

Analyzing the impacts of tourism development in historic urban fabrics (a case study of Dabbaghan Neighborhood, Qazvin)

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Abstract

Tourism development in historical urban fabrics is a key strategy for urban revitalization, yet its success depends on understanding local residents' perceptions and experiences. This study aimed to elucidate the conceptual model of residents' perceptions toward tourism development in the Dabbaghan neighborhood of Qazvin and to identify the dimensions shaping these perceptions across physical, economic, and socio-cultural domains. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected through 32 semi-structured interviews with residents selected via snowball sampling. The analysis, conducted using MAXQDA, followed a three-stage coding process: open coding generated 521 initial codes, which were refined into seven categories through axial coding, and finally synthesized into a core category via selective coding. The seven categories encompassed attitudes toward heritage preservation, satisfaction with urban amenities, neighborhood safety, cultural identity protection, social participation, enhancement of tourism-related economic opportunities, and perspectives on local livelihoods. Findings indicate that the central dimension of residents' perceptions revolves around "enhancing economic opportunities," which interacts with heritage conservation, urban service improvement, neighborhood safety, and cultural preservation, forming a coherent conceptual model. This study advances the literature by providing a structured, resident-centered model for interpreting tourism development impacts in historical neighborhoods and offers actionable insights for policy-making in similar contexts.

Keywords: Dabbaghan Neighborhood Qazvin, Historical fabrics, Local Residents, Tourism

1. Introduction

Tourism, as one of the most diverse and dynamic industries worldwide, has experienced significant growth over recent decades and currently accounts for approximately 11% of global employment (Prados-Castillo et al., 2023). Scholars argue that the tourism industry, as one of the largest and most profitable contemporary sectors, plays a pivotal role in the global economy and generates a substantial share of income for many countries (Kim et al., 2020). The importance of this industry has become increasingly evident in recent years—particularly for countries such as Iran—due to declining oil revenues, where it plays a fundamental role in enhancing employment, increasing national production, and achieving sustainable development (Khatami Nejad et al., 2022). In this context, research findings indicate that the quality of tourists' experiences and destination-related behaviors are significantly associated with the well-being and quality of life of local communities (Taleb et al., 2023). One reason for this relationship is the role of cultural elements as drivers of tourist attraction; diversity in traditions, clothing, cuisine, music, handicrafts, and architecture turns the host culture and society into a focal point of interest, thereby contributing significantly to tourism development (Jalalian & Beiki, 2023). Accordingly, in historic cities, tourism is considered one of the most prominent functions, and urban historic centers have become key tourism destinations due to their cultural and identity-based values (Szromek et al., 2021; Körmeçli, 2024). Structural transformations of cities and the presence of tourists in historic urban fabrics have not only contributed to the development of urban infrastructure but have also enhanced the recognition of urban identity and improved spatial dynamism (Kuzulugil et al., 2023). Thus, tourism has increasingly become an effective tool for the revitalization of historic and cultural urban fabrics (Li et al., 2025; Hsu et al., 2024). Despite these potentials, Iran has not yet fully utilized its tourism capacities, resulting in regional countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Turkey attracting a larger share of international tourists, including Iranian travelers (Khatami Nejad et al., 2022). Despite the country's wide diversity of landscapes and climates, a large portion of Iran's tourism potential remains underutilized due to the absence of comprehensive planning, weaknesses in policymaking, and a lack of coordination among the structural components of the tourism system (Javdan et al., 2024).

In this regard, the historic fabric of the Dabbaghan neighborhood in Qazvin also exhibits such characteristics. Despite its valuable tourism potential, it has not yet been effectively utilized. The presence of numerous historical buildings and elements such as caravanserais, ancient bathhouses, water reservoirs, and other culturally significant structures has made Dabbaghan one of the most capable urban areas for the development of cultural and historical tourism. However, many of these spaces have become abandoned, semi-active, or neglected, and have lost a considerable portion of their functional value. Some caravanserais have been converted into parking areas, storage spaces, or incompatible uses, and parts of the neighborhood have even been turned into waste collection sites. This situation not only prevents the formation of tourism flows but also undermines the environmental quality and identity of the historic fabric. At the same time, the proper utilization of existing capacities could provide the basis for economic, social, and cultural development of the neighborhood and redefine its role within the tourism network of Qazvin city. Therefore, the need for rethinking the current situation and improving infrastructure, services, land-use management, and the organization of historic spaces is increasingly felt. Accordingly, the present qualitative study aims to analyze and evaluate tourism development in the historic fabric of Dabbaghan. In addition to addressing the question of what dimensions residents' perceptions of tourism development in the historic fabric of Dabbaghan entail, it seeks to propose strategies for revitalizing the cultural, historical, and tourism functions of this area. These strategies are expected to enhance environmental quality, strengthen place identity, and create sustainable added value for both the neighborhood and the city.

2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

In the following section, the present study reviews the theoretical and empirical literature related to tourism development in historic urban fabrics and its role in physical revitalization, enhancement of urban environmental quality, and strengthening of social participation.

2.1. Tourism

The term “Tourism” is derived from the English word “Tour,” meaning a journey or travel, and its root can be traced back to the word “Turns,” which conveys the concept of back-and-forth movement between origin and destination. This term was initially transferred from Greek into Spanish, then into French, and ultimately entered the English language (Ziari & Ariankia, 2025). Tourism is essentially a historical phenomenon that has existed in human societies since ancient times and has gradually evolved into its current form and structure through different historical stages (Hatami Nejad et al., 2024). In essence, tourism refers to traveling to an attractive destination with the aim of gaining unique experiences and enhancing personal satisfaction and enjoyment (Rana et al., 2025). It encompasses a set of activities that individuals undertake while traveling outside their place of residence for purposes such as leisure, work, or other objectives (Popescu et al., 2024). This multidimensional and broad phenomenon has been examined from various perspectives, and diverse definitions have been provided by researchers and organizations (Yanan et al., 2024; Koo et al., 2023). In addition, tourism is recognized as a tool for urban revitalization (Jimura, 2021). It operates in a transboundary manner and, through international interactions, connects flows of capital, people, and culture across different regions, thereby generating diverse economic, social, and cultural impacts (Alejziak, 2023; Babaei et al., 2023).

2.2. Tourism in Historic Urban Fabrics

The development of urban tourism in historic fabrics is a multilayered and complex process that involves extensive interaction among various stakeholders. In this context, local governments play a central role as key actors responsible for guiding spatial regeneration and formulating related policies (Zhu et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2024). Historic urban fabrics are not only considered key destinations for cultural heritage tourism (Li et al., 2025), but also constitute the foundation and essence of urban culture, recording the historical evolution of cities. These fabrics provide a platform for the continuity of living culture and valuable heritage, reflecting the unique identity of the city (Wang et al., 2023; Garcia, 2021). Tourism development in such areas can improve neighborhood infrastructure, streetscapes, and recreational services, thereby enhancing residents’ quality of life while preserving local culture (Brunt & Courtney, 1999). In this sense, tourism acts as an effective tool for redistributing urban functions and increasing the vitality of urban fabrics (Yu et al., 2021), while also contributing to the strengthening of positive urban image formation and the improvement of cities’ economic status (Kumar, 2017). In order to gain stakeholder support and ensure sustainable development, it is essential to maintain a balance between “conservation” and “development,” which are the two main pillars of tourism development in historic urban fabrics (Zhang, 2004). Moreover, tourism development in historic contexts should be accompanied by a sense of social responsibility, emphasizing equity and residents’ participation, thereby also creating income-generating opportunities for local communities (Yu et al., 2021).

2.3. Benefits of Tourism

Tourism has a positive and long-term impact on sustainable economic growth (Destek & Aydın, 2022; Eyuboglu, 2020; Dastranj et al., 2018; Li et al., 2024; Cárdenas-García & Alcalá-Ordoñez, 2023).

Numerous studies have confirmed its significant role in generating economic benefits, income creation, employment generation, and poverty reduction (Altinkaya et al., 2024; Deller, 2010; Scheyvens & Russell, 2012; Li et al., 2018; Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019; Lv, 2019; Antonakakis et al., 2019; Cárdenas García & Pulido Fernández, 2019). Tourism development improves quality of life by enhancing healthcare infrastructure, entrepreneurship, community empowerment, security, recreational opportunities, and housing conditions (Cho & Kim, 2024; Kalla & Metaxas, 2024; Ateljevic, 2017; Cárdenas García et al., 2015; Khodapanah, 2023; Mamirkulova et al., 2020). It also provides a profitable share of exports and serves as a source of foreign exchange earnings (King et al., 2024; Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). The expansion of the tourism industry stimulates related service sectors such as accommodation, restaurants, transportation, tour guiding, and souvenir sales, which directly increase local employment opportunities and improve residents' living standards (Dai & Zhang, 2024). These jobs include both direct and indirect employment in hospitality and lodging, transportation, entertainment, cultural services, food and beverage, retail, as well as supporting services such as tour guides, event planners, translators, and photographers (Brida et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021). Overall, the expansion of tourism activities contributes to economic and social dynamism (Abbasi et al., 2019; Fernandez et al., 2020; Koo et al., 2023; Maxim, 2023). Moreover, in urban destinations, tourists devote a significant part of their trips to cultural activities, ranging from visiting museums and walking through historic districts to experiencing artistic programs and observing local everyday life. These cultural interactions not only provide a deeper understanding of the city and enrich the tourism experience (Ebejer, 2023), but also encourage interest in local architecture, conservation efforts, and the revitalization of endangered destinations, thereby contributing to cultural heritage sustainability (Sasithradevi et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023; Dai & Zhang, 2024). This process also enhances opportunities for interaction between tourists and local residents, strengthens social relations and sense of belonging, and fosters local cultural capacities (Ebejer, 2023; Grah et al., 2020). Tourism development in historic urban fabrics becomes effective when accompanied by improvements in communication, technological, and service infrastructure. This not only increases the efficiency of the tourism system but also enhances the spatial-economic condition of the area and raises its locational value. Upgrading infrastructure and services improves the physical and environmental conditions of the existing urban fabric and enhances residents' quality of life, extending the benefits of tourism beyond visitors to the local community. Transportation systems are also an essential component of the tourism industry and a prerequisite for sustainable development in any region (Currie & Falconer, 2014; Szymanska et al., 2021). Tourism and transportation infrastructure are interrelated and economically beneficial (Chen et al., 2021; Haller et al., 2021; Nenavath, 2023) and are key factors in attracting tourists (Virkar & Mallya, 2018). Improving mobility and accessibility—including better neighborhood traffic conditions, adequate lighting, urban furniture, standardized pavement, traffic calming at intersections, and diverse transport options—effectively meets tourists' needs (Nazarabadian & Gahremani, 2023). Other welfare-related factors such as healthcare services, currency exchange facilities, accessibility of routes and transportation, diversity and quality of food services, accommodation conditions, and complementary services ensure tourists' well-being at the destination (Nazarabadian & Gahremani, 2024). In this regard, safety and tourism are closely interrelated; without security, travel does not occur, and focusing on tourism in unsafe environments is ineffective (Nazarabadian & Gahremani, 2024). Therefore, strengthening security infrastructure and support services in historic urban fabrics not only provides a safe environment for tourists but also improves environmental quality and enhances the functional performance of the area, thereby itself constituting one of the key benefits of tourism development.

2.4. Empirical Background

Wang (2025), in an article titled “*Research on the revitalization path of urban historic districts in the context of cultural and tourism integration*,” examined strategies for the development and revitalization of historic neighborhoods from the perspective of cultural and tourism integration. The study showed that integrating culture and tourism can, in addition to preserving cultural heritage, strengthen the economic and social functions of historic neighborhoods. The results indicate that the success of such integration depends on designing revitalization and conservation programs aligned with tourists’ needs, improving the quality of public spaces, strengthening local cultural identity, and fostering positive interaction between residents and visitors. The findings emphasize that integrated cultural and tourism strategies can contribute to the active and sustainable revitalization of historic fabrics and preserve their cultural and social values for future generations. The study also highlights the importance of strategic planning and an interdisciplinary approach, ensuring that tourism development in historic fabrics is not merely an economic tool but a multidimensional process aimed at conservation, development, and improving the social and cultural quality of life in local communities (Wang, 2025). Yang and Liu (2025), in an article titled “*Sustainable development strategies for culture–tourism integration in the historic district of Tianzifang, Shanghai*,” examined strategies for preserving and sustainably developing cultural tourism in a historic neighborhood. The study revealed that excessive commercialization without attention to cultural authenticity can reduce the tourist experience and create a mismatch between expectations and actual experiences. The results emphasize that cultural tourism development should be accompanied by the preservation of cultural values, strengthening of neighborhood identity, management of commercial activities, and the use of managerial and digital strategies to enhance visitor experience while maintaining the sustainability of the historic fabric. This study provides an analytical framework for identifying the mechanisms influencing tourists’ experiences and offers practical strategies for managing and revitalizing historic neighborhoods (Yang & Liu, 2025). Körmeçli (2024), in an article titled “*Accessibility of Urban Tourism in Historical Areas: Analysis of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Safranbolu*,” investigated the role of urban structure and street networks in tourists’ accessibility to historic fabrics. The findings indicated that areas with higher spatial integration attract more pedestrian flow and tourism activities and can contribute to sustainable tourism development. The study also found that macro-scale urban street structure has a stronger influence on accessibility and tourism experience, while spatial awareness in the area remains relatively low, indicating the need for improved routes and user experience within historic fabrics. This research demonstrates that quantitative analysis of street networks can support urban planning and tourism policy-making in historic cities and provide guidance for conservation and sustainable development (Körmeçli, 2024). Ibrahim, Bas, and Zakariya (2023), in an article titled “*Cultural heritage and urban tourism in historic cities: Case study of Melaka, Malaysia, and Istanbul, Türkiye*,” examined the relationship between the distribution and concentration of cultural heritage attractions and urban tourism experience. Through a comparative analysis of two historic cities, the study showed that strategic planning and management of cultural attractions can enhance tourist experience and contribute to sustainable tourism development in historic fabrics. The results emphasize that preserving urban identity, integrating historical elements with contemporary functions, and focusing on cultural authenticity play an important role in attracting tourists and improving the quality of tourism experience. The study demonstrates that the intelligent integration of cultural heritage and tourism development can support the economic, social, and cultural sustainability of historic cities (Ibrahim, Bas & Zakariya, 2023). Aghlara, Ahmadzadeh, and Panahi (2024), in an article titled “*Promotion of Tourism Development of Urban Historical-Cultural Places by Re-Creation in the Historical-Cultural Contexts of Tabriz City (Case Study: Zone 8)*,” examined the role of urban regeneration in enhancing tourism in historic–cultural areas. The results showed that all examined regeneration factors had a

significant relationship with the improvement of tourism in historic–cultural sites. Among them, socio-cultural factors had the strongest impact, followed by physical, architectural quality, economic, and environmental factors. The findings also indicated that District 8 of Tabriz, with its opportunities and strengths, has the potential to create vibrant and tourist-friendly spaces within its historic fabric, and that urban regeneration can enhance cultural tourism development (Aghlara, Ahmadzadeh & Panahi, 2024).

Soleymanian and Fanni (2021), in an article titled “*Assessing the Affecting Factors on Tourism in the Historical Context with the Approach of Culture- Base Regeneration (Case Study: Babolsar city)*,” investigated the role of cultural regeneration in strengthening sustainable tourism in historic areas. The results showed that culture-based regeneration, through the preservation of historical values, strengthening of local cultural identity, and development of creative industries, enhances the tourist experience and increases visitor attraction and urban tourism capacity. The study also emphasizes that integrated management and targeted planning in historic fabrics are essential for achieving sustainable tourism development (Soleymanian & Fanni, 2021). Hosseini Tehrani, Rajabi, and Eghbali (2020), in an article titled “*Analysis of Effective Factors on the Tourism Development of Historical Valuable Texture Case study: District 12 of Tehran*,” examined the key factors influencing tourism development in historic areas. The findings indicated that security, financial and human resource management, and welfare facilities had the greatest impact on tourism development, with security identified as the most critical factor for successful tourism development. The study also found that the destination image ranked fourth, above factors such as attraction quality and accessibility, highlighting the importance of tourists’ perceptions of the destination. The study emphasizes that the preservation and revitalization of historic fabrics is only possible through attention to key social, economic, and security factors, and that heritage tourism can serve as an effective tool for improving the performance and sustainability of such areas (Hosseini Tehrani, Rajabi & Eghbali, 2020).

Overall, previous studies indicate that tourism development in historic fabrics has mainly been examined from physical, economic, and managerial perspectives. Many studies have emphasized the role of tourism in physical revitalization, infrastructure improvement, and economic dynamism (Wang, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Aghlara et al., 2024), while others have focused on spatial and structural dimensions such as accessibility and spatial organization (Körmeçli, 2024). Another group of studies has highlighted the importance of cultural identity preservation, development management, and strategic planning in tourism sustainability (Yang & Liu, 2025; Soleymanian & Fanni, 2021), and some have identified security, services, and management as key determinants of tourism development using quantitative approaches (Hosseini Tehrani et al., 2020). However, most of these studies have addressed tourism from structural and managerial perspectives and have paid less attention to the in-depth analysis of local residents’ perceptions and lived experiences as key stakeholders. Furthermore, most research has examined economic, physical, or cultural dimensions separately, lacking an integrated framework that simultaneously analyzes the role of tourism in improving physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of historic fabrics—including environmental quality, security, cultural identity, social participation, and economic empowerment—based on residents’ perspectives. This gap is particularly evident in qualitative interpretive studies at the neighborhood scale within Iranian historic contexts. Accordingly, the main research gap lies in the absence of an integrated analytical framework based on residents’ perceptions to examine the role of tourism development in the sustainable revitalization of historic fabrics. In response, the present study adopts an interpretive qualitative approach and uses qualitative content analysis to explore the lived perceptions of residents and shopkeepers in the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood of Qazvin. The main contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual model based on residents’ lived experiences, analyzing tourism as a multidimensional

mechanism for the integrated enhancement of physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. This includes strengthening cultural identity, improving environmental quality, enhancing security, increasing social participation, and promoting economic empowerment at the neighborhood scale. By moving beyond a unidimensional and structure-oriented perspective, this study conceptualizes tourism as a socio-spatial and community-based process that can pave the way for the sustainable revitalization of historic urban fabrics.

2.5. Conceptual Model of the Study

Based on the theoretical foundations and research background, the proposed model for tourism development in historic urban fabrics is structured around three main dimensions: physical, economic, and social. Findings from both domestic and international studies indicate that the sustainability of tourism development in such contexts can be achieved only when the physical condition of space, economic functions, and social dynamics are addressed simultaneously and in a coordinated manner. This is because each of these dimensions encompasses a set of reinforcing and synergistic factors that directly influence destination attractiveness, the quality of tourists' experiences, the functional efficiency of the urban fabric, and the improvement of neighborhood livability conditions.

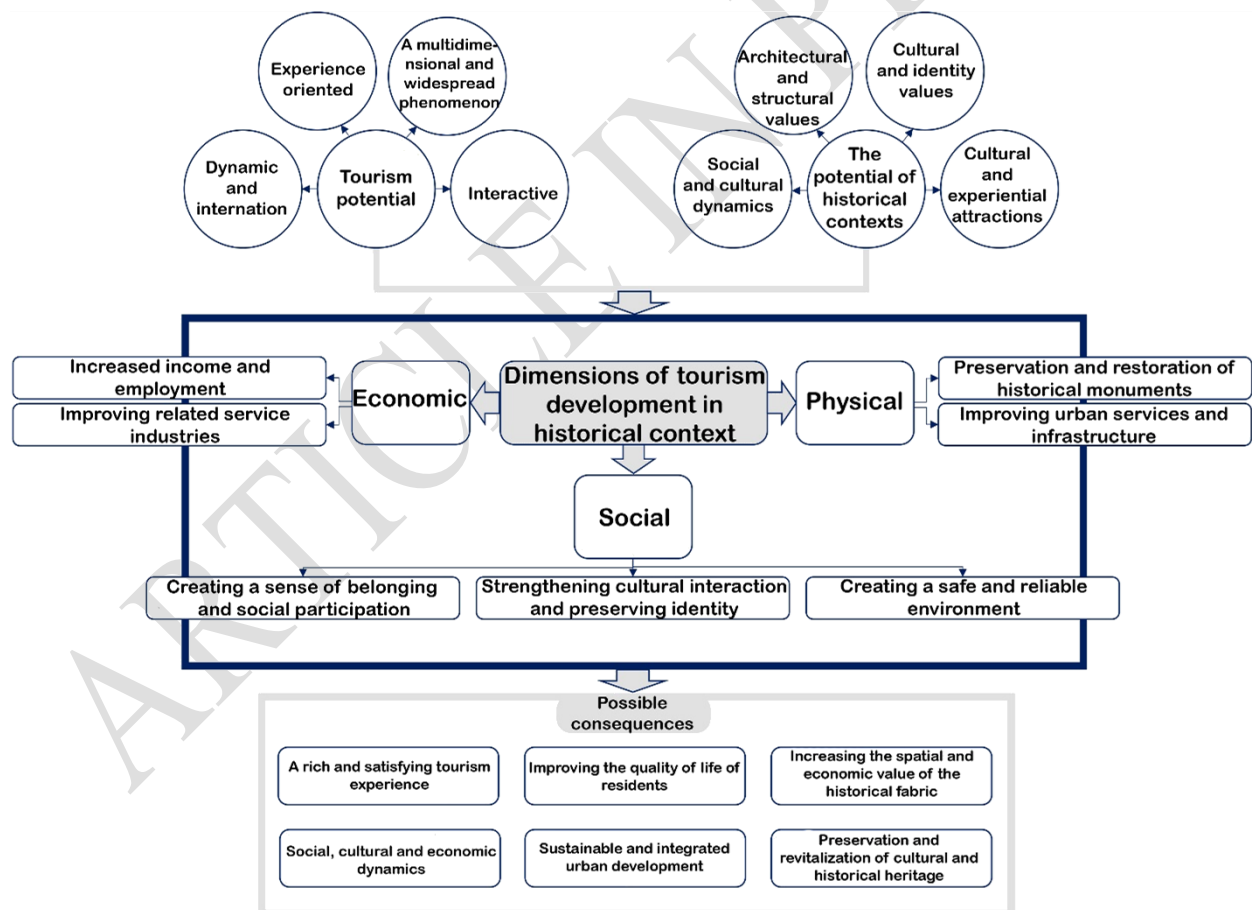


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

3. Methodology

This study is applied in nature and designed using a qualitative–interpretive approach, aiming to analyze the impact of tourism development on the historic fabric of the Dabbaghan neighborhood in Qazvin. Data were collected through two main methods. First, library and documentary research was conducted, including scientific articles, urban reports, and documents related to tourism and historic urban fabrics, which provided the theoretical framework and research context. Second, field studies were carried out through semi-structured interviews with residents and local shopkeepers. The interview questions were developed based on the conceptual model of the study in order to cover all main dimensions of tourism impacts. The validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review and confirmation by specialists in urban planning and tourism, thereby establishing content validity. The key interview questions included: 1. In your view, can tourism contribute to physical revitalization and prevent further deterioration of the neighborhood? How? 2. Do you think tourism development can improve urban services and infrastructure (such as transportation, lighting, street furniture, and street quality)? Why? 3. Do you think the presence of tourists in the future could increase or decrease neighborhood security? Why? 4. What impact do you think tourism development would have on the preservation of cultural and historical identity? 5. If tourism were to develop in the neighborhood, do you consider residents willing to participate and cooperate? 6. In your opinion, what new economic opportunities could tourism create for local residents? 7. If tourism develops, what types of businesses could emerge or expand in the neighborhood?

The study population included all residents and shopkeepers of the Dabbaghan neighborhood. Sampling was conducted using a purposive method combined with snowball sampling. This approach was selected due to the qualitative nature of the study and the need to identify participants with lived experience, deep local knowledge, and the ability to provide rich and reliable information. Initial participants were informed long-term residents, who subsequently introduced other individuals meeting the study criteria. This process continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Participants were aged between 20 and 60 years and represented a diverse range of social groups, including long-term residents, local shopkeepers, housewives, elderly residents, youth, and other active members of the community. This diversity enabled a comprehensive and multi-perspective understanding of tourism impacts. In total, 32 semi-structured interviews were conducted, including 30 main interviews and 2 supplementary interviews. The additional interviews were carried out to ensure theoretical saturation and confirm that no new codes or concepts were emerging. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted with informed consent from participants and were audio-recorded with their permission. In addition, field observations and field notes were recorded by the researcher and used as complementary data to gain a deeper understanding of the spatial, social, and functional conditions of the neighborhood. To enhance data reliability (trustworthiness), member checking, cross-interview data comparison, and cross-case analysis were employed. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis. This process included three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the open coding stage, interview transcripts were examined line by line, resulting in the extraction of initial concepts and the identification of 521 primary codes. In the axial coding stage, similar and related codes were categorized into 7 axial categories based on conceptual relationships and shared characteristics. In the selective coding stage, these categories were integrated into a core category, leading to the development of the final conceptual framework of the study. The analysis process was supported by MAXQDA software, which facilitated the systematic organization, classification, and analysis of qualitative data. This methodological approach, grounded in empirical data and active community participation, enables a comprehensive and scientific analysis of tourism

development impacts on urban spatial quality, social interactions, cultural identity, and economic opportunities.

3.1. Study Area

The study area of the present research is the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood, located in District 1 of Qazvin Municipality. This neighborhood is recognized as the original core of the formation of the city of Qazvin. According to census data, its population is approximately 6,185 residents, indicating the continuity of residential life and social vitality within this historic fabric. From a physical heritage perspective, Dabbaghan is considered one of the richest historic areas of Qazvin. It contains valuable architectural assets such as Sara-ye Shah, Sara-ye Golshan, Sara-ye Ardakani, Golshan Bathhouse, Agha Water Reservoir, the Water Reservoir of the Jameh Mosque, and a range of associated historic structures. In addition, the presence of the Jameh Mosque of Qazvin, as one of the most prominent religious–historical monuments in the country, further enhances the cultural and symbolic significance of this neighborhood. However, a considerable number of these elements are currently at risk of deterioration and abandonment due to a lack of appropriate functional use. In terms of spatial location, the neighborhood is bounded by Sepah Street to the east (one of the oldest paved streets in Iran), Shahid Ansari Street to the north, Molavi Street to the west, and Montazeri Street to the south. Taken together, these characteristics make the Dabbaghan neighborhood an appropriate case for examining the potentials and challenges of tourism development in historic urban fabrics.

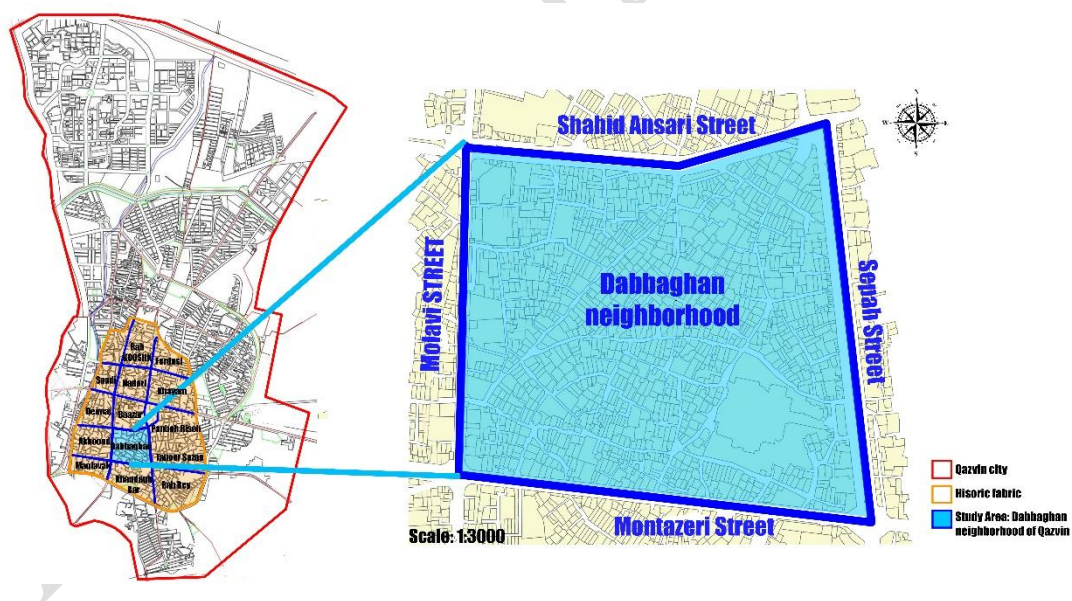


Figure 2: Study Area

4. Findings

Based on the processes of open, axial, and selective coding, the extracted concepts were organized into a range of components related to tourism development in the historic fabric. The thematic analysis indicated that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts are formed across three levels—physical, social, and economic—each of which contains distinct and traceable meaning patterns. Following the integration and classification of concepts, seven main categories were developed in line with the research questions, each associated with a set of axial subcategories. Comparative analysis of the main

categories revealed that residents perceive tourism development as an “integrative enhancement process of the physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the neighborhood.” This process, through physical conservation, improvement of urban facilities, enhancement of security, preservation of cultural identity, strengthening of social synergy, and expansion of employment opportunities, can provide the basis for improving the performance and vitality of the historic fabric.

Table 1. Axial and Main Categories

Row	Number of Concepts	Axial Categories	Main Category	Final Category
1	3	Revitalization of historic buildings, control of deterioration and physical damage, improvement of environmental quality and urban landscape	Attitudes toward heritage and fabric conservation	Integrated enhancement of the physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the historic neighborhood based on tourism development
2	4	Urban furniture and infrastructure, transportation and accessibility, welfare and recreational services, environmental cleanliness and order	Satisfaction with urban facilities	
3	4	Monitoring and active presence of law enforcement, street lighting and safety, secure movement routes and traffic control, reduction of crime and social harms	Enhancement of neighborhood safety and security	
4	3	Restoration and conservation of historic buildings, preservation of cultural values and heritage, sustainability of local lifestyles, traditions, and behavioral patterns	Protection of cultural heritage and neighborhood identity	
5	4	Willingness to cooperate in neighborhood activities, interest in collective decision-making and planning, support for cultural and tourism projects, participatory education and awareness-raising	Social participation and synergy	
6	3	Increase in income opportunities, informal employment and small industries, local investment and tourist attraction	Strengthening tourism-based economic capacities	
7	3	Development of handicraft and souvenir markets, cultural–educational and recreational services, accommodation facilities and traditional cafés and restaurants	Perceptions of local employment opportunities	

5. Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Based on the qualitative content analysis process, data obtained from 32 semi-structured interviews were examined through open, axial, and selective coding. The purpose of this process was to transform participants’ perceptions and experiences regarding the integrated enhancement of the physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions of the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood—through tourism development—from raw data into a systematic and interpretable structure. The analysis revealed that responses, while sharing common patterns in terms of attitudes, needs, opportunities, and threats, also contained meaningful distinctions rooted in the neighborhood’s social, environmental, and historical characteristics. Accordingly, content analysis enabled the identification of latent meanings, internal relationships among concepts, and participants’ cognitive patterns. In the following section, the findings are presented separately for each of the seven research questions. For each question, axial themes are first presented, followed by the main theme. Subsequently, selected excerpts from participants’ narratives are provided to illustrate the logical connection between data and findings. These excerpts

are directly drawn from interview transcripts and serve to amplify the voice of the local community and enhance the credibility of the results, enabling the reader to clearly trace the progression from lived perceptions to the theoretical structure of the study.

1) Attitudes toward Heritage and Fabric Conservation: Most respondents emphasized that the presence of tourists and related activities could lead to the “restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings,” “organization of abandoned spaces,” “improvement of streets and pathways,” “prevention of physical deterioration and inappropriate land-use changes,” and ultimately the “restoration of the neighborhood’s physical identity.” From the participants’ perspective, physical decay is mainly the result of neglect and lack of investment. They believe that tourism development, by attracting public and private investment, plays a significant role in preventing further deterioration and acts as a mechanism for restoring investment cycles, institutional attention, and symbolic value to the space. Specifically, caravanserais, bathhouses, and water reservoirs are highlighted in the participants’ perceptions as key heritage elements and are considered the primary points of entry for tourism into the neighborhood’s physical structure. In addition, residents feel that tourism development not only improves the physical fabric but also enhances the “urban landscape,” “environmental order,” and “public usability” of spaces. This perspective suggests that tourism is not merely an economic activity for residents, but rather a mechanism for restoring spatial value and ensuring physical conservation. These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that tourism can act as a driver for active heritage conservation and attract the attention of urban authorities and investors toward the preservation of historical values (Wang, 2025; Körmeçli, 2024).

"... In my opinion, with tourism, historic buildings will no longer remain abandoned. The municipality will be forced to take care of them. Their value increases, property prices in the neighborhood rise, and the area becomes more attractive ..." (Milad, 29 years old)

2) Satisfaction with Urban Facilities: The responses of participants indicate that “infrastructure” and “urban equipment” are among the main concerns and expectations of residents. The lack of standard paving, weak street lighting, insufficient urban furniture, inadequate accessibility routes, and circulation problems are identified by residents as factors that reduce environmental quality. The data analysis showed that the presence of tourists draws attention toward improving urban infrastructure. This finding is consistent with urban tourism development theories that consider tourism an effective driver for enhancing service quality and redistributing urban resources (Yu et al., 2021; Kuzulugil et al., 2023). In fact, residents perceive tourism as a tool for redefining the neighborhood’s position within the urban decision-making structure. For them, the main issue is not merely the lack of infrastructure, but rather the “institutional marginalization” of the neighborhood in the allocation of urban resources. From this perspective, tourism functions as a bargaining lever that can attract managerial attention and public investment toward the area. Therefore, satisfaction with urban facilities is not seen as a direct outcome of infrastructure improvement, but rather as a consequence of the enhanced symbolic and functional position of the neighborhood within the urban system. This analysis shows that, in residents’ perceptions, tourism is closely linked to spatial justice and increased managerial responsiveness.

"... When tourism becomes involved, more budget is allocated to our neighborhood, and the municipality is forced to fix the streets. In some alleys, cars can barely pass, and service provision also improves..." (Zahra, 27 years old)

3) Enhancement of Neighborhood Safety and Security: In the minds of respondents, there is a direct relationship between security and tourism. The majority believe that the presence of outsiders, increased mobility, social surveillance, and formal activities lead to reduced crime, better control of

suspicious movements, and improved lighting and police monitoring. This finding aligns with the concept of safety in sustainable tourism, which emphasizes the role of increased social presence and enhanced natural surveillance (Khodapanah, 2023; Hosseini Tehrani, Rajabi & Eghbali, 2020; Nazarabadian & Gahremani, 2024). Analysis of responses shows that security, in residents' perception, is a socio-spatial concept rather than merely an enforcement-based one. They consider increased human presence and continuous activity as mechanisms for producing safety. In other words, tourism activates space, reduces social blind spots, and strengthens informal surveillance. Even concerns raised by participants reflect sensitivity toward managing tourist flows rather than rejecting their presence. This indicates that security in this neighborhood is less dependent on formal control and more reliant on spatial vitality and social interaction. Therefore, tourism, as a factor that enhances spatial dynamism, is perceived by residents as equivalent to increased social safety.

"... In my opinion, security increases because when there is more movement, police and security forces are more present. Some alleys are very empty after sunset, and tourists can reduce that. Of course, if strangers are not managed properly, it may create insecurity, but with good management, it becomes positive ..." (Mr. Babaei, 53 years old)

4) Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Neighborhood Identity: Participants demonstrate a strong awareness of the neighborhood's historical identity and clearly recognize the value of both tangible and intangible heritage. For residents, historical identity is an existing cultural asset, but its sustainability depends on external recognition and valuation. The dominant belief is that tourism acts as a "reinforcing mechanism of identity," as it increases public attention, supports heritage conservation, restores authentic land uses, and functions as a process of "symbolic revalorization." Participants feel that the cultural heritage of caravanserais, water reservoirs, the Jameh Mosque, and historic bathhouses can only be revitalized through tourism. In other words, the presence of visitors redefines the historical significance of the neighborhood at both urban and supra-local scales; otherwise, the process of decline continues. Moreover, the link between tangible heritage (buildings) and intangible heritage (rituals, food, arts) shows that residents perceive identity as an integrated phenomenon. Therefore, tourism is not seen as a threat to identity but as a mechanism for its reproduction and intergenerational transmission. This perspective indicates that residents understand tourism development within the framework of strengthening cultural capital. These findings are consistent with cultural tourism development theories, which emphasize that tourism experiences should contribute to the preservation of local identity and the strengthening of community cultural capital (Yang & Liu, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Wang, 2025).

"... Tourism makes people pay attention to the value of historical buildings and feel that this place is important. Today, some people think old buildings are worthless, but when attention is given and visitors come, their value is restored. At the same time, arts like calligraphy should also be supported so that traditions are preserved ..." (Mr. Hasanpour, 37 years old)

5) Social Participation and Synergy: Most respondents consider social participation essential and believe that public involvement in decision-making and implementation processes is a prerequisite for successful tourism development. This finding is consistent with the principles of community-based tourism, which emphasize active resident participation as a key requirement for achieving sustainable development (Yu et al., 2021; Alejziak, 2023). The findings indicate that participatory capacity exists at the attitudinal level but has not yet been activated at the structural level. At the same time, it is noted that residents require training, guidance, and economic incentives in order to engage more actively. The community demonstrates a generally positive attitude toward participation, and many participants report prior experiences of social cooperation, local problem-solving, historical

awareness, and a willingness to preserve heritage. However, they emphasize that formal managerial structures and institutional mechanisms for participation must be established. This perspective suggests that social participation has latent potential, but its actual realization depends on formal instruments, trust-building processes, education, and systematic planning. The presence of younger generations in this discourse reflects a dynamic social potential that, if properly supported institutionally, can lead to local synergy.

“... Yes. Many people are looking for work. If there is training, participation will increase a lot. So far, no one has seriously engaged with the people; if they do, cooperation will happen. It is not only adults— young people and teenagers are also very interested ...” (Mahdieh, 33 years old)

6) Strengthening Tourism-Based Economic Capacities: All responses indicate that residents directly associate tourism development with “income generation,” “employment,” “small businesses,” “local investment,” “tourist inflow,” “sale of local products,” and “cash flow creation.” This is consistent with economic tourism studies suggesting that tourism in historic fabrics can act as a driver of neighborhood economic development (Altinkaya et al., 2024; Dai & Zhang, 2024; Cárdenas-García & Alcalá-Ordoñez, 2023). Participants believe that tourism can create new markets for handicrafts, traditional foods, accommodation services, small-scale production, and service industries. This is particularly important for lower-middle-income groups, highlighting the role of tourism in household economic empowerment. From the residents’ perspective, tourism represents an opportunity to prevent youth migration, create family-based jobs, and revive dormant local assets. Therefore, the tourism economy in this context operates on multiple levels: subsistence, social, and spatial.

“... When this area is improved and attracts tourists, more people come and spend money, and this spending enters people’s lives. At the same time, job opportunities are created for residents, and many people get out of unemployment ...” (Alireza, 23 years old)

7) Perceptions of Local Employment Opportunities: The findings show that participants categorize potential tourism-related jobs mainly into three groups: cultural and handicraft industries (such as calligraphy and traditional Qazvin crafts), tourism services (eco-lodges, traditional cafés and restaurants, local tour guiding), and small-scale businesses (local food products, souvenirs, and home-based production). This classification indicates that residents envision an economic development model aligned with the cultural-historical advantages of the neighborhood, reflecting an adaptive understanding of local capacities. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that cultural tourism contributes to the development of local businesses in historic districts (Soleymanian & Fanni, 2021; Brida et al., 2020). The emphasis on handicrafts, traditional foods, and cultural services suggests that residents seek a tourism economy model aligned with local identity rather than one that replaces it. This alignment between economy and culture reflects a tendency toward endogenous, resource-based development. Moreover, the presence of caravanserais and historic bathhouses is perceived as an opportunity for the emergence of new cultural and service-based functions. Responses indicate that residents view the tourism market as tangible and achievable, and consider entrepreneurship an integral part of neighborhood development.

“... In many ways it can be very beneficial—selling handicrafts and artworks like calligraphy and painting, opening eco-lodges, guesthouses and traditional restaurants, and even for women it can be very good, such as selling homemade sweets and traditional foods ...” (Ali Akbar, 42 years old)

To understand the distribution pattern and concentration of the extracted concepts from the qualitative data, the dispersion of codes derived from interview analysis was examined. In total, the coding process led to the extraction of 521 initial codes from the semi-structured interview transcripts, reflecting the

diversity of participants’ perceptions, lived experiences, and semantic emphases regarding the research topic. The analysis of code dispersion enables the identification of frequency levels, conceptual concentration, and the intensity of thematic repetition, indicating which thematic areas are more prominent from the participants’ perspective. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution and dispersion of the codes extracted from the interviews.

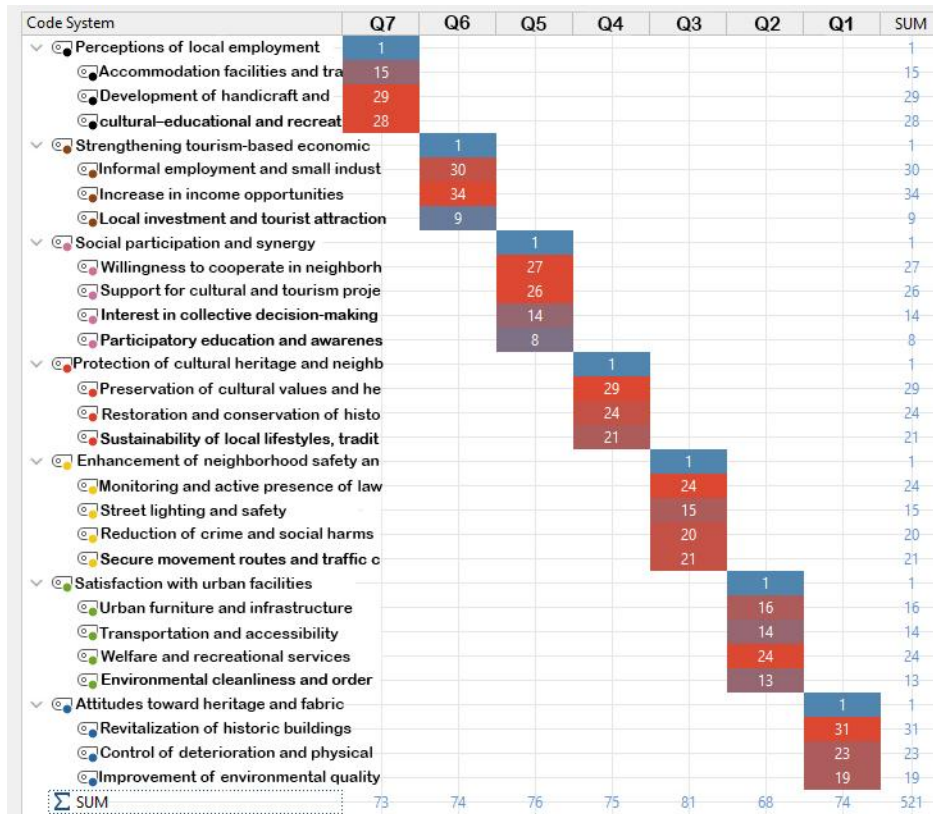








Figure 3. Distribution of Interview Codes

The frequency analysis of the extracted codes from the interviews indicates that residents’ perceptions of tourism development in the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood are primarily shaped by economic and livelihood-related concerns. Among the axial categories, “increase in income opportunities” with 34 codes shows the highest frequency, reflecting the dominant perception of tourism as a tool for improving economic conditions and compensating for local livelihood constraints. This is followed by “revitalization of historic buildings” with 31 codes, indicating residents’ high sensitivity to physical deterioration and the necessity of restoring and reactivating historic spaces. The category of “informal employment and small-scale industries” with 30 codes highlights participants’ attention to tourism’s potential for creating small, flexible job opportunities aligned with the neighborhood’s social structure. Next, “development of handicraft and souvenir markets” and “preservation of cultural values and heritage,” each with 29 codes, reflect a meaningful linkage between local economy and cultural identity in residents’ perceptions. In addition, “cultural, educational, and recreational services” with 28 codes suggests that tourism, from the participants’ perspective, is not limited to economic functions but is also associated with enhanced social vitality and cultural interaction. The category “willingness to cooperate in neighborhood activities,” with 27 codes, indicates the existence of latent social participation capacity among residents. Overall, the frequency pattern shows a gradual decline across categories. The

above-mentioned concepts hold the highest frequency, while other concepts appear with lower intensity and repetition. This pattern suggests that residents' perceptions are concentrated around a limited but key set of economic, physical, and cultural issues in relation to tourism development in the historic fabric of Dabbaghan. In order to deepen the analysis, word cloud (keyword visualization) techniques were employed to identify the most frequently occurring terms in the interviews. Word clouds help highlight dominant concepts and prevailing concerns of residents, revealing how each axial category is reflected in everyday language and lived experience. Accordingly, a separate word cloud was extracted for each of the seven main research dimensions, which, as a complementary tool to thematic analysis, strengthens the interpretive validity of the findings by directly representing the voice of the local community.

Table 2. Most Frequent Keywords of Interview Dimensions

<p>Satisfaction with Urban Facilities</p>  <p>A word cloud with green and blue text. The most prominent words are 'improvement', 'lighting', 'urban', 'organization', 'cleanliness', 'network', 'development', 'safety', 'passages', 'monitoring', 'garden', 'path', 'neighborhood', 'management', 'promotion', 'creation', 'market', 'access', 'parks', 'public', 'amenities', 'more', 'reinforcement', 'inefficiency', 'landscaping', 'restoration', 'buildings', 'physical', 'historical', 'promotion', 'maintenance', 'prevention', 'architecture', 'old', 'spaces', 'preservation', 'reconstruction', 'protection', 'materials', 'organization', 'traditional', 'quality', 'physical', 'historical', 'promotion', 'maintenance', 'prevention'.</p>	<p>Attitudes toward Heritage and Fabric Conservation</p> 
<p>Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Neighborhood Identity</p>  <p>A word cloud with red and brown text. The most prominent words are 'preservation', 'identity', 'display', 'architectural', 'heritage', 'education', 'reinforcement', 'prevention', 'cultural', 'activity', 'interaction', 'promotion', 'architectural', 'heritage', 'education', 'reinforcement', 'prevention', 'cultural', 'activity', 'historical centers', 'maintenance', 'symbol', 'old', 'restore', 'creation', 'documentation', 'safe', 'security', 'damage', 'route', 'control', 'walkways', 'increase', 'prevention', 'tourists', 'reduction', 'emergency', 'presence', 'promotion', 'training', 'safety', 'theft', 'creation', 'prevention', 'nighttime', 'reduction'.</p>	<p>Enhancement of Neighborhood Safety and Security</p> 
<p>Strengthening Tourism-Based Economic Capacities</p>  <p>A word cloud with orange and brown text. The most prominent words are 'employment', 'economic', 'improvement', 'career', 'business', 'services', 'activity', 'attraction', 'job', 'capital', 'increase', 'entrepreneurial', 'neighborhood', 'opportunity', 'jobs', 'income', 'household', 'industries', 'entertainment', 'competition', 'attraction', 'job', 'capital', 'increase', 'entrepreneurial', 'neighborhood'.</p>	<p>Social Participation and Synergy</p>  <p>A word cloud with purple and brown text. The most prominent words are 'participation', 'creation', 'project', 'support', 'presentation', 'activity', 'works', 'presence', 'program', 'cooperation', 'assistance', 'meetings', 'maintenance', 'general', 'cultural', 'information', 'campaign', 'educational', 'management', 'quality', 'program', 'cooperation', 'assistance', 'meetings', 'maintenance'.</p>
<p>Perceptions of Local Employment Opportunities</p>	



In the following step, in order to provide an overall picture of the dominant concepts and linguistic patterns across the entire set of interviews, a word cloud was generated from the most frequently used terms. This word cloud, without separating the thematic dimensions, reflects the general orientation of residents' perceptions and concerns regarding tourism development in the historic fabric of the Dabbaghan neighborhood. The most frequently occurring terms include the creation of traditional spaces, the presence of tourists, improved participation, enhanced security, and the expansion of cultural services.



Figure 5. Most Frequent Words Across All Interviews

In the next stage, with the aim of comparing and explaining the relative intensity and importance of axial categories within each research dimension, frequency diagrams of the codes were analyzed separately for each axis. This analysis enables the identification of dominant axial categories and highlights those issues that, from the participants' perspective, represent the highest level of concern, need, or demand within each dimension. In this way, residents' perceptual priorities across different dimensions are made explicit, comparable, and analytically interpretable.

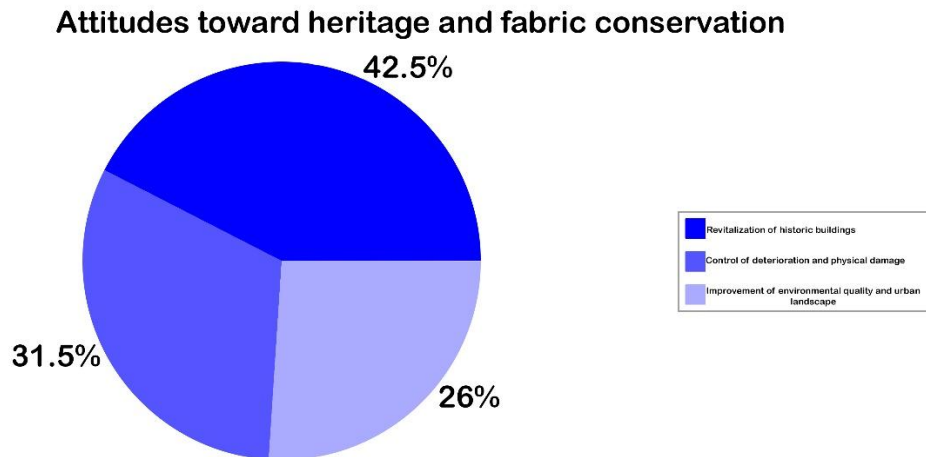


Figure 6. Frequency Diagram of the “Attitudes toward Heritage and Fabric Conservation” Dimension

The axial category of “revitalization of historic buildings,” with 42.5%, holds the highest share within the “attitudes toward heritage and fabric conservation” dimension, indicating the importance of physical preservation and urban landscape conservation from the residents’ perspective. These findings highlight two main points: first, tourism acts as a catalyst for the restoration and revitalization of key historic buildings in the neighborhood; second, building rehabilitation is not merely a physical process but also a symbol of cultural identity consolidation and strengthening of social attachment. This semantic emphasis underscores that successful tourism development must be aligned with physical conservation and cultural values in order to ensure local community acceptance and the sustainability of the historic fabric.

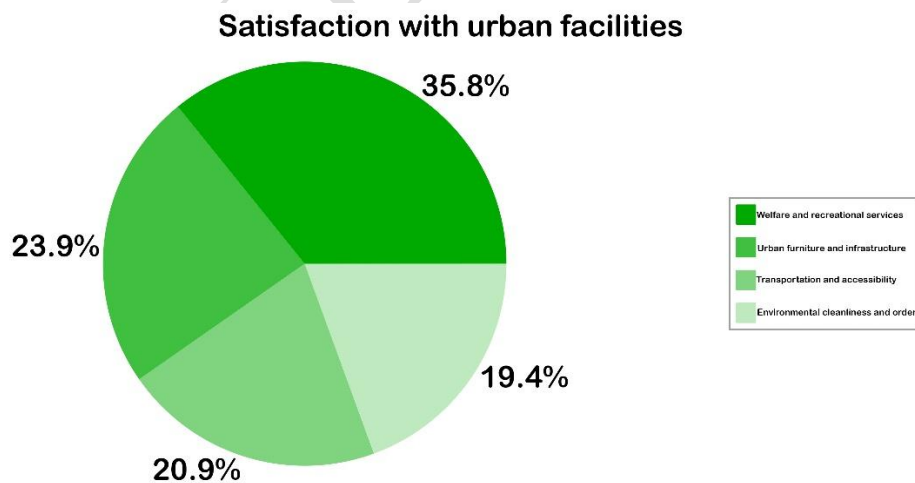


Figure 7. Frequency Diagram of the “Satisfaction with Urban Facilities” Dimension

The axial category of “welfare and recreational services,” with 35.8%, represents the highest share within the “satisfaction with urban facilities” dimension, indicating that residents consider the improvement of urban infrastructure and services as their most important expectation from tourism development. The presence of tourists is associated with improvements in streets, lighting, urban furniture, and public amenities, which in turn enhances residents’ satisfaction with quality of life and social interactions. This finding emphasizes that tourism is not only an economic activity but also a

driver of infrastructure development and public welfare, and that successful tourism development requires simultaneous attention to both physical and social needs of the neighborhood.

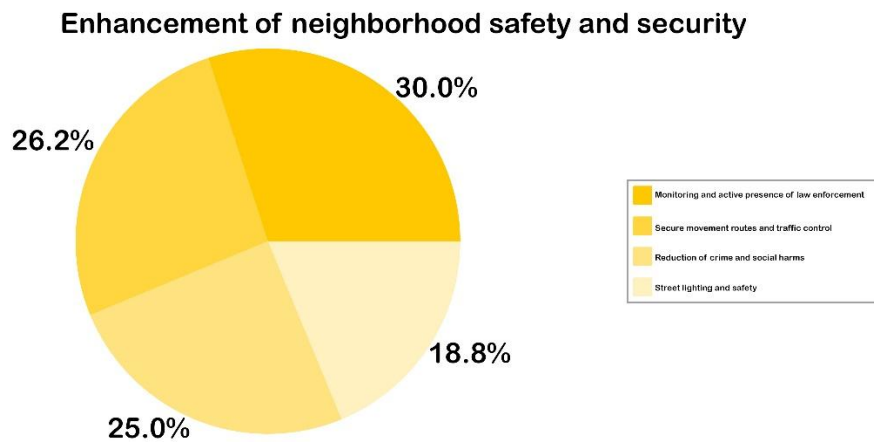


Figure 8. Frequency Diagram of the “Enhancement of Neighborhood Safety and Security” Dimension

The axial category of “monitoring and active presence of law enforcement,” with 30%, holds the highest share within the “enhancement of neighborhood safety and security” dimension, indicating that residents perceive security as one of the key outcomes of tourism development. Increased tourist presence and related activities, combined with social surveillance and law enforcement measures, contribute to reducing crime and social harm and enhancing both perceived and actual safety. This finding highlights that tourism can serve as an effective factor in creating a safe and stable environment for residents, provided that it is accompanied by proper management and targeted supervision.

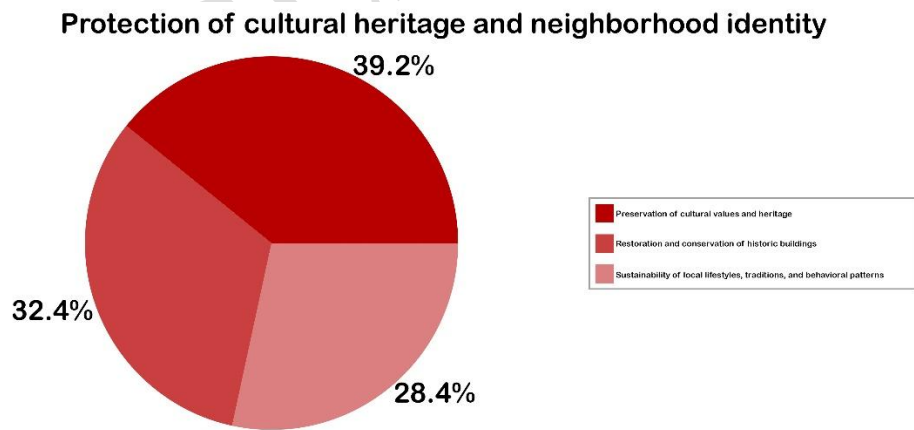


Figure 9. Frequency Diagram of the “Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Neighborhood Identity” Dimension

The axial category of “preservation of cultural values and historic heritage,” with 39.2%, has the highest share within the “preservation of cultural heritage and neighborhood identity” dimension, indicating that residents view tourism development as a means of strengthening cultural identity and preserving both tangible and intangible heritage. From their perspective, tourism not only leads to the revitalization of historic buildings and places but also contributes to the preservation of local culture, lifestyle, traditions, and indigenous skills. This semantic focus suggests that any successful tourism development

program must be aligned with cultural preservation in order to ensure community acceptance and sustain the continuity of the neighborhood’s identity values.

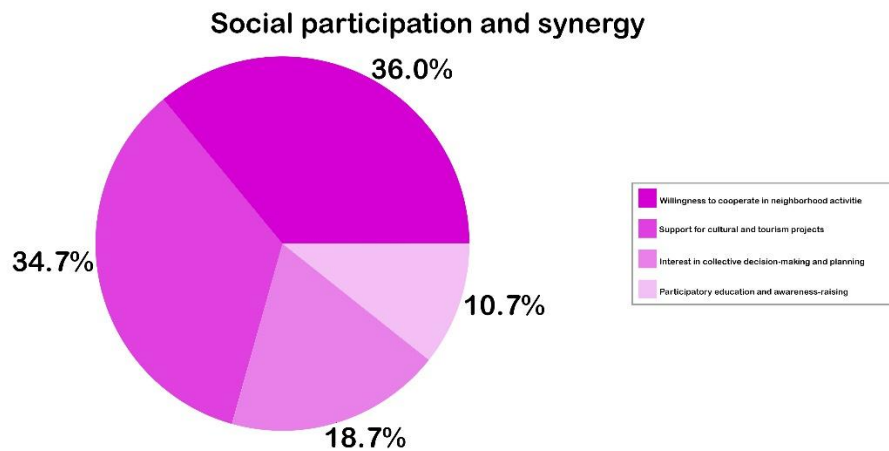


Figure 10. Frequency Diagram of the “Social Participation and Synergy” Dimension

The axial category of “willingness to cooperate in neighborhood activities,” with 36%, accounts for the highest share within the “social participation and synergy” dimension, indicating the existence of latent social capital among residents. This finding suggests that the local community not only holds a positive attitude toward tourism development but also demonstrates both cognitive and practical readiness to engage in planning and implementation processes. The prominence of this category indicates that the success of tourism development in historic fabrics is primarily dependent on activating formal participatory mechanisms, institutional trust-building, and creating platforms for local collaboration. In this context, community participation can be transformed from a latent capacity into a driving force of development.

Strengthening tourism-based economic capacities

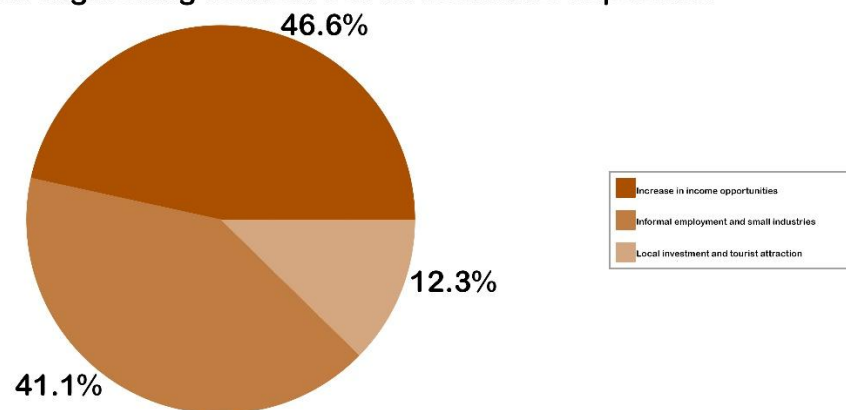


Figure 11. Frequency Diagram of the “Strengthening Tourism-Based Economic Capacities” Dimension

The axial category of “increase in income opportunities,” with 46.6%, represents the highest share within the “strengthening tourism-based economic capacities” dimension, reflecting the dominance of a livelihood-oriented perspective among residents regarding tourism development. This strong emphasis indicates that, from the local community’s perspective, tourism is primarily perceived as a

strategy for improving economic conditions, compensating for employment limitations, and generating a sustainable income flow. The prominence of this category suggests that the acceptance and sustainability of tourism development in historic fabrics are strongly dependent on its ability to generate tangible economic benefits for residents; without fulfilling this function, other physical and cultural dimensions may also face challenges.

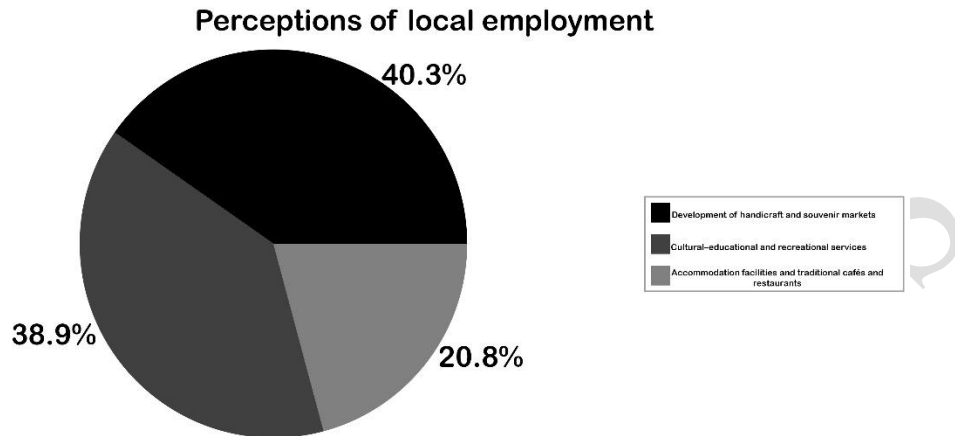


Figure 12. Frequency Diagram of the “Perceptions of Local Employment Opportunities” Dimension

The axial category of “development of handcraft and souvenir markets,” with 40.3%, holds the highest share within the “perceptions of local employment opportunities” dimension, indicating residents’ preference for occupations aligned with the historical and cultural identity of the neighborhood. This finding shows that the local community views tourism as an opportunity to reconstruct the local economy and strengthen identity-based businesses—occupations that not only generate income but also contribute to the preservation of traditional skills and the representation of local culture. The prominence of this category suggests that the success of tourism development in historic fabrics depends on supporting the value chain of handicrafts and souvenirs and integrating it with the tourism market. Such an approach can simultaneously ensure the economic and cultural sustainability of the neighborhood.

The simultaneous analysis of the seven main dimensions of the study indicates that residents’ perceptions of tourism development in the historic fabric of the Dabbaghan neighborhood are structured within a “multidimensional and interwoven” pattern. In this pattern, the economic dimension functions as the central core of residents’ perceptions, with the increase in income opportunities acting as the primary driver of tourism acceptance. This economic stimulus is reciprocally linked with the physical revitalization of historic buildings, the improvement of urban services and facilities, and the enhancement of neighborhood security, collectively enabling the spatial and social revitalization of the urban fabric. At the socio-cultural level, the preservation of cultural heritage and strengthening of neighborhood identity, along with residents’ willingness to participate and collaborate, indicate the existence of latent social capital that can be transformed into an operational engine for tourism development. At the same time, the emphasis on the development of identity-based occupations such as handicrafts and souvenirs reflects the community’s tendency toward an economic model compatible with the cultural and historical values of the neighborhood. Overall, the findings suggest that tourism development in the historic fabric of Dabbaghan can only lead to sustainability if it is understood as an integrated process—one that simultaneously and in a balanced manner pursues tangible economic benefits, physical and cultural preservation, improved quality of life, and active community participation. This model can serve as a strategic framework for tourism planning and policy-making in

similar historic urban fabrics. Within this framework, the proposed tourism development strategies for the Dabbaghan neighborhood are presented as follows:

1. **Functional and Qualitative Reorganization of Sepah Street as the Main Axis of Heritage Tourism:** Sepah Street, as one of the oldest historic axes in the country, has the potential to function as a “showcase of historical identity and tourism” for the Dabbaghan neighborhood. Gradually guiding land uses along this street toward tourism-compatible activities—such as handicraft shops, local souvenir stores, traditional sweets, cultural cafés, and small-scale tourism services—can enhance spatial vitality and encourage pedestrian engagement. Improving façade quality, removing incompatible additions, implementing identity-based nighttime lighting, and using materials consistent with the historic fabric can significantly enhance the legibility and visual attractiveness of this axis.

2. **Enhancing Safety and Lighting Quality in the Tourism Spaces of the Historic Fabric:** Safety and adequate lighting are essential prerequisites for the presence of both tourists and residents in historic environments. Improving the lighting of streets, secondary alleys, and areas surrounding historic buildings—especially at night—can enhance both objective and perceived safety. The use of soft, uniform, and heritage-compatible lighting, avoiding harsh illumination, and emphasizing the lighting of corners and spatial blind spots are key interventions in this regard. Simultaneously, increasing social presence, natural surveillance, and organizing active ground-floor uses can serve as complementary measures for improving neighborhood safety.

3. **Strengthening the Role of the Grand Mosque as the Cultural-Spatial Core of Tourism:** The Jameh Mosque of Qazvin and its surrounding spaces can become the main center of historical and cultural experience for tourists. Improving the surrounding environment through unified and identity-based paving, façade organization, enhanced nighttime lighting, and improved spatial safety can increase visitor presence and encourage longer stays. In adjacent historic buildings, defining low-impact cultural functions—such as small exhibitions, neighborhood history galleries, handicraft displays, and cultural product sales—without compromising the sanctity and authenticity of the mosque can lead to both cultural and economic activation of the area.

4. **Restoration and Adaptive Reuse of Caravansaries through a Cultural–Economic Utilization Approach:** The historic caravansaries of the Dabbaghan neighborhood, as prominent yet largely abandoned elements, require an approach based on minimal intervention restoration and gradual adaptive reuse. Transforming these spaces into handicraft markets, souvenir retail areas, traditional cafés and restaurants with controlled capacity, and venues for cultural events and performances can, while preserving their physical structure, turn them into vibrant social and economic hubs. Providing appropriate interior and exterior lighting, furniture consistent with the historic fabric, and designated resting and pause areas are essential prerequisites for the success of this strategy.

5. **Development and Strengthening of Continuous Pedestrian Tourism Routes within the Historic Fabric:** Defining continuous pedestrian tourism routes connecting the Jameh Mosque, caravansaries, baths, and historic water reservoirs plays a key role in organizing tourist movement. These routes should be equipped with distinctive paving, clear wayfinding systems, multilingual signage, historical interpretation stations, and short rest areas. Enhancing nighttime lighting, eliminating blind spots, and strengthening the visual connectivity between heritage buildings increase both the usability and safety of the routes during evening hours.

6. **Development of Identity-Based and Community-Based Tourism Economy:** Given the central role of the economic dimension in tourism acceptance, supportive policies should focus on strengthening identity-based occupations such as handicrafts, production and sale of traditional foods and sweets, and

small-scale cultural and tourism services. Utilizing historic buildings and surrounding spaces for these activities facilitates direct participation of residents—particularly women and youth—and establishes a sustainable link between the local economy and the neighborhood’s historical identity.

7. Strengthening Social Participation and Local Tourism Governance: Social participation, as a key form of capital in the development of tourism in Dabbaghan, requires the strengthening of formal mechanisms, targeted training programs, and institutional trust-building. Active involvement of residents in the planning, implementation, and operation of tourism projects can ensure social sustainability, local acceptance, and the long-term success of the proposed interventions.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted using a qualitative–interpretive approach and based on qualitative content analysis of data obtained from 32 semi-structured interviews with residents of the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood in Qazvin. The conceptual framework of the study was developed based on the theoretical foundations of urban tourism development in historic fabrics and structured around three main dimensions—economic, social, and physical—since recent studies indicate that tourism development in historic urban areas contributes to sustainable neighborhood revitalization through the creation of economic opportunities, strengthening of social cohesion, and improvement of the physical quality of the urban environment. Accordingly, the interview questions were directly derived from this theoretical framework to empirically examine all three dimensions of the conceptual model in the field. Data analysis was conducted through open, axial, and selective coding, resulting in the extraction of 521 initial codes. After conceptual abstraction, these codes were categorized into seven axial categories and ultimately integrated into a unified conceptual structure comprising four dimensions: economic, social, physical, and cultural. Systematic analysis of the qualitative data led to the identification of seven axial categories: “attitudes toward heritage and fabric conservation,” “satisfaction with urban facilities,” “enhancement of neighborhood safety and security,” “preservation of cultural heritage and neighborhood identity,” “social participation and synergy,” “strengthening tourism-based economic capacities,” and “perceptions of local employment opportunities.” In the selective coding stage, these were integrated into a final overarching category titled: “Integrated enhancement of the economic, social, cultural, and physical dimensions of the historic Dabbaghan neighborhood through tourism development.” This conceptual structure indicates that, from the residents’ perspective, tourism development is not a unidimensional intervention but a multidimensional and synergistic process that simultaneously improves physical environmental quality, strengthens social interactions, activates economic capacities, and preserves cultural identity. This finding is consistent with the theoretical foundations of the study, as recent research emphasizes the role of tourism in improving infrastructure and spatial quality in historic fabrics (Kuzulugil et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2023), enhancing local economic opportunities and job creation (Dai & Zhang, 2024; King et al., 2024), strengthening social interaction and community participation (Grahm et al., 2020; Babaei et al., 2023), and preserving cultural heritage and strengthening place identity (Wang et al., 2023; Jalalian & Beiki, 2023). Similarly, domestic studies have confirmed the role of tourism in functional revitalization and enhancing the dynamism of historic fabrics as well as strengthening economic and social capacities (Aghlara et al., 2024; Soleymanian & Fanni, 2021; Hosseini Tehrani et al., 2020). Accordingly, the final category extracted in this study confirms the view that tourism development can function as an integrated mechanism that simultaneously improves multiple dimensions of spatial and social life in historic fabrics and redefines its role within the functional structure of the city. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that the three dimensions—economic, social, and physical—extracted from the data are directly aligned with the

initial theoretical framework of the study, thereby confirming the validity of the proposed conceptual model. Specifically, the economic dimension—comprising indicators such as job creation, development of local businesses, and increased income flows—is consistent with the findings of Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) and OECD (2024), which identify tourism as a key driver of local economic development. The social dimension—including improved safety, increased social participation, and strengthened local interactions—is also aligned with the findings of Garau-Taberner et al. (2025) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2024), which emphasize tourism's role in strengthening social capital and the vibrancy of historic neighborhoods. In the physical dimension, findings indicated that tourism contributes to the restoration of historic buildings, improvement of infrastructure, and enhancement of urban environmental quality, which is consistent with frameworks proposed by UNWTO (2023) and OECD (2024). Therefore, the empirical findings not only confirmed the theoretical model but also demonstrated that the three-dimensional structure (economic, social, and physical) has sufficient explanatory power to analyze the impacts of tourism development in historic fabrics. However, the most significant analytical finding of the study was the emergence of the cultural dimension as an independent and key category in residents' perceptions, whereas it had not been explicitly included in the initial conceptual model. This dimension includes concepts such as cultural heritage preservation, strengthening neighborhood identity, maintaining traditions, and sustaining local cultural patterns. This finding indicates that, from the residents' perspective, tourism development is not merely an economic or physical process but also an identity-forming and culture-centered mechanism. This result is consistent with recent studies emphasizing the role of tourism in strengthening cultural identity and heritage sustainability (Garau-Taberner et al., 2025; UNWTO, 2023). In sum, the results show that tourism development in the historic fabric of Dabbaghan is perceived by residents as a multidimensional and integrated process that simultaneously improves economic conditions, strengthens social structure, enhances physical quality, and consolidates cultural identity. The main innovation of this study lies in the evolution of the initial conceptual model from a three-dimensional framework to a four-dimensional framework based on empirical data. This finding demonstrates that the cultural dimension is not a secondary outcome but a structural component of tourism development in historic urban fabrics. This highlights the necessity of incorporating cultural dimensions into neighborhood-based tourism planning and confirms the proposed conceptual framework as a localized, resident-based model for analyzing and guiding tourism development in historic fabrics.

Author Contributions

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization, research design, data collection, analysis of results, and manuscript writing.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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