficiency and consolidation of the role of taxis in the local economy of Kish. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that this efficiency in drivers' experience is simultaneously accompanied by a type of awareness of the island's economic fragility. In such a manner that strong dependency on tourism and exogenous political, security, and health factors shapes a hidden feeling of uncertainty in the minds of the fleet. Thus, the public transportation economy of Kish in drivers lived experience is a dual economy that oscillates between daily occupational tranquility and fear of future instability. In totality, it can be concluded that public transportation on Kish Island is not merely an urban service or a mobility tool, but the backbone of the tourism-oriented local economy and an economic-spatial mediator among tourists, local businesses, and beneficiaries' livelihoods. The economy based on public transportation on this island is a flexible yet fragile economy that is vulnerable to tourism fluctuations, political-security crises, and external shocks, and its sustainability requires intelligent institutional and policy interventions. Understanding this economy without attention to the lived experience of its actors will provide an incomplete and reductionist picture.

Based on the results of the present research, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Public transportation policy-making in tourist islands should be conducted with an understanding of the seasonal nature of demand and the livelihood instability of fleet beneficiaries. In such a manner that supportive and compensatory mechanisms for tourism recession periods are anticipated.
- Intelligent adjustment of capacity, spatial distribution, and fleet activity frequency in accordance with the temporal rhythm of tourism can, while reducing waiting time waste, lead to increased driver occupational productivity and realization of economic efficiencies at the transportation system scale.
- Official support for diversifying the economic roles of drivers in the tourism chain, including providing guidance, tour guiding, and complementary services, can reduce pure dependency on passenger transfer and strengthen fleet livelihood resilience.
- Designing economic support programs for drivers during low-tourist seasons (such as May to July), including temporary financial assistance, short-term loans, or creation of temporary employment opportunities, is necessary for managing seasonal fluctuations and tourism demand.
- Developing tourism programs and seasonal festivals to reduce severe demand fluctuations and increase economic activity during low-demand periods is recommended.
- Utilizing intelligent fleet scheduling and passenger congestion prediction to increase trip numbers and driver efficiency.
- Fleet modernization, creation of standard stations, and special services for the elderly and disabled.

- Strengthening the link between transportation and the local economy by promoting public transportation use for visiting shops, restaurants, and local services in order to increase business income and local employment.
- Developing combined tourism and transportation packages (e.g., discount cards or shared services) to increase tourist use of the public transportation network.
- Formulating supportive programs during social, political, or health crises (such as pandemic disease) to reduce economic damage to beneficiaries.
- Creating a rapid information system and predicting tourism fluctuations for fleet preparation and reduction of economic risks.

The present research faced limitations including the work commitments of taxi drivers, which prevented lengthy and comprehensive interviews. Time limitations of fieldwork on the island led to reduced numbers and repetition of interviews and observations. Furthermore, the researcher's financial limitations in long-term accommodation on the island reduced the possibility of continuous presence and extensive data collection. The study was focused solely on Kish Island, and direct generalization of findings to other tourist islands is not possible. Additionally, the lack of precise and updated statistical data regarding the fleet and driver income limited information collection. Finally, given the phenomenological nature of the research, findings are based on individuals lived experience, and statistical generalizability to a larger population does not exist.

Given the limitations of the present research, for the development of future studies, it is necessary to conduct more comprehensive studies in cooperation with the Kish Free Zone Organization and within the framework of research projects. Such studies can collect more precise and extensive data regarding the structure of the island's tourism economy and its effects on public transportation beneficiaries, and provide the possibility of comparative analysis, prediction of seasonal tourism effects, and presentation of sustainable economic and transportation development solutions. Furthermore, by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and conducting comparative studies among several tourist islands, the ground for greater transferability of findings and formulation of more comprehensive policy models in the field of public transportation in tourism destinations can be provided.

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Equal contribution

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