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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. The research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing 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 Kish Island's status 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, as collective memories, has 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

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1. Introduction

Public transportation networks are critical 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/services transfer services constitute examples of public transportation modes (Daviran, 2026). The operational efficiency of this system depends, on the one hand, on 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 on 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. Research indicates that better access to public transportation can directly influence local economic development, leading to increased economic activities, job creation, and growth in the retail and service sectors. Investment in public transportation to enhance 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 a more balanced distribution of tourists throughout the city. Research evidence also suggests a positive relationship between transportation infrastructure development and tourism growth. Enhanced transportation networks and shorter travel times to scenic destinations result in greater tourist satisfaction and longer stays (Orujov, 2025). From an urban economics perspective, public transportation serves as a vital link between residents, tourists, and the local economy. 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 functions as a demand-driven economic factor against tourism intensity and concentration. In island cities with recreational and tourism functions, such as Qeshm, Kish, Hormuz, and Lavan in southern Iran, public transportation performance is particularly important. 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 has expanded the public transport-based economy 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 3 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 led tourists to rely more than ever on public transportation, especially taxis and organized transfer services. This significant development has formed an economy based on public transportation, in which transportation services function not merely as tourist transporters, but also shape 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 explored 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 ununderstood. The principal concern of the present research is not merely public transportation efficiency, but rather the lack of a 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, aimed at 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, explaining the functional structure of this economy 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 a key infrastructure for the 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 on tourism economics based on public transportation have been limited, with the majority of research focused on their infrastructural development rather than the micro-economy derived therefrom. Nevertheless, among the studies on transportation, economics, and tourism, the following may be noted:

Taghizadeh Farahmand (2020), in a study entitled "The impact of urban tourism on the urban economy, with emphasis on the public transportation systems," demonstrated 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 "Designing a model of urban tourism economy with 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 titled "Presenting a model for sustainable tourism development in Qeshm Island with a focus on the prospects and challenges of natural tourism," addressed the topic of infrastructure and public transportation systems and their impact on tourism prosperity and development.

Garau et al. (2022), in a study titled "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 "Factors affecting encouraging tourists to use public transportation at holiday destinations with focus on tourism sustainability," conclude that the existence of guest cards for 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 hurts this choice.

Karabulut and Özün (2024), in a study named "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 the final consumption goods, but intermediate goods 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 arises not from the act of traveling, but from people's need to access their workplace, shopping centers, or tourist 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 level of urban economics, 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 use 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 reproduce 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 use 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 Reeven, 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 passenger numbers compels transportation operators to offer more frequent services, which subsequently leads to reduced average waiting times and travel costs. (Silva, 2021).

In the literature of urban economics and transportation, the economy based on public transportation is defined as an infrastructure beyond mobility services, linked to increased accessibility, productivity, and local economic interactions. According to recent studies, investment in public transportation not only improves passenger mobility and reduces travel costs but also systematically exerts positive spillover effects on urban economic development; in areas covered by increased transportation services, the amount of economic activity, employment, and business growth has

increased, which is a clear manifestation of the role of transportation in urban economics (Albalate & 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 increase economic activity and provide extensive economic, social, and health benefits for individuals' lives. The ability to travel and connect with others is also a fundamental human capability, which can 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; tourism destinations face increased trips during peak seasons, and this additional demand highlights the necessity of appropriate service and operational frequency adjustment (Albalate & 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, constituting an inseparable part of the core tourism activity (Samková & Navrátil, 2023).

According to the theoretical literature, the urban economy based on public transportation is 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 increases 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 using 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 Reeven, 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 allows for 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 to express their essence (Vasegh et al., 2020). The study or knowledge of phenomena encompasses everything that appears to the mind and humans experience. Phenomenology is

formed around the axis of consciousness and encompasses what is recognized as primary insight (Daviran, 2026). Lived experience is a key and foundational concept in phenomenology. Phenomenological research is a method concerning human experience and how 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. This framework enables the explication of hidden meanings, economic perceptions, and lived logics of actors in relation to tourism and the urban mobility system (Figure 1).

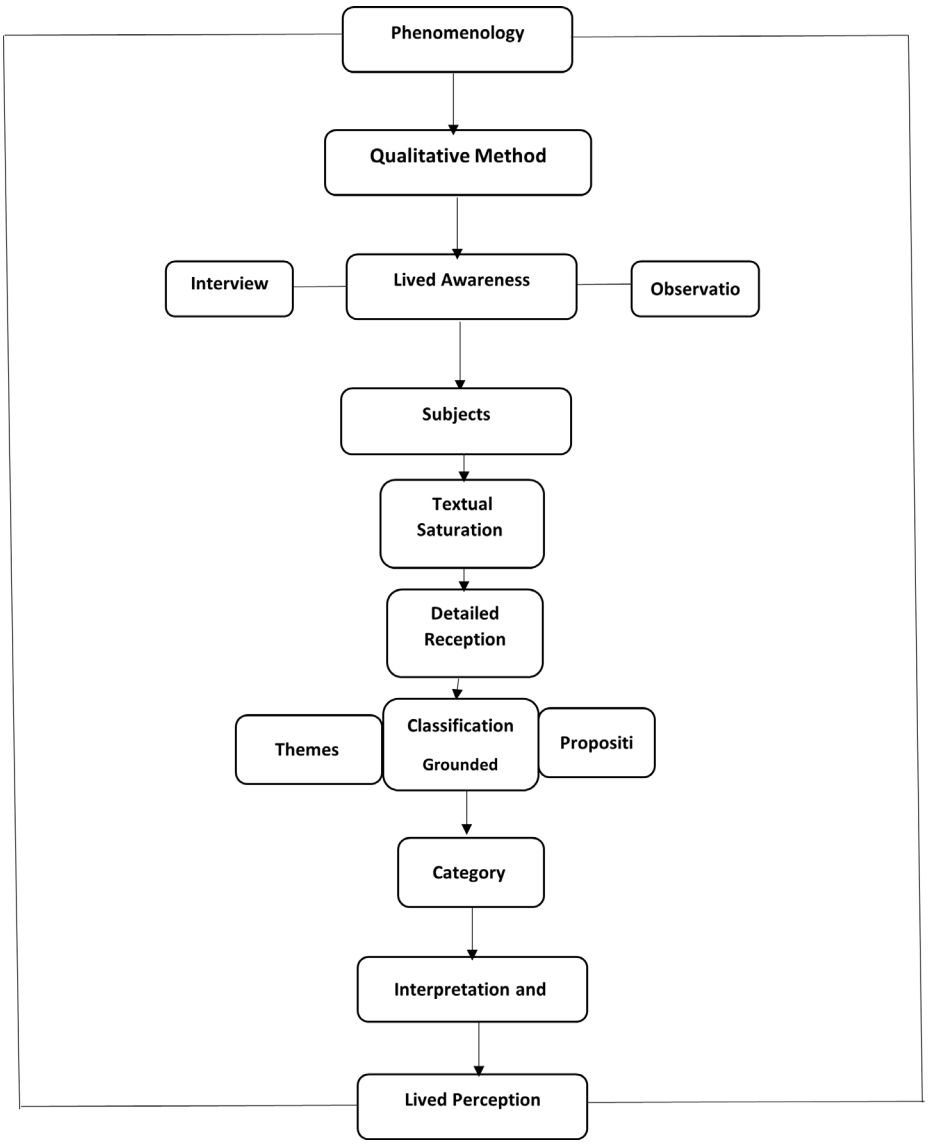

Figure 1. The phenomenological method is used in the study of lived perception

The present research is qualitative 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 allows for

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, 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 to be 20 participants based on the principle of theoretical saturation. 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 further ensure data consistency and complete coverage of themes, the data collection process continued until the twentieth 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 was conducted based on the interpretive phenomenological approach to explicate 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 as meaning units. The extracted meaning units were organized into main themes through an interpretive process and were interpreted within the theoretical foundations of urban economics and public transportation. The result 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. 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 experiences. The research's dependability was ensured by clearly documenting the data collection and analysis stages and precisely recording 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 a contextual description of the research context 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 questions were shaped based on 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 situated in southern Iran and is one of the country's island cities. It spans approximately 91 square kilometers and has a relatively oval 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 summer reach over 40 degrees Celsius, and in winter are moderate, between 18 and 25 degrees Celsius. Relative humidity is high in most seasons, and rainfall is limited to winter. According to the latest national population and housing census (2016), the population of this urban island was about 40 thousand people, which has increased by more than 11 percent compared to 2011 (approximately 24 thousand people). According to statistics from Kish Free Zone in 2014, the island's population grew to around 50,000, indicating rapid growth. Current investigations reveal that the island's indigenous population is about 7,000,

primarily residing in the Safin district and mainly of Arab ethnicity. The demographic structure of Kish is characterized by an influx of immigrants from various parts of the country, particularly from southern provinces such as Khuzestan, Fars, Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormozgan, Bushehr, Isfahan, Yazd, and Kerman. Many of these immigrants have moved to the island for investment and employment opportunities and have gradually established permanent residence. Functionally, Kish serves as a tourism and commercial hub, attracting over 3 million tourists annually.

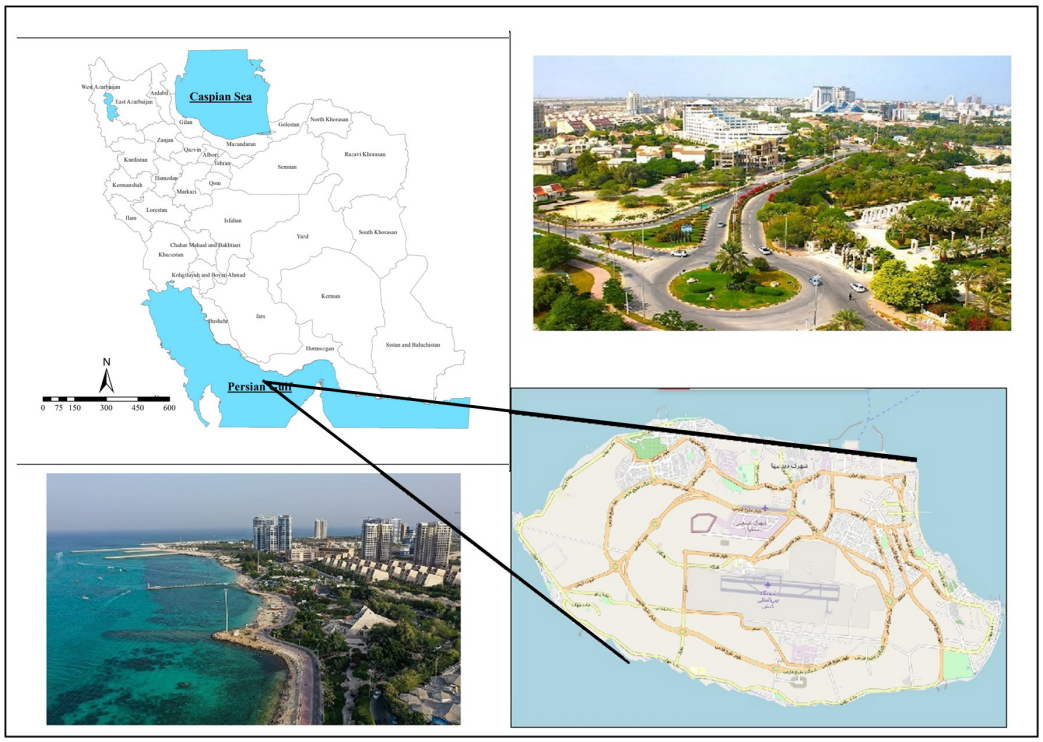

Figure 2. Location of Kish Island in Iran

5.1. Transportation structure of Kish Island

Kish Island has 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. According to the announcement of Kish Public Transportation Management, 700 taxis (yellow and white) and 80 minibus vans operate with approximately 1,300 drivers, a significant portion of which has been renovated through renovation projects. A limited number of luxury taxis, known as London taxis, also operate, designated for the transportation of disabled and elderly individuals in wheelchairs (Kish Water and Services Company, 2024). 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, currently, most taxis in Kish are imported and various Toyota models (Elantra, Corolla, and Camry), mainly 2016 models and later.

To phenomenologically study the lived experience of the local economy based on public taxi transportation, the location of taxis within the island's boundaries was first examined. The results of field observation indicate that the white taxis are predominantly located 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 indicated 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 immigrants from neighboring and southern provinces of Iran, such as Sistan, Khuzestan, Fars, Kerman, Bushehr, and Hormozgan. The study population is married and has at least one child.

The findings from the interview process included more than 211 shared propositions (final open code), which, through conceptual classification and sharing, resulted in 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 static and uniform, 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 working lifeworld of public transportation; 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 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-term 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 May, June, and July, the Kish public transportation experiences a time of stagnation, 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; 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. 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, 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 the cost of livelihood provision increases. The lived experience of the economy based on public transportation among beneficiaries demonstrates that, in addition to climatic issues affecting tourist attractions, during the 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 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 the face of these conditions. They employ multiple adaptive strategies in their daily lives to manage their occupational economy. Saving and investing income 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)
Income and temporal fluctuation	Noticeable increase in income during peak travel months, particularly from January to March; severe income decreases during May, June, and July; high dependency of households' livelihood 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 and vulnerability of the public transportation economy; increased financial pressure; growth of livelihood costs during low-income periods; and a sense of income inequality throughout the year.
Work and activity intensity	Increased working hours during high-tourist seasons and reduced rest time; intensive daily and nightly activity (December to March); long waits for passengers; reduced number of daily trips (low-demand months); experience of hidden unemployment; physical exhaustion during peak travel periods; waste of working time during recession season; and instability of daily work patterns.
Continuity and security	Drivers' sense of job security limited to tourist seasons; increased concern during low-demand periods and fear of meeting living expenses; 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; and increased sense of long-term occupational instability among taxi drivers.
Economic adaptability	Save and invest income from high-demand seasons to compensate for seasonal fluctuations; increase personal working hours, in some cases by taking on temporary jobs; reduce household expenses during recession season; focus on high-tourist-traffic routes; select more profitable working hours; endure difficult economic conditions; and hope for the next prosperous peak season.

5.3. Category: Waiting and productivity

The findings from interviews with white taxi drivers on Kish Island indicate that public transportation's activity pattern 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; 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. The continuous presence of the fleet at conventionally and formally designated locations (stations) during most times, particularly during high-traffic periods, has resulted in no or very short waiting times for passengers. This very matter has greatly facilitated tourist access to the public transportation fleet at various hours of the day and night.

Also, according to the findings, 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, the request, negotiation, and bargaining on Kish Island fleet rates are subject to fleet adherence to established fares, rarely leading 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 and five kilometers, the fare is 200 to 250 thousand; and for longer routes, the fare ranges from 250 to 300 thousand Tomans. The findings indicate that shared fares resulting from route-based traffic constitute a small share of 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 are created between trips. 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, particularly in 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 average number of services drivers provide during peak tourism times per working shift is between 8 and 10.

The lived perception of taxi fleet beneficiaries demonstrates that beneficiaries, through the lived experience derived from continuous activity, clearly connect temporal fluctuations with daily and seasonal tourism cycles; 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 workflow 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. Increased demand not only leads to increased workload but also to decreased 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 are directly linked to 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 the 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)
Waiting time and demand rhythm	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 waits for passengers are formed. A portion of working time is spent without trips. Long waiting is perceived as an economic waste of time.
Productivity and economic efficiency	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 a noticeable productivity decline.
Economic perception	Drivers attribute the decreased waiting time to the increased number of passengers. Increased demand improves taxi system efficiency. The benefits of increased passengers are experienced simultaneously for the driver and the 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 for 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 restrictions on the entry and transfer of private vehicles) and the dependence of mobility on tourism have led public taxis to play a substitute role 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; 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. These services, alongside tourist transfer services, lead to the creation of income and better circulation of the public transportation economy. For instance, some drivers introduce island tourism tours to passengers (tourists) at their request, and arrange tickets for them. 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. Drivers do not receive additional compensation for guiding and directing tourists; rather, by introducing them to places that provide tours and various island programs, they endeavor to obtain economic benefits from the service providers. This is best done customarily between taxi drivers and tourism service providers on Kish Island.

As mentioned, the 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 supply disproportionality. Simultaneously, the high costs of living on the island

(due to 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, organizing the work rhythm of drivers. During peak tourism days, the activity continues until midnight at high-traffic locations, and the work system is generally organized in a shift-based, rotational manner (two drivers for one vehicle) 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 allow for short-term returns for meals or essential family matters, creating 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 during high-demand periods is managed in commercial sectors, small investments, or savings. Given that a significant portion of drivers are immigrants who first entered the island individually and then moved their families, securing housing has become a major concern for them. The high cost of rent and limited land availability necessitate planning for housing purchase and ownership. 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 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 transportation economy of Kish Island

Concepts	Propositions (open codes)
Role in the Island economy	Public taxi is the main pillar of tourism and the island's economy. Passenger movement drives the flow of life in the city. Fleet activity is the main infrastructure of the urban economy. Without taxis, tourism would slow 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 we do on the routes is related to the island's economy. With tourism, family income and jobs are stabilized.
Life management and balance	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 rhythm of tourism. During peak periods, we work until midnight. Through coordination and colleague rotation, we mainly eat meals at home and adjust our personal lives to work shifts. 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 the family's future. Rising living costs require us to plan more carefully. Family life is intertwined with high-traffic routes and shifts. Time limitation causes us to weigh work and family priorities.
Complementary tourism services	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 passenger's purchase amount. We perform some personal requests from 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.

Concepts	Propositions (open codes)
Lived perception of occupation	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. The increase in tourists brings us a sense 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 sense of role in the island economy. Tourism fluctuations change the meaning of the occupation. Every daily service is part of our economic responsibility. Our occupation shapes family opportunities and limitations.

5.5. Category: Capacity and limitation

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

The insularity of Kish and its location within an 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 formed a special structure in the goods, vehicles, and tourists' entry flow. 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 in drivers' minds the feeling of working in a relatively smart and controlled system. 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. Thus, drivers do not see themselves as just passengers, but as part of the island's tourism experience, an experience that is enriched by the arrival of domestic and foreign tourists, sports teams, festivals, ceremonies, and diverse cultural programs, and the development of maritime and land tourism. Due to the intense concentration of the island's economy on tourism, the work rhythm of drivers is directly adjusted with seasons, events, and the volume of tourist entries.

Nevertheless, interviews with public transportation fleet beneficiaries demonstrate that despite the limitations and the 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 created relative occupational tranquility and a sense of professional dignity among drivers.

However, in the mental and perceptual layer of lived experience, a hidden concern exists 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 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 these periods, many hotels were closed, tourist entry severely decreased, the island's economy

experienced a 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 intertwined with the island's limitations and capacities and has acquired its identity through coexistence with them. This economy, on the one hand, provides order, relative security, job satisfaction, and work tranquility; on the other hand, due to its strong dependence on tourism and exogenous factors, it 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

Concept	Propositions (final open codes)
Island lifeworld	The island is located in a closed area in the south of the country. Its round and small shape enables control and management. The existence of the seaport and airport determines the conditions for the entry and exit of passengers and goods. The fragile island ecosystem requires protection. The relative security prevailing on the island affects the work experience. Limitations on private vehicle entry have 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.
Island ecology and space	Land and space limitations restrict 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 and entry/exit limitations during crisis times, such as the 12-day war or COVID-19, reduce fleet activity.
Tourism and commerce nexus	The island, as a regional tourism and trade center, shapes fleet activity. The arrival of foreign tourists, sports teams, and festivals affects the drivers' 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, tours, and guidance). Active fleet participation in tourism gives meaning to drivers' livelihood and occupational experience.
Public transportation dominance	Public taxi is a substitute for private vehicles and the main means of passenger mobility. Continuous fleet presence stabilizes the island's economic flow. Good-quality vehicles, respectful drivers, and training courses provide a standard experience. Complementary activities keep tourism and the island's economy flowing. The fleet is coordinated with tourist entry and exit. Even small drivers' activities are effective in attracting tourists. Drivers strengthen the local economy by providing complementary services.
Perceived institutional order	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.
Tourist-centric livelihood limitation	Family economy depends on tourist volume and fleet balance. Fewer tourists lead to decreased income and increased pressure on livelihoods. Rising living and housing rental costs exacerbate this pressure. Tourism instability in economic, political, and health crises affects drivers. Drivers facing decreased tourism are forced to change occupation or temporarily migrate. The dependency of livelihood on tourism makes the public transportation economy vulnerable.
Stability–anxiety duality	Drivers are relatively satisfied with their job experience. Occupational meaning and motivation go beyond income. In stable tourism conditions, hope and motivation increase. In macro crises (war, COVID, and decreased tourism), psychological pressure and job insecurity are noticeable. Drivers' lived experience oscillates between continuous activity flow and anxiety of tourism dependency. The planned future depends on income derived from tourism and investment in housing and commerce. Drivers endeavor to balance personal and occupational life through intelligent management and rotational planning.

5.6. Tangible findings

Given the topic, problem, and research question – how the economy based on the public transportation network in tourist islands is formed, structured, and functions from the perspective of beneficiaries' lived experiences – we can state 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 island residents' daily life.
- 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, considering 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; increased demand simultaneously enhances driver productivity and passenger welfare.

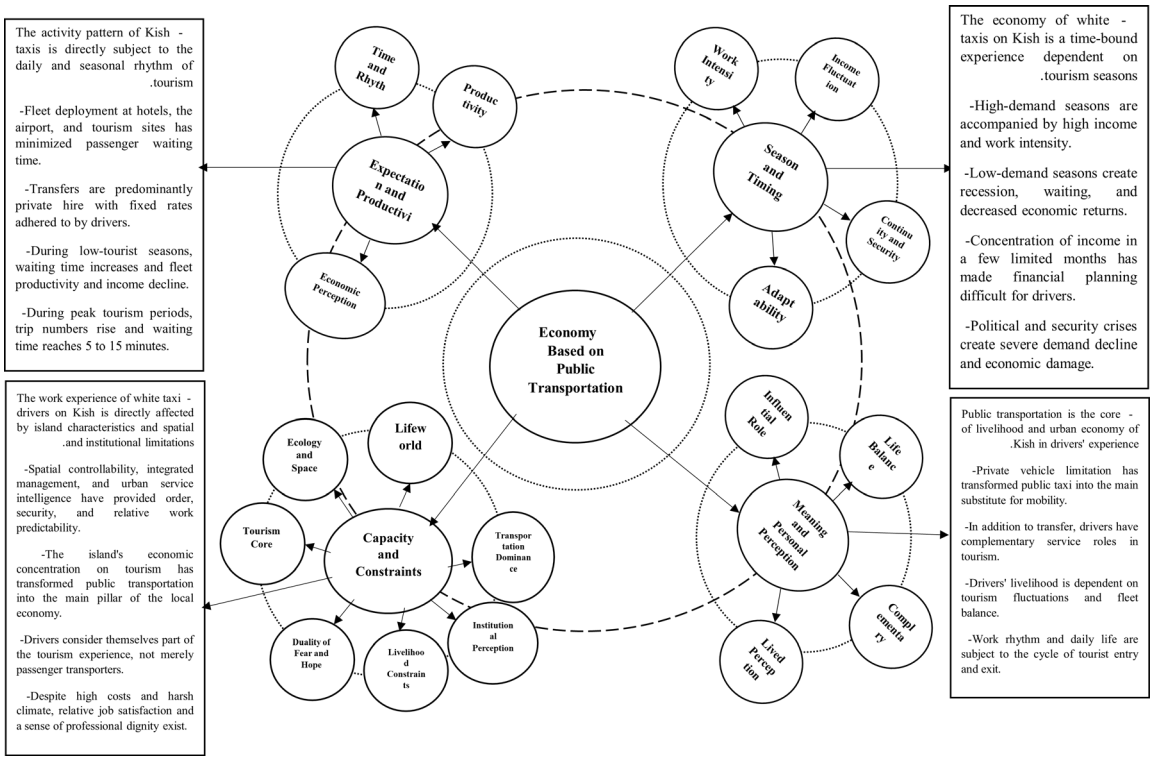

Figure 4. Phenomenological findings of the urban economy based on public transportation on Kish Island

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 dependence 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. This research employed an interpretive phenomenological approach to examine the urban economy based on public transportation from the perspective of the beneficiaries' lived experiences on Kish Island. The findings, organized into four categories, 18 concepts, and 211 shared propositions (or codes), revealed that the economy

based on public transportation on Kish Island is temporal, fluctuating, and heavily reliant on tourism. 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 a sense of economic prosperity. During recession periods, long waits, reduced trips, and income decline lead to 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; increased demand not only enhances the volume of activity but also improves system efficiency.

White taxi drivers on Kish Island are not passive actors in the face of economic instability. 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 to 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. According to this approach, reduced waiting time, increased trip continuity, and perceived occupational productivity are understood as objective signs of tourism prosperity in the daily life of the fleet.

The phenomenological study of the economy based on public transportation on Kish Island demonstrated that the limitation of private vehicle use and tourists' reliance on public transportation leads to increased economic efficiency and a consolidated role of taxis in the local economy of Kish. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that this efficiency in drivers' experience is accompanied by an awareness of the island's economic vulnerability. This strong dependence on tourism, along with external political, security, and health factors, creates an underlying sense of uncertainty among 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. We can conclude that public transportation on Kish Island is not just an urban service or a means of mobility; it serves as the backbone of the tourism-oriented local economy and an economic–spatial link between tourists, local businesses, and beneficiaries' livelihoods. The economy based on public transportation on this island is a flexible yet fragile one, making it susceptible to tourism fluctuations, political–security crises, and external shocks. Ensuring its sustainability requires thoughtful 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 by understanding the seasonal nature of demand and the livelihood instability of fleet beneficiaries, so that supportive and compensatory mechanisms are predicted for tourism recession periods.
- Intelligent adjustment of capacity, spatial distribution, and fleet activity frequency in accordance with the temporal rhythm of tourism, to reduce wasted waiting time, increase drivers' job productivity, and achieve economic savings on the scale of the transportation system.
- Official support for diversifying the economic roles of drivers in the tourism chain, including providing guidance, tour guiding, and complementary services, to 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 temporary employment opportunities, to manage seasonal fluctuations and tourism demand.
- Developing tourism programs and seasonal festivals, to reduce severe demand fluctuations and increase economic activity during low-demand periods.
- Using 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 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 economic risk reduction.

The present research faced limitations, including the work commitments of taxi drivers, which prevented lengthy and comprehensive interviews. Time constraints of fieldwork on the island reduced the number of interviews and observations. Furthermore, the researcher's financial constraints 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 drivers' income limited the information collection. Finally, given the phenomenological nature of the research, findings are based on the lived experience of individuals and cannot be statistically generalized to a larger population.

Given the limitations of the present study, more comprehensive studies are needed in collaboration with the Kish Free Zones Organization and in the form of research projects. Such studies can collect more accurate and extensive data on the structure of the island's tourism economy and its effects on public transportation operators, and enable comparative analysis, predicting the seasonal effects of tourism, and providing solutions for sustainable economic and transportation development. Furthermore, by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and conducting comparative studies among several tourist islands, the ground for greater generalizability of findings and formulation of more comprehensive policy models in the field of public transportation in tourism destinations can be provided.

Authors' Contributions

All steps of the article were carried out by one author.

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Conflict of Interest

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