Najjari Nabi R. et al.
June 2027
Urban Economics and Planning
Volume 8, Issue 3

Examining the effects of street vending on the urban landscape in historic districts: A case study of District 8 in Tabriz

Rana Najjari Nabi[1], Nahideh Rezaei[2*]

1. Ph.D. in Architecture, Department of Architectural Engineering & Urban Design, Shahid Rajaee Teacher Training University, Tehran, Iran
2. Assistant Professor at Tabriz Islamic Art University, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Tabriz, Iran

54

Case Study

Received: 2026/08/09
Revised: 2026/09/28
Accepted: 2026/10/03

COPYRIGHTS

©2027 The author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, as long as the original authors and source are cited. No permission is required from the authors or the publishers.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Najjari Nabi R. Rezaei N. Examining the effects of street vending on the urban landscape in historic districts: A case study of District 8 in Tabriz. *Urban Economics and Planning* 8(3):54-75.

DOI: 10.22034/uep.2026.596227.1982

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of street vending on the urban landscape within the historic fabric of District 8 in Tabriz. The research has an applied purpose and uses a descriptive-analytical, qualitative methodology. Data collection methods included document review, field observation, photography, semi-structured interviews with four municipal managers and more than thirty street vendors, and analysis of vendor-management documents. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, comparative descriptive analysis, and data triangulation. Thematic analysis reveals that street vending in the study area encompasses multiple dimensions. Key themes identified include livelihood dynamics, factors influencing location choice, behavioral diversity, spatial organization, impacts on the historic landscape, social attachment, and perceived environmental quality. The activity involves various seller-customer interactions and diverse uses of space that extend beyond economic considerations. Foot traffic significantly influences vendor location preferences, typically near commercial centers. Additional emerging themes include informal territorial claims, daily informal agreements, support networks, and livelihood resilience. While vendors contribute to the area's social life, excessive density causes crowding and reduces the landscape's perceived quality. Expert interviews indicate that ineffective street-vending management stems from weak policymaking, poor institutional coordination, and short-term strategies. The findings highlight the necessity for gradual, participatory regulatory approaches.

Keywords

Historic fabric
street vending
Tabriz
urban landscape
urban management

* Corresponding Author: nahideh.rezaei@tabriziau.ac.ir

1. Introduction

Rapid urbanization and structural changes in developing countries' economies, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, have expanded the informal sector within urban economies. Limited formal employment opportunities, labor migration to cities, and the formal economy's inability to absorb the active population have compelled many low-income groups to engage in informal activities such as street vending (Rezaei & Najari-Nabi, 2024: 159). Street vending is one of the most prevalent forms of informal work worldwide, especially in developing countries, and constitutes a significant component of the social, economic, and cultural landscape of urban life. Vendors supply relatively inexpensive and accessible goods and services, thereby addressing some daily needs of residents while also providing employment and income for a segment of the urban population (Nesaie et al., 2025: 23), citing Martínez et al. (2017: 2) and Woldeamanuel (2023: 1).

Street vendors operating in public spaces such as streets, sidewalks, squares, and markets have dual effects. On the one hand, they enhance vitality, promote social interaction, increase space utilization, and contribute to natural surveillance, thereby integrating into everyday urban life and the local economy (Roy, 2005: 155–156; Anjaria, 2006: 2142–2143). Conversely, densely concentrated and poorly organized vendor clusters can occupy public space, reduce sidewalk width, impede movement and access, create crowding, and produce visual disorder that diminishes the quality of the urban landscape (Bromley, 2000: 1; Dimas, 2008: 4). Consequently, street vending should not be viewed solely as a matter of removal or acceptance. The primary challenge is balancing vendors' livelihood needs with the quality, functionality, and attractiveness of public space and the urban landscape.

In Iran, urbanization, limited formal employment, and economic inequality have also fueled the growth of informal activities and the widespread presence of street vendors in busy urban areas. While this work provides an important source of income for some low-income groups, inappropriate placement can reduce usable sidewalk width, increase crowding, obstruct pedestrian movement, and create visual problems in the urban landscape (Nazmfar, 2015: 28–30). These issues are particularly sensitive in historic and traditional urban fabrics because of their physical, cultural, and heritage value. The location of commercial activities can affect not only visual quality but also the identity and cultural character of these areas.

District 8 of Tabriz is the city's historic and cultural core. It contains major historic elements such as the Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex, the Blue Mosque, the Arg of Alishah, the Municipality Building, and numerous historic houses. These sites play a central role in shaping collective identity and attracting visitors. In this setting, irregular placement of street vendors in streets and spaces around historic elements can support the social life of the fabric and provide income for some residents. At the same time, without location-based planning, such placement can create disorder in the urban appearance.

The issue of street vending in District 8's historic fabric is therefore less about the mere presence of vendors and more about how they locate, distribute, and organize themselves in relation to the area's spatial structure, functions, and historic-cultural values. Vendors influence social and economic life and the everyday use of public space. Excessive density or weak organization can encroach on movement space, disrupt pedestrian flows, break visual continuity and legibility, and reduce the visibility of historic elements. Understanding how street vending affects different components of the urban landscape and identifying the spatial and functional mechanisms involved can clarify the problem and support more suitable approaches to managing this activity in the historic fabric. This study therefore examines how street vending affects the urban landscape of the historic fabric in District 8 of Tabriz and asks how and through what processes it influences this area's urban landscape.

2. Research background

Domestic research has studied street vending in primarily from economic, social, spatial, and managerial perspectives. Mazloomi and Estelaji (2021) showed that creating local markets and regulating vendor activity can improve environmental conditions, reduce traffic problems, and strengthen economic and social activity in Tehran's Kan neighborhood. Pasandeh et al. (2025) found that occupational position, social relations, and everyday experiences shape women vendors' social identity in the Tehran metro. Dadgarfard et al. (2024) studied the role of economic and social support, training, and assistance programs in the economic empowerment of female heads of household. Rezaei and Najari-Nabi (2024) reviewed vendor management experiences in different countries and noted the dual character of the activity: on one

side, job creation and stronger social interaction; on the other, visual disorder, increased crowding, and reduced urban space quality when planning is absent, a pattern based on spatial and landscape effects. The study identified effective management requirements as suitable location selection, legal support, vendor participation, and organized markets.

Drawing on international research, the researchers examined the relationship between street vending and the quality and vitality of public space. Peymani and Kamalipour (2025) examined the spatial dimensions of street vending in Tehran. They linked urban spatial structure, pedestrian movement, and public-space dynamics to street vending and highlighted its potential to generate urban vitality. Deore and Lathia (2019) found higher vendor activity, greater space use, improved safety, and increased street vitality in Ahmedabad, India. Jacob (2023) reviewed research on street vending and pedestrian behavior, noted the field's growth, and highlighted a shortage of theoretical and methodological work on interactions among vendors, pedestrians, and urban space. Tallavajjula (2023) stressed the need to consider vendors' needs and experiences and to apply inclusive urban design approaches when managing public spaces.

Overall, previous studies have focused primarily on the economic and social dimensions of street vending, its management, and some of its spatial and physical consequences. Simultaneously examining its effects on different components of the urban landscape, especially in historic fabrics, has received less attention. This study aims to address that gap.

3. Theoretical foundations

3.1. Urban landscape

The interplay among the environment's physical features, human activities, and users' perceptions and experiences of space shapes the urban landscape. It cannot be reduced to physical and visual elements alone. The city's physical structure provides the setting for social, economic, and cultural activities, and these activities, in turn, shape how space is used, how it is organized, and the landscape's quality (Pakzad, 2016; Shieh et al., 2017). The urban landscape is therefore not static. It has a dynamic social-spatial character and changes over time as activities, use patterns, and user experience shift.

Classical approaches to the urban landscape emphasize how physical structure and environmental perception shape the city's mental image. Lynch (1960) identified paths, edges, nodes, landmarks, and districts as key elements that shape the environment's legibility and the mental image people form. Cullen (1961) focused on visual experience and the sequence of views that unfold as people move through space, emphasizing the relationship between spatial structure and perception. Taken together, these views show that the quality of the urban landscape results from the interplay between physical features and how people perceive and experience them. However, this interaction remains incomplete without concerning the activities that take place in space. From this perspective, the urban landscape can be examined through physical, functional, and perceptual-semantic dimensions. These dimensions work together to shape the quality and identity of urban space (Bacon, 1996; Pakzad, 2016).

Human activities are integral to producing and reproducing the urban landscape. Urban space is not merely a container for activities; its spatial characteristics also shape how activities form and where they are located. Streets and public spaces are not only routes for movement but also settings for social presence and economic activity. The type, intensity, and placement of these activities can affect movement and stopping patterns, levels of presence and vitality, and the overall experience of space (Deore & Lathia, 2019). Studying the urban landscape therefore requires simultaneous attention to the physical qualities of space and the activities that flow through it.

Within this framework, street vending is an informal economic activity that depends directly on public space. Factors influencing the location of street vending include pedestrian flow, proximity to commercial centers, mixed land uses, and the streets'physical characteristics. At the same time, vendors' placement and density can alter the spatial organization and quality of public space use (Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025). Street vending is therefore not simply an economic activity placed in urban space; it can also affect the physical, functional, and perceptual-semantic dimensions of the urban landscape.

In this study, the urban landscape is treated as a multidimensional phenomenon whose quality is shaped by the interaction among physical structure, ongoing activities, and people's perceptions and experiences of the environment. Table 1 presents the main views on the dimensions of the urban landscape found across different studies.

Table 1. Dimensions of the urban landscape (Source: Vahdat et al., 2015)

Researcher	Dimensions of the urban landscape
Lynch (1960)	Perceptual, physical, and functional
Cullen (1961)	Visual and structural
Swaffield (2005)	Natural and mental factors
Pakzad (2003)	Form, function, and meaning
Golkar (2006)	Tangible, mental, and emotional factors
Mahmoudi (2006)	Sustainability, identity, beauty, and unity
Behzadfar (2008)	Physical and non-physical factors, human activities
Mansouri (2009)	Aesthetic, cultural, functional, and identity dimensions

Based on the theoretical foundations, the urban landscape can be understood as a system composed of three components: functional, physical, and semantic-perceptual. Physical-spatial elements create the container of space, while human factors – people and the population's activities within space – form an inseparable part of that space through their behavior (Pakzad, 2003: 115). As discussed above, the urban landscape has both appearance and content. The external landscape consists of the physical form, while the content landscape includes function and meaning.

3.2. Informal economy

Keith Hart first introduced the term "informal economy" in 1971 in a classic study of Ghana's economy. Early definitions treated informal activities primarily in contrast to formal ones. More recent approaches, however, place greater emphasis on distinguishing among the informal sector, informal employment, and the informal economy (Williams & Lansky, 2013).

The International Labor Organization (2021: 11) stated that the informal economy comprises all economic activities carried out by workers and economic units for profit or wages that are not covered, or are insufficiently covered, by formal arrangements. It employs a large share of the labor force, especially in urban areas (Cunningham et al., 2024), and is a global phenomenon. These workers occupy and use spaces such as sidewalks and street edges to earn a living (Anaafo et al., 2024; Banks et al., 2019).

Another view regards the informal economy as a product of power dynamics and the formal economy's limitations. It argues that the formal economy can be seen as a discursive act within mainstream economics that excludes various forms of human economic life it cannot understand or control, thereby producing the "informal economy" (Zhang & Zhao, 2025). As attention to this issue has grown, Roy (2015) explains that the informal economy has flourished as a fundamental right that opposes exclusionary urban planning and rests on a principle of tolerance. However, the informal economy, its origins, and how to address it do not necessarily fall within the domain of urban planning. They relate more closely to public and economic policy and to policy failure.

Different theoretical models of the informal economy are outlined below. These frameworks include the neoclassical approach, macro-econometric perspectives, and multidisciplinary schools of thought that systematize theoretical approaches to the informal economy and emphasize the two-way relationship between the informal and formal sectors. Modernization theory views the informal economy as a temporary phenomenon that gradually disappears as the economy develops and the formal sector expands. Its main cause is surplus labor and a shortage of formal employment opportunities (Dell'Anno, 2022). This view has been advanced by Lewis (1954), Rostow (1960), Harris and Todaro (1970), and Rauch (1991).

The informal economy is regarded as a relatively independent and stable sector within Dualism, forming the gap between the modern formal economy and unemployment. Its main drivers are skill shortages, limited formal opportunities, and mismatches between labor supply and demand (Dell'Anno, 2022). Hart (1973), Moser (1978), Portes (1994), and Thomas (1995) developed this perspective.

In Structuralism, the informal economy is considered a structural, enduring part of the capitalist system. It emphasizes the informal sector's dependence on the formal economy and labor exploitation (Dell'Anno, 2022). ILO (1972) and Chen et al. (2004) advanced this approach.

Dell'Anno (2020) describes the neoliberal approach as viewing the informal economy as entrepreneurs' and firms' response to heavy taxes, regulations, and state rules. From this perspective, reducing regulation and strengthening property rights and market freedom can bring informal activities into better order. This view is associated with De Soto (1989).

The voluntary exit (or free choice) model treats informality as the outcome of a conscious decision by individuals and firms, based on a cost-benefit comparison of formalization. Increasing the advantages of formality and improving law enforcement can strengthen incentives to exit the informal economy. Maloney (2004), Baily et al. (2005), and Farrell (2004) proposed this model.

The dual-layer model views the informal economy as the product of both exclusion and voluntary choice. Because it emphasizes group diversity, a single policy cannot be applied to all informal groups, and measurements must be tailored to each group's specific conditions. Hart (1973), Moser (1978), Portes (1994), and Thomas (1995) (Dell'Anno, 2022) advanced this perspective.

Given the inductive nature of this research, the theories shown in Figure 1 are treated as sensitizing concepts. They help deepen the interpretation of findings after themes have been extracted, without imposing a predetermined analytical framework on the data.

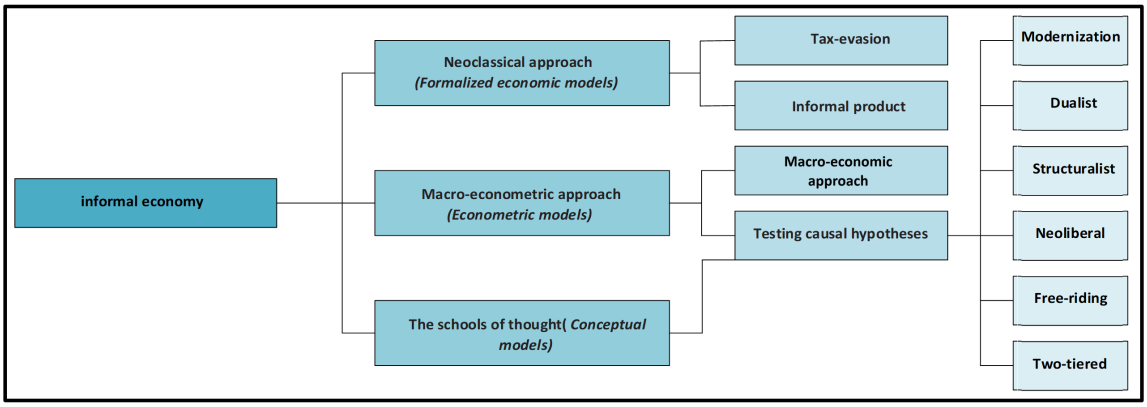


Figure 1. Theories of the informal economy (Dell'Anno, 2022)

3.3. Street vending and public space

Street vending is one of the earliest forms of economic activity in public spaces. When choosing a location, people generally consider foot traffic, ease of access, street features, proximity to other land uses, and visibility (Bromley, 2000; Saha, 2011). As a result, street vending is not simply an economic activity operating outside the formal system; it also shapes how public space is used and socially constructed.

Street vendors can offer a wider variety of activities, encourage people to use the space, and promote social interaction, all of which help enhance the liveliness of public areas. However, if the number and placement of vendors exceed the environment's spatial capacity, they may block travel routes and negatively affect access, circulation, and spatial clarity (Jacob, 2023; Deore & Lathia, 2019).

Street vending also creates temporary or semi-permanent uses of public space, blurring the line between public space and the workplace. Consequently, where and how vendors are present becomes part of a social and spatial discussion about access to and use of public space. The spatial nature of the activity is influenced by pedestrian traffic, the mix of functions, the public-private boundary, and access to customers (Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025). Moreover, recent studies have highlighted the variety of location patterns, mobility, and spatial strategies vendors employ (Ngo Kien Thinh et al., 2025).

Whether street vending positively affects public space is not inherently positive or negative; it depends on the type of activity, density, stall-placement patterns, and the environment's spatial capacity.

3.4. Street vending and the urban landscape in historic fabrics

Beyond their physical and architectural features, historic fabrics also hold historical, cultural, and identity value and are integral to the city's historic fabric. In Iran's historic cities, bazaars, passages, caravanserais, and timchehs have long served as places where economic, social, and communicative

activities converge; therefore, economic activity is not inherently incompatible with the historic character of these places.

Challenges emerge when an activity's scale or nature is misaligned with the physical capacities and values of the historic environment. Under such circumstances, a high concentration of street vendors may impede pedestrian movement and access, obscure routes, diminish views of facades and historic buildings, and reduce visual quality and the overall environmental impression. Conversely, regulated, contextually appropriate economic activity can support the preservation of everyday life, activity diversity, and the vitality of historic areas.

Street vending in areas of historical interest therefore cannot be understood simply as a matter of eliminating the activity. The main concern is to balance the need for livelihoods and employment, the right to use public space, the continuity of economic and social life, and the need to protect historic and landscape values. This view aligns with more recent approaches that regard street vending as an element of public life and as a process of interaction and negotiation among various groups over space use (Tallavajjula, 2023; Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025).

The argument presented indicates that the urban landscape cannot be confined to the environment's physical and visual aspects. Instead, it arises from the interaction among spatial structure, ongoing activities, patterns of space use, and the meanings and perceptions people form in that environment. Viewing it this way, street vending is not simply an informal economic activity; by the way it is positioned and moves about in public space, it can influence spatial organization, patterns of use and movement, stopping, social interaction, activity variety, environmental perception, identity, and the quality of the urban landscape. In historic areas, these effects become more significant in relation to the environment's structure, values, landmark features, and identity and heritage characteristics.

Approaches to street vending and their consequences for the urban landscape

Studies of street vending identified four main approaches: anti-vending, tolerant, vendor-compatible, and inclusive. These approaches differ in how vendors are treated and how they are positioned and located in public space. As a result, each approach yields a distinct form of use, organization, and quality of urban space.

In the anti-vending approach, vendors' activity is curtailed through eviction, seizure of goods, and forced relocation. Vendors are usually seen as causing disorder, disrupting space's use and creating visual clutter. Although these measures are often temporary, they do not always result in a permanent decrease in vending (Hanser, 2016). In the urban landscape, this approach's key feature is removing vendors' physical presence from public space.

In the tolerant approach, street vending is not formally recognized but is permitted to continue. Vendors remain in public areas, though there are generally no clear rules about where they can set up or how intense their presence will be. As a result, their impact on public space and the urban landscape varies by place and depends on density. When activity is highly concentrated, movement routes are more likely to be blocked and visual disorder is more likely to result (Recio et al., 2017).

The inclusive approach goes beyond regulating vendors' activities; it emphasizes involving vendors in decision-making and management. In this model, the municipality, vendors, and other relevant groups share responsibility for managing the activity. For example, in Lima, Peru, a new law establishes a commission composed of representatives from the municipality, vendor associations, and neighbors (Roever, 2016).

These methods affect the urban landscape in different ways. The anti-vending approach involves removing vendors through eviction, confiscation, and relocation. In the short term, such actions can reduce visual clutter and clear movement routes. However, because these measures are usually temporary, vendors move elsewhere, so spatial disorder is not permanently resolved.

In the tolerant approach, vending is not officially recognized but is allowed. Because there are no clear rules about where it can be located or how it should be placed, outcomes depend on density and the area's features. In high-activity areas, it occupies travel routes, increases density, and creates visual disorder. In lower-density areas, the same presence can instead add diversity and give the area a sense of vitality. Nevertheless, this approach still offers limited control over landscape quality.

The vendor-compatibility method treats the activity as something that can be managed through licensing, by specifying certain locations, and by setting rules for where the activity can take place. If implemented properly, it can reduce interference with pedestrian movement, control space use, and improve both circulation order and visual appearance. However,

success depends on careful site selection and rules suited to each space's specific characteristics.

An inclusive approach encourages vendors, the municipality, and other stakeholders to participate in decision-making and management. The objective goes beyond simple control; it aims to balance vendors' economic and social roles while preserving order, access, and the physical and perceptual quality of the public space. With greater social acceptance and placements designed to match the area's character, this approach can improve the urban landscape more sustainably.

To sum up, the more an approach moves away from removal-oriented approaches and toward participatory and regulatory approaches, the greater the opportunity to manage the physical, functional, and perceptual effects of street vending on the urban landscape more deliberately. Table 2 shows these approaches' effects on the urban landscape.

Table 2. Consequences of street vending approaches for the urban landscape in historic fabrics

Main component	Theoretical basis / main content	Consequences of the anti-vending approach	Consequences of the tolerant approach	Consequences of the vendor-compatible approach	Consequences of the inclusive approach	Relevance to the research topic
Physical	Concentration, distribution, and location of activity within the city's spatial structure; relationship of activity with the structure, elements, and values of the historic fabric; placement, arrangement, and spatial organization of the activity	Temporary removal of physical presence; displacement of the problem to other locations; temporary reduction of visual clutter	Unregulated presence; risk of occupying routes and creating visual clutter in high-density areas	Control of location and placement; reduced movement conflict and relative improvement in visual order	Participatory placement suited to the identity of the place; balance between presence and physical quality	Lynch, 1960; Cullen, 1961; Pakzad, 2003; Golkar, 2006; Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025; Behzadfar, 2008; Mansouri, 2009; Kiani & Sardari, 2011; Faizi & Asadpouri, 2013; UNESCO, 2011
Functional	Livelihood, employment, and links to the local economy; social interaction and the formation of everyday life; diversity of activities (shopping, stopping, watching); supply of goods and services and their relation to the quality of space use	Weakening of livelihood and social roles; temporary elimination of activity diversity	Preservation of livelihood and social roles without control; possible disruption of access and movement	Regulation of activities while maintaining economic and social roles; reduction of functional conflicts	Strengthening of economic-social roles together with management of conflicts and equitable access	Hart, 1973; ILO, 2002; Bromley, 2000; Saha, 2011; Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025; Tallavajjula, 2023; Jacobs, 1961; Gehl, 1987; Pakzad, 2003; Mansouri, 2009; Jacob, 2023; Zhang & Shao, 2024; Lynch, 1960; Cullen, 1961
Semantic–perceptual	Diversity of presence, stopping, movement, and user interactions; connection of the environment with memory, identity, and place characteristics; reflection of cultural diversity; presence, natural surveillance, and sense of security; visibility and meaning of landmark and heritage elements	Reduction of social vitality; temporary improvement in the perception of order without lasting effect	Increased diversity of interactions alongside possible decline in legibility and sense of security at high density	Relative improvement in legibility and perceptual order through placement rules	Enhancement of place identity, legibility, and sense of belonging through participation and conscious coexistence with historic elements	Jacobs, 1961; Gehl, 1987; Lynch, 1960; Golkar, 2006; Jacob, 2023; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Pakzad, 2003; Mansouri, 2009; Kiani & Sardari, 2011; UNESCO, 2011; Faizi & Asadpouri, 2013; Peimani & Kamalipour, 2025; Cullen, 1961; Rezazadeh, 2007

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction to the study area

Tabriz is one of Iran's five major metropolitan cities. Because daily markets are scarce and unevenly distributed across districts, the city has not fully met residents' needs. As a result, in areas with strong public demand, street vendors set up stalls on sidewalks and along street edges to sell everyday goods. Large numbers of vendors are also visible within the traditional and historic fabric. The area around the Tabriz Bazaar in District 8 has a particularly high concentration of street vending. The main locations include Jomhuri-e Eslami Street, Gorjilar, West Tarbiat, East Tarbiat, Amin Junction, the Golestan Garden (Fajr) area, Gajil, and Motahhari Street (the Rasteh-Kucheh section) (Figure 2).

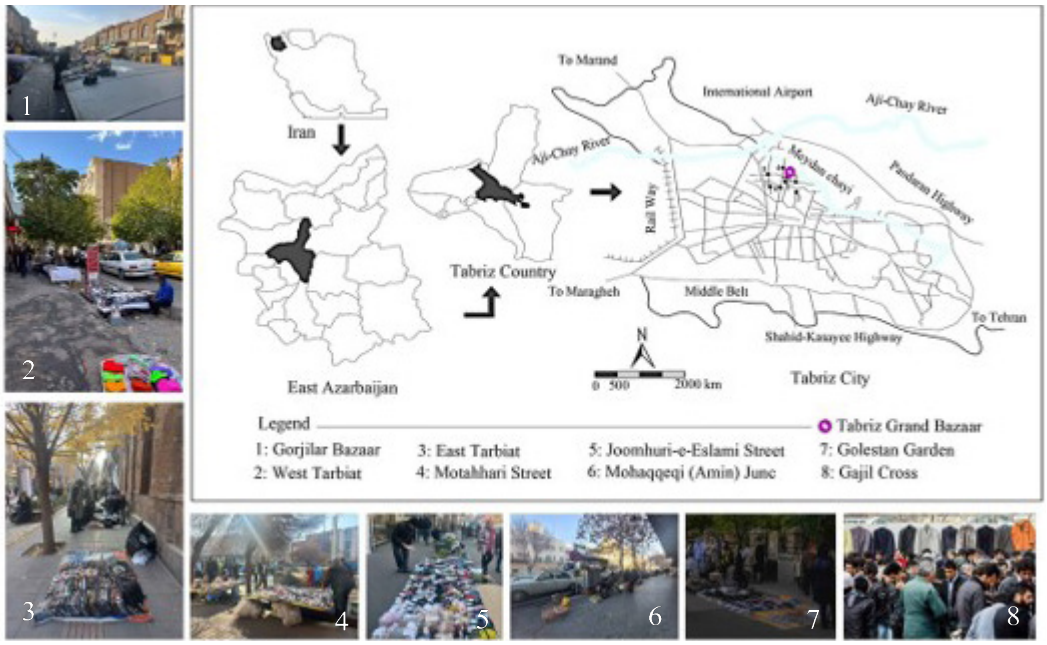


Figure 2. Areas with high concentrations of street vendors in Tabriz

4.2. Research method

The study uses an applied-developmental, qualitative approach and methodology, with inductive thematic analysis. Methodological transparency was essential to achieving a detailed understanding of the spatial, social, and economic aspects of street vending in District 8 of Tabriz. The study also prioritized avoiding overlapping qualitative labels. For this reason, the research focused entirely on thematic analysis and intentionally did not combine it with other methods, such as phenomenological analysis or the three-stage grounded-theory model. Field data were obtained through triangulation, involving semi-structured interviews, systematic field observations, photographic documentation, and the review of official documents. Field observations were conducted over three months, from mid-autumn to mid-winter. During that period, the study area was visited fifteen times at different times of day – morning, noon, and afternoon. At each visit, eight streets with the highest levels of street-vending activity were inspected. The people to be interviewed were municipal managers and officials involved in street vending and public space management, as well as street vendors active in District 8 of Tabriz. Because the study focused on vendor management and organization at the city level, the Agricultural Products and Occupations Organization of Tabriz Municipality was selected as the organization directly responsible for this area. However, this decision represents a limitation of the research.

Furthermore, vendors' concerns about a possible link between the researchers and the municipality, along with the researchers' gender, influenced trust and the quality of interactions in some field interviews. Nevertheless, four experienced experts from the organization with management responsibilities for street vendors were deliberately selected for the semi-structured interviews: the deputy in charge of Occupational Organization (E1), the deputy in charge of Municipal Services in District 8 (E2), the expert responsible for District Coordination and Environmental Affairs (E3), and the head of the

Planning and Human Capital Development Office (E4). From among the mobile street vendors working in District 8, a sample of about thirty people was selected using convenience sampling (Table 3). The interviews continued until no new responses were obtained and theoretical saturation was achieved. As Lak (2014: 47) points out, in qualitative research, sampling continues until the data and categories become saturated, with the number of participants usually between four and forty.

To establish the validity of the data-collection instrument, the semi-structured interview guide was first developed after reviewing relevant theoretical literature, previous studies, and documents on the informal economy and street vending. The questions and topics were then sent to experts in urban planning and urban economics, as well as university lecturers. They provided comments on the clarity, appropriateness, completeness, and relevance to the research objectives, and the necessary amendments were made based on these comments. A pilot interview was conducted with two participants; after reviewing the results, the final interview structure was determined.

The data analysis was conducted using an inductive thematic analysis approach based on Braun and Clarke's six-phase model (2006). This involved becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The themes were derived from the interview transcripts and field observations, and no predefined theoretical framework was applied to the data. Once the themes were identified and stabilized, the three-part functional–physical–semantic conceptual framework was used to organize the findings more coherently. Themes that did not fit within this framework (i.e., emergent themes) were reported separately to maintain the inductive nature of the research. The three-dimensional framework was used only after the themes were defined and named, at the stage of finalizing the presentation of the findings, and it played no role in coding or in extracting the themes. This temporal separation was necessary to avoid suggesting that a deductive method was used in the thematic analysis. Themes such as power dynamics and informal governance, micro-level livelihood resilience and viability, and spatiotemporal fluidity could not be reduced to the three classical dimensions because of their complexity and were therefore taken directly from the lived experience of District 8 in Tabriz.

To ensure the trustworthiness and methodological soundness of the research, three key criteria were observed in the data analysis:

Matching the indicators to the structural content: the extracted codes were organized by their functional aspect. For instance, indicators such as 'behavioral diversity and patterns of space use', which have a functional character, were grouped within the functional component.

Maintaining the integrity of observations and avoiding double counting of evidence (Single-Observation Integrity): redistributing a single observation under multiple and overlapping labels was avoided. All statements and field evidence regarding the limited visibility of the historic façades were gathered under a single integrated code, and no observation was treated as multiple separate pieces of evidence.

Adjusting the causal claim: since qualitative research is of a descriptive-analytical kind, the findings show the spatial and behavioral patterns that have been observed and must not be regarded as evidence of a direct causal link between street vending and landscape quality.

Table 3. Characteristics of the participants (street vendors)

No.	Years of activity	Location of activity	Type of goods	Age	Education
P1	>20	Gorjilar	Clothing	>60	Guidance
P2	>15	Gorjilar	Clothing	>50	Secondary
P3	>10	Gorjilar	Kitchenware	>50	Guidance
P4	>10	Gorjilar	Toys	>40	Secondary
P5	>10	Gorjilar	Dried Fruits	>50	Guidance
P6	>10	West Tarbiat	Clothing	>50	Guidance
P7	>5	West Tarbiat	Clothing	>40	Diploma
P8	>5	West Tarbiat	Produce	>40	Diploma

No.	Years of activity	Location of activity	Type of goods	Age	Education
P9	>5	West Tarbiat	Plastic Goods	>40	Bachelor's
P10	>15	East Tarbiat	Clothing	>50	Guidance
P11	>5	East Tarbiat	Clothing	>40	Diploma
P12	>10	East Tarbiat	Glassware	>50	Secondary
P13	>5	East Tarbiat	Kitchenware	>50	Diploma
P14	>5	East Tarbiat	Toys	>40	Secondary
P15	>20	Motahhari St.	Clothing	>50	Secondary
P16	>15	Motahhari St.	Clothing	>60	Guidance
P17	>15	Motahhari St.	Food	>50	Guidance
P18	>15	Motahhari St.	Vegetables	>60	Guidance
P19	>10	Motahhari St.	Bags & Shoes	>50	Guidance
P20	>10	Motahhari St.	Produce	>40	Diploma
P21	>10	Motahhari St.	Plastic Goods	>50	Diploma
P22	>15	Motahhari St.	Tobacco Products	>60	Guidance
P23	>10	Jomhuri-e Eslami St.	Clothing	>40	Bachelor's
P24	>10	–	Glassware	>50	Secondary
P25	>10	–	Dried Fruits	>50	Guidance
P26	>5	–	Costume Jewelry	>40	Secondary
P27	>5	Amin Junction	Produce	>40	Diploma
P28	>5	Amin Junction	Vegetables	>50	Diploma
P29	>10	Golestan Garden	Costume Jewelry	>40	Diploma
P30	>20	Gajil	Clothing	>50	Guidance

5. Findings

5.1. Findings from thematic analysis

The research findings were derived from an inductive thematic analysis of interview data with street vendors and municipal managers, along with field observations. Main and sub-themes were extracted from the data. After identifying the themes, the findings were organized using a conceptual framework comprising functional, physical-spatial, semantic-perceptual, and emergent dimensions. Table 4 presents the final results of the inductive thematic analysis. The table outlines the analytical path from raw statements to initial codes, sub-themes, and main themes.

Table 4. Thematic analysis process and extraction of final categories and themes from interview data

Organizing component*	Initial code	Sub-theme	Main theme	Raw statement/ interview quote	Source (participant)	Frequency of evidence**
Functional	Lack of permanent job, necessity of earning a living	Livelihood urgency and need to secure income	Livelihood dynamics and occupational motivations	"I turned to this work because I don't have a permanent job and need to cover living expenses"	P10 and other vendors	27 out of 30 vendors
	Low start-up capital, no need for a shop	Ease of entry into the activity		"Street vending does not require initial capital or a shop"	P10	22 out of 30 vendors
	No employer, self-determined working hours	Job independence and flexibility		"I have no employer and set my own working hours"	P10	15 out of 30 vendors

Organizing component*	Initial code	Sub-theme	Main theme	Raw statement/ interview quote	Source (participant)	Frequency of evidence**
Functional	High pedestrian flow, proximity to commercial centers	Functional attractions of location	Attractions and constraints of location choice	"Tarbiat Street and the area around the bazaar are the best places for selling because of the crowds"	P11, P20	25 out of 30 vendors
	Low pedestrian flow, distance from commercial hubs	Ineffectiveness of alternative locations		"Mohaqeqi Junction has little foot traffic because it is far from the shopping center"	P1, P23	20 out of 30 vendors
	Shopping, stopping, watching, seller-customer interaction	Diversity and simultaneity of everyday activities	Activity diversity and use of public space	"The presence of vendors is accompanied by shopping, stopping, looking at goods, and interaction between sellers and customers"	P11, P23	19 out of 30 vendors
	Sale of food and edible items	Service and hygiene considerations		Field observation	Field observation; E1–E4	Observation + 2 out of 4 managers
	Occupation of pedestrian space, reduced walking area	Occupation of routes and restricted movement	Disruption of movement and access systems	"The placement of vendors in busy streets occupies part of the pedestrian movement space"	E1	Field observation; 4 out of 4 managers
Physical and spatial	Concentration on high-traffic axes and near commercial centers	Spatial concentration at commercial hubs	Spatial organization and placement patterns	"Vendors mainly locate on high-traffic axes and near commercial centers"	P11, P20, E3	20 out of 30 vendors; 4 out of 4 managers
	Placement along routes and near active edges	Linear and edge-based placement patterns		Field observation	Field observation	Field observation
	Variation in stall size and arrangement of goods	Diversity of scale and extent of space occupation		Field observation	Field observation	Field observation
	Proximity of stalls to façades and historic elements	Coexistence of temporary activity and historic fabric	Impact on the landscape and historic fabric	"In some places the stalls are located next to façades and historic elements"	E2	3 out of 4 managers; field observation
	Limited visibility of historic façades	Visual disruption and restricted views		"Dense concentrations of vendors limit visibility and disrupt views of historic façades"	E1	4 out of 4 managers; field observation
Semantic–perceptual	Repeat customers	Stable seller-customer relationships	Sense of belonging and social ties	"Some vendors have regular customers who return to buy again"	P10, P23	23 out of 30 vendors
	Presence of different groups of sellers and customers	Diversity of actors and social interactions		"The presence of different groups of sellers and customers creates a variety of social interactions"	P13, P27	20 out of 30 vendors

Organizing component*	Initial code	Sub-theme	Main theme	Raw statement/ interview quote	Source (participant)	Frequency of evidence**
Semantic–perceptual	Stopping, gathering, restricted passage space	Crowding and reduced quality of spatial experience	Perception of environmental quality and security	"The density of vendors causes stopping, gathering, and restriction of passage space"	E1	3 out of 4 managers
	Disorderly behavior under crowded conditions	Disruption of spatial order		"In some statements, disorderly behavior under crowded conditions was mentioned"	E2	2 out of 4 managers
Emergent components	Specific locations, unwanted division of space	Informal territorial claims and spatial priority rights	Power dynamics and informal governance	"Experienced vendors regard certain locations as their priority right and have created an unwanted division of space among themselves"	P5, P13, P30	21 out of 30 vendors
	Rejection of alternative locations	Lack of acceptance of alternative spaces	Institutional challenges and non-acceptance of organization	"The creation of alternative spaces for organization has met with non-acceptance and lack of interest"	E3, P3	3 out of 4 managers; 20 out of 30 vendors
	Informal agreements among vendors, shopkeepers, and officials	Informal agreements among actors	Everyday bargaining mechanisms	—	Vendors	14 out of 30 vendors
	Economic safety net under inflationary conditions	Street vending as a resilience mechanism	Micro-level livelihood resilience and viability	"Street vending acts as a household resilience mechanism in the face of economic instability"	P10, P22	26 out of 30 vendors
	Support during clearance of stalls	Information networks and mutual support	Solidarity and mutual support networks	—	Vendors	18 out of 30 vendors
	Changing presence patterns at different times of day	Temporal rhythms and temporary occupation of space	Temporality and spatial-institutional fluidity	Field observation; change in the character of the pedestrian area in the late hours of the day	Field observation + vendors	Field observation; 17 out of 30 vendors

* The "Organizing component" column is used to present the final organizing components (functional, physical and spatial, semantic–perceptual, and emergent). These components were added after inductively extracting themes, during the organization of findings, and were not imposed on the data.

** Frequency of evidence is reported as an indicator of the prevalence of the theme among participants. The importance of themes was determined by their central meaning and relevance to the research question, not by repetition (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The organizing components were applied after inductively extracting themes to structure the final presentation of findings.

Functional components

Livelihood dynamics and occupational motivations: interviews with street vendors show that livelihood and economic pressures are among the main reasons people enter this work. One vendor named the lack of a steady job and the need to cover family living costs as his chief reasons for starting. He also pointed to the low capital required, the chance to work independently, freedom from a fixed employer, no need to rent a permanent shop, and the ability to set his own hours as features that make street vending an accessible way to earn money (P10). These comments, along with

low entry costs, occupational independence, and flexible hours, indicate that the economic motive is not limited to income alone. The same theme appeared in other vendor interviews, showing that livelihood needs, together with the activity's structural features, help explain why vendors remain in public space (P21, P26).

Locational attractions and spatial constraints: location choice is likewise tied to economic logic. In the interviews, pedestrian volume and customers' presence ranked among the most important factors. One vendor linked his preference for the bazaar area to its central position in the city, the density of commercial activity, and the high volume of passersby (P10). He noted that shops and commercial centers around the bazaar and along Tarbiat Pedestrian Street increase foot traffic and therefore the viability of informal stalls. Municipal managers described the same pattern. One official (E1) observed that vendors generally choose places with heavy pedestrian movement, such as the bazaar, Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, Abrasan, and Valiasr. Data from both groups therefore identify pedestrian volume and customer access as key factors in location choice. Interviews about the site allocated at Mohaqqeqi (Amin) Junction showed that lower foot traffic and greater distance from commercial centers reduced its economic appeal. Compared with the bazaar and Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, the junction has fewer commercial units and functions mainly as a through-route. As a result, people tend to walk past rather than stop to look at or buy goods (P3, P13). Environmental conditions at the alternative site were also mentioned. Direct sun exposure and the difficulty of standing for long periods under those conditions were cited as drawbacks (P26). Vendors did note, however, that during periods of higher demand, especially in Esfand and just before Nowruz, foot traffic and customer interest in that location increase (P13).

Behavioral diversity and public space utilization: field observations indicate that vendor activity along busy corridors integrates with routine activities such as shopping, walking, pausing, and examining goods. Several vendors also reported regular customers who return (P23, P11). Consequently, street vending is an integral part of daily use of public space in the area. Vendor concentrations in the bazaar and Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, due to substantial pedestrian flows and proximity to commercial centers, lead to simultaneous buying and selling alongside other ongoing activities in public spaces (E1, P7). In the most densely populated areas, such activity can cause stopping, crowding, and disruption of pedestrian movement (E3).

Service and sanitary considerations: part of the vending activity in the study area involves selling food and other edible items. Field observations recorded differences in how these vendors set up and operate across locations. Because the interviews did not provide sufficient evidence for directly assessing health outcomes, this study refrains from attributing definite sanitary effects to street vending.

Disruptions to pedestrian movement and spatial access: field findings show that vendors in busy streets can occupy space needed for pedestrian movement. This is evident in Tarbiat Pedestrian Street and the bazaar core, where denser clusters reduce usable path width and make walking more difficult. A municipal official, referring to Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, identified reduced walking space and increased difficulty of movement as direct outcomes of vendor concentration (E1). The alternative site at Mohaqqeqi (Amin) Junction was established to mitigate these issues; however, insufficient foot traffic and limited commercial appeal resulted in low vendor uptake at this location (E3).

Physical and spatial component

Spatial organization and deployment patterns : field observations indicate an uneven pattern of vendor placement. Vendors cluster along busy routes and near commercial centers, especially the bazaar and Tarbiat Pedestrian Street. Vendors themselves confirmed that pedestrian volume and access to customers are the main reasons for choosing these spots (P20, P11). Municipal managers likewise confirmed clustering in high-traffic locations (E3). Some places, like Mohaqqeqi (Amin) Junction, are less attractive. It is because of the fact that it lies farther from commercial centers and carries lower foot traffic (P20, P1). Spatial concentration of vendors is therefore directly related to pedestrian volume and the density of commercial activity. Also, each street's character and traffic levels influence the physical form of placement. On busy routes, stalls tend to line the path of movement and sit against active building edges; in some places, stall density reduces free space for walking and stopping. Differences in stall size, arrangement of goods, and equipment further alter how much public space is occupied (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Left: District 8 of Tabriz showing the highest levels of pedestrian presence. Right: a) Livelihood dynamics, b) Social interactions, c) Spatial organization, d) Deployment patterns, e) Diversity of everyday activities, and f) Street-food preparation and supply.

Impact on the landscape and historic fabric: vending activity next to historic elements and valued façades is a notable feature of the study area. Field observations show that in some places, stalls and displayed goods occupy space immediately beside these façades, thereby limiting views of parts of the historic architecture. One official stated that dense concentrations of vendors in certain spots create disorder in the area's cultural landscape, which contrasts with the historic and tourist importance of District 8 and the Tabriz Bazaar (E1). This assessment aligns with observational evidence of temporary activity set against historic fabric.

Semantic–perceptual component

Place attachment and social ties: field observations show that vendors bring activities such as displaying and purchasing goods, stopping, looking, and conversation between seller and customer into public space. Some vendors also reported regular customers who return (P23, P10). Street vending therefore forms part of the everyday economic life of public space and, through the presence of different groups of sellers and buyers, generates a range of social interactions (P27, P13). However, the available data are insufficient for an independent and definitive assessment of effects on cultural diversity; the study therefore avoids generalizing this finding or attributing a specific cultural outcome to street vending. Field findings further show that vendor presence shapes part of the everyday experience of using public space. On the one hand, interactions between vendors and customers and the presence of regular clientele strengthen social presence and activity (P28, P6). On the other hand, dense stalls and restricted movement space can create a different experience for pedestrians (E2). Because no separate survey of residents' or visitors' feelings and perceptions was conducted, the findings in this section rest solely on observational evidence and participants' accounts and cannot be generalized to all users of the area.

Perception of environmental quality and security: increased stall density along busy routes is accompanied by more stopping and gathering in the path of movement and, in some places, interference with pedestrian flow (E1). Field observations confirm that higher vendor density in certain busy spots increases stopping and gathering, limits passage space, and makes movement more difficult. One official also cited harder circulation and greater crowding as consequences of vendor concentration (E1). In a few statements, disorderly behavior under conditions of crowding and dense commercial activity

was also mentioned (E2). In conclusion, the findings focus on density, crowding, restricted movement, and disruption of the orderly use of public space. District 8 of Tabriz, especially the historic Tabriz Bazaar, ranks among the city's most important historic and tourist centers. One official, referring to the area's historic and cultural value, argued that vendors' concentrations in certain places create disorder in the cultural landscape and reduce visitors' ability to attend to historic architectural features (E3). Field observations also show that in some locations, stalls placed against façades and historic elements partially obstruct views. District 8 contains several significant historic and cultural assets, including the historic bazaar, Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, the Jameh Mosque, the Constitutional House, and St. Mary Church (Figure 4). According to one official, dense vendor presence in some areas allows temporary commercial activity to visually dominate the area's valued historic and architectural elements (E2). Field checks confirm that stalls and goods placed next to historic elements and façades occupy part of the visual field. Vendor presence in this setting can therefore be examined as a form of coexistence between temporary activity and elements of historic and cultural value.

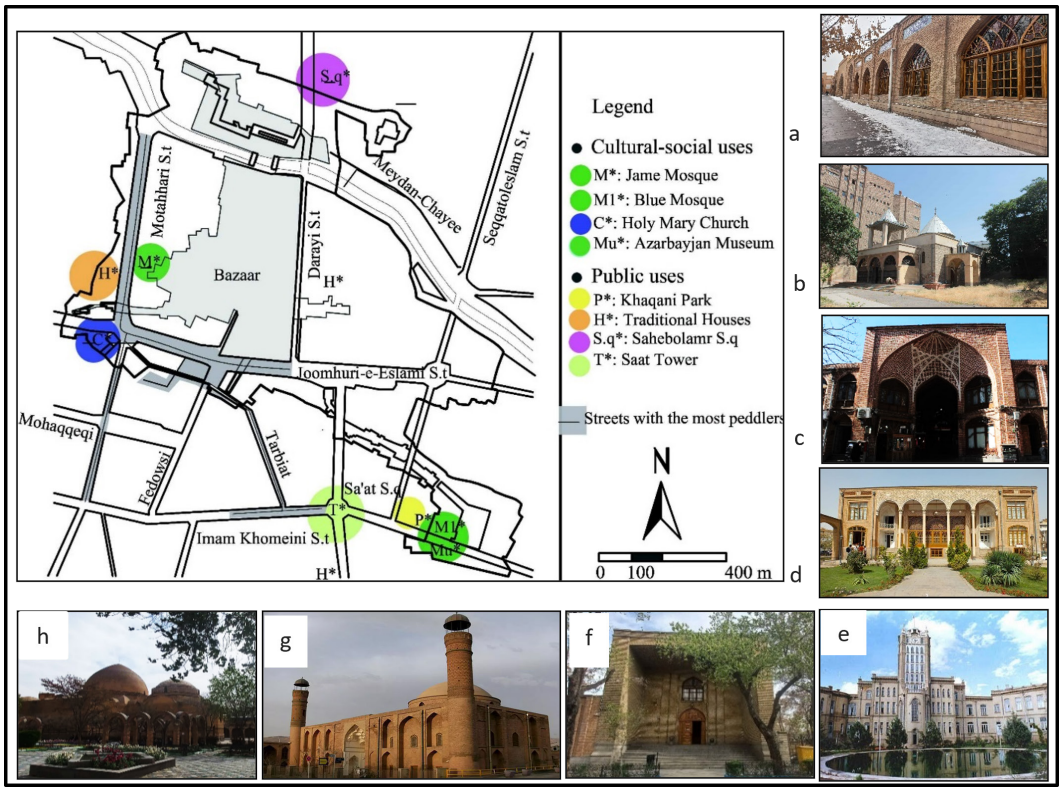


Figure 4. Map of the historic fabric of Tabriz as a field of urban symbols and landmarks; adapted from the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO, 2009). a) Tabriz Jameh Mosque, b) St. Mary Church, c) Tabriz Grand Bazaar, d) Behnam Historic House, e) Clock Tower, f) Azerbaijan Museum, g) Saheb al-Amr Square, h) Blue Mosque and Khaqani Park.

Emerging themes

During inductive analysis, themes emerged that fell outside the original three-part framework. These themes include: power dynamics and informal governance; institutional challenges and resistance to organization; everyday bargaining mechanisms; micro-level livelihood resilience and viability; solidarity and mutual support networks; and the temporal and spatial fluidity of presence.

Integrated overview of thematic analysis results

Inductive thematic analysis showed a link between livelihood needs and features such as low entry costs and occupational independence. Pedestrian volume, proximity to commercial centers, and access to customers also shape the spatial pattern of vending. Vendors create direct interaction between sellers and buyers. At the same time, rising density can affect the social and movement use of public space. Street vending in District 8 of Tabriz is not a one-dimensional nuisance. It simultaneously performs economic, social, and service roles while also producing negative effects on access, sanitation, crowding, and spatial conflict.

Physically, the impact depends not only on the number of vendors but also on stall placement, the space they occupy, and their relationship to the street's structure and edges. In some locations, stalls near façades and historic elements reduce visibility and add disorder to the physical and cultural landscape. In semantic and perceptual terms, vendor presence contributes to social life and a wider variety of activities. However, high density can produce crowding, reduce legibility, and limit perception of historic and cultural features. Security-related findings focus mainly on the consequences of density, crowding, and restricted movement.

Emerging themes include power dynamics and informal governance, institutional challenges and resistance to organization, everyday bargaining mechanisms, mutual support networks, livelihood resilience, and temporal-spatial fluidity. These themes show that street vending is also bound up with informal power relations, survival strategies, and the changing temporal dynamics of space. The analysis indicates that street vending in the historic fabric under study is a multi-sided phenomenon that carries economic and social capacities, as well as physical and perceptual consequences. Understanding this complexity is a prerequisite for effective, participatory policy for organization.

5.2. Findings from analysis of experts' views on vendor organization schemes (District 8 of Tabriz)

A vendor organization scheme titled "Vendor-Free Saturdays" was placed on the municipal agenda for all streets in District 8. It involves clearing stalls to prevent obstruction of thoroughfares, restore urban streets, and improve the urban landscape. The scheme is currently being run as a pilot (from Bahman 1402 / February 2024). To implement it, the municipality, as the executing body, coordinated with vendor representatives and required their cooperation. According to the District 8 Municipal Services office, the scheme will soon be implemented on other days of the week on the district's busiest streets.

A form of temporal regulation is already in effect on Tarbiat Bazaar Street. Vendors can operate at the designated location until 11 a.m., before shops open, and again after 9 p.m., once shopkeepers finish for the day.

Another scheme carried out by the District 8 Municipality involved site selection and on-the-spot organization at Mohaqqeqi (Amin) Junction. This scheme failed due to a lack of cooperation from vendors, objections from residents, and insufficient support from related agencies (Figure 5).

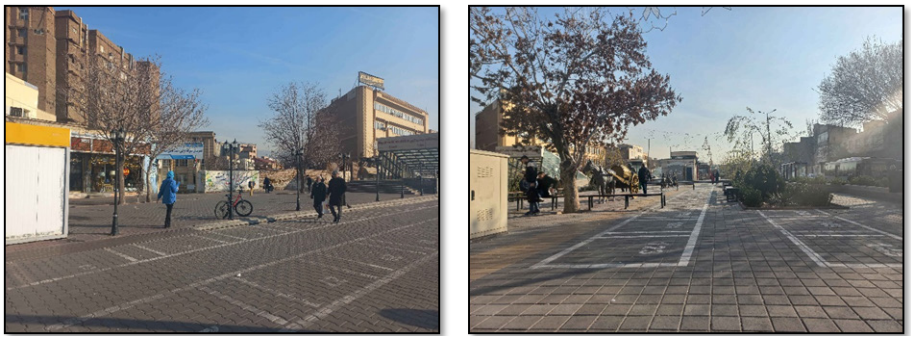


Figure 5. An example of vendor organization in Tabriz (Mohaqqeqi/Amin Junction)

Interviews with four officials and specialists suggest that a key factor in the failure of organizational plans is the dominance of executive actions over long-term policymaking. According to participants, municipal management has often limited itself to clearing or relocating vendors from a given area without developing clear plans for employment, livelihoods, alternative sites, or working conditions. As a result, many measures have merely shifted the location and form of vending rather than resolving the underlying issue.

Participants also stressed weak coordination among the responsible bodies. Although numerous organizations and institutions are directly or indirectly connected to street vending, the boundaries of responsibility, the division of labor, and each body's role in the process have never been clearly defined. The consequence has been parallel work, overlapping tasks, and, in some cases, a waste of resources.

The interviews showed that many of the implemented schemes have been directive and top-down. Decisions have been made mainly at the management level and

then issued for execution, with limited real participation by vendors or even by specialists. The short-term nature of many schemes and their focus on immediate control have also meant that longer-term and root aspects of the problem receive less attention. Participants believed that the media also play a role, yet they tend to cover street vending only when events such as conflict, clearance, or nuisance occur. As a result, coverage is often episodic and negative. The economic and social dimensions of vending, vendors' living conditions, their rights, and realistic solutions receive far less attention. In managing the activity, managers sometimes feel compelled by economic and social conditions to adopt a lenient stance, while sudden coercive measures can worsen the situation. They argued that the core difficulty lies in the absence of a clear, stable organizational framework that accounts for the rights of residents and shopkeepers while also addressing vendors' livelihood conditions. Participants therefore stressed the need to move from purely directive management to participatory, supportive management. This emphasis aligns with the themes of "solidarity and mutual support networks" and "micro-level livelihood resilience and viability" identified by the vendors themselves.

Findings in this section show that the success of organization schemes depends less on physical clearance alone than on the quality of the governance process, recognition of existing informal mechanisms, and participatory, gradual design. These findings align with the study's conceptual framework, which includes a procedural dimension (process, management, and governance aspects). The emerging themes, including institutional challenges and resistance to organization, power dynamics and informal governance, everyday bargaining mechanisms, and solidarity and mutual support networks, are within this procedural dimension. Table 5 presents the extracted codes.

Table 5. Thematic analysis process and extraction of categories and themes from interview data.

Organizing component	Primary code	Theme	Relation to research themes
Emerging/ procedural	Policy void in vendor organization	Dominance of executive actions over long-term policy; absence of plans for employment, livelihood, and alternative sites; displacement rather than root resolution	Institutional challenges and resistance to organization; livelihood dynamics and occupational motivations
Emerging/ procedural	Weak program coherence	Weak inter-agency coordination; unclear division of labor and responsibilities; parallel work; overlapping duties; wasted resources	Power dynamics and informal governance; disruptions to pedestrian movement and spatial access
Emerging/ procedural	Management style	Directive, top-down management; short-term schemes; limited participation by vendors and specialists	Everyday bargaining mechanisms; solidarity and mutual support networks; place attachment and social ties
Semantic–perceptual	Absence of policy in the cultural-production sphere	Episodic media attention; negative and one-dimensional representation of vending; limited attention to other dimensions of the activity	Perception of environmental quality and security
Emerging/ procedural	Leniency in organization	Discretionary application of rules; opaque relations arising from lack of clear regulations; coercive clearance without addressing underlying factors	Power dynamics and informal governance; everyday bargaining mechanisms
Emerging/ procedural	Need for a participatory and gradual approach.	Emphasis on moving from directive to participatory and supportive management; need for a stable and comprehensive framework	Micro-level livelihood resilience and viability; temporal and spatial fluidity; locational attractions and spatial constraints

6. Discussion

Given the findings of the present study on the concentration of vendors in the high-traffic parts of District 8 of Tabriz and the effects of their presence on the physical, functional, and semantic-perceptual dimensions of the urban landscape, examining organizational experiences in other cities and urban areas can clarify capacities, challenges, and requirements for managing this activity. These experiences demonstrate how municipal management

can balance economic activity, public space, pedestrian movement, the physical quality of space, and citizens' identity and perception, rather than merely clearing or relocating vendors. Therefore, five cases (Mashhad, District 5 of Tabriz, District 10 of Tehran, Sanandaj, and the Kan area of Tehran) were reviewed to extract practical lessons for organizing vendors in District 8 of Tabriz.

In Mashhad, designated marketplaces and institutional coordination provided a basis for orderly vendor placement. Physically, this approach reduced irregular street occupation and created more organized space for stalls; functionally, it improved pedestrian movement and access; perceptually, it increased the order and legibility of the urban environment (E1). For District 8 of Tabriz, the key point is that organization should not be limited to site designation; it must also align with the space's historic and tourist character and the quality of its landscape.

In the Shahriar Pedestrian Mall scheme in District 5 of Tabriz, measures such as vendor identification and registration, along with the allocation of specific locations, played an important role in bringing the activity under control. The experience shows that even relatively simple steps, including site designation, numbering, and organized placement, can effectively organize space. Preserving pedestrian routes and ensuring suitable access strengthened the scheme's functionality, while greater environmental order can also improve perceptual quality and legibility (E1). The District 5 experience is therefore relevant to similar settings within District 8, especially historic and commercial spaces.

In District 10 of Tehran, vendor concentrations in places such as Noor Park and along Roudaki and Hashemi Streets occupied pedestrian space, degraded access quality, and increased visual and acoustic disorder. The issue is not simply the presence of vendors but the manner of their placement and its effects on the physical form and functioning of public space; interference with movement and a decline in environmental quality can ultimately affect citizens' perception of and satisfaction with the space (Sadeghi et al., 2020: 39). The experience of this area shows that purely negative measures and the removal of vendors, without attention to economic needs and without providing alternative space, cannot offer a lasting solution.

Along Ferdousi Street in Sanandaj, street vending is closely linked to unemployment, limited capital, and a shortage of job opportunities. For that reason, short-term, purely physical measures have not resolved the problem in the long term (Mir-Ahmadi, 2018: 101–136). The experience indicates that organizing can succeed only when, alongside control of occupation and spatial disorder, attention is also paid to the activity's economic and social functions. How authorities deal with vendors can affect citizens' perceptions of justice, vitality, and the social character of public space; the semantic-perceptual component is therefore relevant here as well.

In Tehran's historic Kan area, vendors have occupied parts of pedestrian routes, creating disorder, yet temporary local markets have helped channel activity into designated spaces (Mazloomi & Attarzadeh, 2019: 46; Mazloomi & Estelaji, 2021). This experience matters to the present study because it links organization to place identity. Physical organization and the regulation of movement and activity in space are paired with attention to the area's historic and identity features. In District 8 of Tabriz, therefore, organization should avoid damaging the historic identity, legibility, or perceptual quality of the urban landscape, while meeting economic needs and preserving the proper functioning of space.

Taken together, these experiences show that street vending cannot be treated as a one-dimensional problem. It involves physical, functional, semantic-perceptual, and procedural dimensions. Successful organization therefore requires balance among these components; focusing on any single one cannot produce a lasting solution. On this basis, District 8 of Tabriz can develop a model suited to its historic, tourist, and commercial character by combining spatial organization, functional regulation of activity, attention to identity and the perceptual quality of the landscape, and sound management and governance.

7. Conclusion

The inductive thematic analysis results showed that street vending in District 8 of Tabriz is a multi-layered phenomenon and cannot be regarded merely as a nuisance or a disruptive element within urban space. The themes drawn from the data indicate that the activity, on the one hand, helps meet household livelihood needs, offers low barriers to entry into the labor market, and provides occupational independence; on the other hand, through the formation of repeated seller-customer relations and its coincidence with actions such as shopping, walking, stopping, and looking, it affects the social and everyday use of public space. At the same time, when vendor

concentration along busy routes and near commercial centers exceeds the environment's spatial capacity, it can reduce usable path width, interfere with pedestrian movement, increase density, and intensify conflict among different activities in public space.

The physical and spatial aspects indicate that vendor placement is strongly influenced by pedestrian volume and proximity to commercial centers. Around the bazaar and along Tarbiat Pedestrian Street, clustering is more pronounced. At the same time, locations with lower traffic and greater distance from commercial hubs, such as the site allocated at Mohaqqeqi Junction, have limited appeal.

In some places, stalls' proximity to façades and historic elements reduces their visibility and contributes to disorder in the physical and cultural landscape. The physical impact of street vending cannot be measured solely by the number of vendors; placement, the extent of space occupied, the relationship to spatial edges, and the physical character of each location all shape the consequences.

In the semantic and perceptual domain, vendors' presence, by diversifying activities and interactions, contributes to the everyday experience and social life of the space. However, high density in certain spots leads to stopping and gathering, interference with movement, and reduced legibility. Dense placement of stalls next to historic elements can also allow temporary commercial activity to visually dominate the area's architectural and cultural values. Findings on security focus mainly on the consequences of density, crowding, and restricted movement rather than on any direct attribution of crime to street vending.

Inductive analysis also yielded themes that fell outside the original three-part framework. Examples include the formation of informal territorial claims and priority rights among vendors, everyday agreements and bargaining with shopkeepers and officials, mutual support networks, the role of street vending as a household livelihood-resilience mechanism, and the temporal-spatial fluidity of presence at different times of day. These themes show that street vending is not merely an economic or physical activity; it is also bound up with informal power relations, survival mechanisms, and the temporal dynamics of space.

Interviews with officials and specialists indicate that the failure of vendor organization schemes cannot be attributed to a single factor. It results from the interaction of factors, including policy voids, weak institutional coordination and coherence, unsuitable management styles, the absence of a cultural and media policy, and unstable, episodic handling of the phenomenon. The findings show that the dominance of executive and control-oriented approaches, the lack of long-term planning, and limited stakeholder participation have led many measures to produce temporary control and displacement rather than root resolution of the problem. Also, a lack of coordination among responsible bodies and the absence of a clear policy framework have exacerbated the complexity and inefficiency of organizational processes.

Limited attention to the role of media and cultural production, along with the predominantly episodic and negative portrayal of street vending, has also shaped public attitudes toward the activity. Taken together, these findings underscore the need to shift from scattered, short-term, and largely control-oriented policies to comprehensive, coordinated, participatory, and gradual organization that can balance the requirements of order and quality in urban space with vendors' livelihood conditions and the interests of other stakeholders, while possessing clear policy and executive frameworks.

In sum, the central issue is not removing street vending from urban space but balancing its economic and social functions with the requirements of access, safety, landscape quality, and the rights of other users of space. Effective organization of vendors in the historic fabric of District 8 of Tabriz requires a gradual, participatory, and place-based approach that, while preserving economic and social capacities, can, through suitable site selection, density control, adequate access, and management of spatial conflicts, improve the quality of public space and the experience of residents and visitors. Such organization must attend to the following: preserving historic identity, landscape legibility, and how temporary activities coexist with valued urban elements, going beyond functional considerations. This aspect emphasizes institutional barriers and entrepreneurial motives: vendors' dependence on their livelihoods, low entry costs, and resistance to official alternative sites. Themes such as informal territorial claims, everyday agreements and bargaining among vendors, shopkeepers, and officials, and the formation of mutual support networks show closer affinity with the structuralist view of power relations and the informal sector's structural dependence on formal urban space. Emerging themes such as the temporal-spatial fluidity of vendor presence and the role of the activity as a household livelihood-resilience mechanism go beyond

the common explanations offered by these two theories and reveal that the informal economy in the historic fabric under study is not solely a product of macro-structures or legal barriers; it is interwoven with everyday dynamics, social relations, and survival strategies. Table 6 below summarizes executive strategies concerning street vending and the urban landscape under the organizing components (functional, physical-spatial, semantic-perceptual, and emerging themes).

Table 6. Summary of executive strategies concerning street vending and the urban landscape

Strategy/ executive lessons	Organizing component	Executive lessons and proposals
Inclusive functional design	Functional component	Inclusive functional design (an approach that supplies and organizes the full range of needed goods, services, and activities through optimal management and coordination of existing functions, for example, a local market that simultaneously offers food, clothing, repairs, and prepared meals and meets the varied needs of people in one area). Provide access for different groups; ensure necessary facilities; consider the scale and size of activities; provide sanitary facilities and waste-collection systems; ensure suitable parking access; restrict vendor activity to specific days (e.g., Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays).
Inclusive spatial design	Physical and spatial component	Inclusive spatial design (an approach that makes optimal and multi-purpose use of existing spaces through spatial and temporal management of activities, for example, use of an urban space for a Friday market at a defined time); sharing of space over a defined period (e.g., for weekly or Sunday markets); matching of fabric type with the scale of vendor supply (regional, municipal, etc.); preparation of an urban commercial map; use of residual or leftover space for vendors; sequencing of sidewalks and pedestrian streets so that vendors, vehicles, and pedestrians can be present together; creation of temporary zones for vending; attention to the scale and size of sales spaces; participatory design with street vendors to generate innovative ideas for resolving spatial conflicts; covering of entire market sections with platforms and light semi-permanent roofs in meat and vegetable markets; use of temporary structures on narrow streets for vendors.
Understanding spatial linkages	Semantic–perceptual component	Understanding of linkages (logistics, customers, role in the urban retail hierarchy); attention to subcultures and varied behaviors; meeting of vendors' basic needs so that human dignity is preserved; regular municipal inspection and several visits per week to manage vendor conduct.
Recognition of informal governance	Emerging themes	Formal recognition of existing informal agreements; design of participatory and gradual organization; attention to the temporal rhythm of vendor presence; support for the livelihood-resilience role of the activity.

Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this article.

Acknowledgments

This paper was conducted as part of the research project titled "A study on the national and international experiences of organizing peddlers in line with the urban landscape," Number 280-6/M/P | Date: 6 November 2023, carried out by Dr. Rana Najari-Nabi and Dr. Nahida Rezaei, in the Research Center of the Islamic City Council of Tabriz.

We used ChatGPT (OpenAI; GPT-6) to assist with translating the manuscript into English, along with Grammarly for language editing, grammar correction, and proofreading. The authors reviewed the translated and edited text and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Anaafo, D., Nutsugbodo, R. Y., Agyepong, E., Anane, G. K., Mensah, B. A., & Bata, P. D. (2024). Place-making decisions among informal street food vendors in Sunyani, Ghana. *Cities*, 154, 105328. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.105328

Anjaria, J. S. (2006). Street hawkers and public space in Mumbai. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(21), 2140–2146. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4418270.

Bacon E. (1996). Design of cities (F. Taheri, Trans.). Urban Planning and Architecture Research Center of Iran. [In Persian]

Baily, M., Farrell, D., & Remes, J. (2005). *Domestic services: The hidden key to growth*. McKinsey Global Institute.

Banks, N., Lombard, M., & Mitlin, D. (2019). Urban informality as a site of critical analysis. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 56(2), 223–238. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2019.1577384

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bromley, R. (2000). Street vending and public policy: A global review. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 20(1–2), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443330010789052

Chen, M., Vanek, J., & Carr, M. (2004). *Mainstreaming informal employment and gender in poverty reduction: A handbook for policymakers and other stakeholders*. Commonwealth Secretariat.

Cullen, G. (1961). *Townscape*. The Architectural Press.

Cunningham, W., Newhouse, D., Ricaldi, F., Seuyong, F. T., Viollaz, M., & Edochie, I. (2024). *Urban informality in Sub-Saharan Africa: Profiling workers and firms in an urban context* (Policy Research Working Paper No. 10703). World Bank.

de Soto, H. (1989). *The other path: The invisible revolution in the Third World*. Harper and Row.

Dell'Anno, R. (2022). Theories and definitions of the informal economy: A survey. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 36(5), 1610–1643. https://doi.org/10.1111/joes.12487

Deore, P., & Lathia, S. (2019). Streets as public spaces: Lessons from street vending in Ahmedabad, India. *Urban Planning*, 4(2), 138–153. https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v4i2.2058

Dimas, H. (2008). *Street vendors: Urban problem and economic potential (Working Paper No. 6)*. Center for Economics and Development Studies, Padjadjaran University.

Economic Research Department. (2019). *Smart municipal policy-making for low-capital sellers and street vendors*. Research Center of Tehran Municipality. [In Persian]

Farrell, D. (2004). The hidden dangers of the informal economy. *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2004(3), 26–37.

Fathi S., Dadgarfard Z., Dadandish P., & Zare Z. (2025). Analyzing the lived experience of capable female heads of households in the economic field. *Human Information Interaction*, 11(4): 1–15. [In Persian]

Fugazza, M., & Jacques, J. F. (2003). Labor market institutions, taxation and the underground economy. *Journal of Public Economics*, 88(1–2), 395–418. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2727(02)00079-8

Hamidizadeh, M. (2005). Shadow economy and its social consequences. *Political-Economic Information*, 213–214, 112–125.

Hanser, A. (2016). Street politics: Street vendors and urban governance in China. *The China Quarterly*, 226, 329–348. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741016000278

Harris, J. R., & Todaro, M. P. (1970). Migration, unemployment and development: A two-sector analysis. *American Economic Review*, 60(1), 126–142.

Hart, K. (1973). Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1),61–89.https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00008089

International Labour Organization. (2002). *Decent work and the informal economy*. International Labour Office.

International Labour Organization. (2021). *Conceptual framework for statistics on informal economy. Department of Statistics, Working Group for the Revision of the Standards for Statistics on Informality*.

Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization. (2009). *World Heritage nomination dossier of Tabriz Historical Bazaar Complex*. Deputy of Cultural Heritage.

Jacob, A. A. (2023). Influence of urban street vending on pedestrian experience and behaviour: A systematic quantitative review. *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs*, 7(1), 139–163. https://doi.org/10.25034/ijcua.2023.v7n1-10

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. Penguin Books.

Lak A. (2014). Grounded theory applications in urban design research. *Soffeh*, 24(1): 43–60. [In Persian]

Lewis, W. A. (1954). Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour. *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, 22(2), 139–191.

Lynch K. (2021). The image of the city (M. Mezaini, Trans.). University of Tehran Press. [In Persian]

Maloney, W. F. (2004). Informality revisited. *World Development*, 32(7), 1159–1178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2004.01.008

Martínez, L., Short, J. R., & Estrada, D. (2017). The urban informal economy: Street vendors in Cali, Colombia. *Cities*, 66, 34–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2017.03.010

Mazloomi S., & Attarzadeh M. (2019). *Neighborhood book: Kan*. Lahzeh Yek Publications. [In Persian]

Mazloomi, S., & Estelaji, A. (2021). Organizing retailers with an emphasis on creating seasonal participatory markets and its effects on urban viability (Case study: Kan). *Journal of Urban Research and Planning*, 12(45), 71–84. https://doi.org/10.30495/JUPM.2021.4104

Mir-Ahmadi R. (2018). *An analysis of the drivers of informal economy formation in Sanandaj with emphasis on street vending (Case study: Ferdousi Street between Iqbal Square and Enqelab Square)* [Master's thesis, University of Maragheh]. Faculty of Humanities. [In Persian]

Mohebi M., & Heydari A. (2022). Street hawker as stranger. *Journal of Sociological Review*, 28(2): 9–38. [In Persian]

Moser, C. N. (1978). Informal sector or petty commodity production: Dualism or independence in urban development. *World Development*, 6(9–10), 1041–1064. https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(78)90062-1

Motamedi Mehr A., & Mati Dost Komaleh A. (2010). The role of Langrud Bazaar Park in the spatial changes of the city. *Quarterly Journal of Environmental-Based Territorial Planning*, 11: 27–61. [In Persian]

Nazmfar H., Matie Doost Komaleh A., & Molaei N. (2015). An analysis of street vending in the city and its effects on the volume of urban pedestrian and vehicle traffic (Case study of Langrud). *Regional Urban Studies and Research Journal*, 6(24): 27–47. [In Persian]

Nesaei K., Etesami S., & Aeeni Z. (2025). A survey on street vending and its relationship with urban branding (field of study: Sanandaj city). *Journal of Sociology of Culture and* Art, 7(3): 23–39. [In Persian]. https://doi.org/10.22034/scart.2025.141244.1522

Pakzad J. (2003). Elements and landscape qualities of urban space. *Abadi Journal*, 38: 115–124. [In Persian]

Pakzad J. (2016). Theoretical foundations and urban design process. *Shahidi Publications*. [In Persian]

Pasandeh M., Savadian P., & Karimian H. (2022). Identity types of women vendors in Tehran subway. *Female Police Studies*, 16(36): 1–27. [In Persian]

Peimani, N., & Kamalipour, H. (2025). Mapping the spatiality of informal street vending. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 18(3), 329–348.

Portes, A. (1994). The informal economy and its paradoxes. In N. J. Smelser & R. Swedberg (Eds.), *The handbook of economic sociology* (pp. 426–449). Princeton University Press.

Rauch, J. (1991). Modeling the informal sector formally. *Journal of Development Economics*, 35(1), 33–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-3878(91)90065-4

Recio, R. B., Mateo-Babiano, I., & Roitman, S. (2017). Revisiting policy epistemologies on urban informality: Towards a post-dualist view. *Cities*, 61, 136–143. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.08.018

Rezaei N., & Najjari Nabi R. (2024). A review on the international experiences of organizing peddlers with an emphasis on the role of peddlers in the urban landscape. *Urban Economics and Planning*, 5(1): 154–170. [In Persian]. https://doi.org/10.22034/uep.2024.451998.1476

Roever, S., & Skinner, C. (2016). Street vendors and cities. *Environment and Urbanization*, 28(2), 359–374.

Romero, R. (2009). *The dynamics of the informal economy*. Oxford University Press.

Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689

Roy, A. (2015). Urban informality: The production and regulation of space. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 818–822). Elsevier.

Sadeghi M., Baferani J., Mahdavi P., & Gholamrezaei Z. (2020). Spatial investigation and organization of hawkers in District 10 of Tehran City with an emphasis on problematic areas. *Journal of Urban Economics and Planning*, 1(1): 36–47. [In Persian].https://doi.org/10.22034/UE.2020.09.04

Saha, D. (2011). Working life of street vendors in Mumbai. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 54(2), 301–325.

Salehifard M. (2009). The phenomenon of street vending and goods smuggling: Interactions and impacts of vendors in Mashhad. *Salem Economy*, 429: 1–18. [In Persian]

Salimifar, M., & Keivanfar, M. (2011). Informal economy in Iran and the effect of inflation on it. *Knowledge and Development*, 17(33), 1–26.

Shieh I., Behzadfar M., & Namdariyan A. A. (2017). Formulating an urban landscape framework via the theory of production of space and forces affecting urban landscape. *Urban Studies Journal*, 24: 81–94. [In Persian]

Taheri Tafti M. (2021). An analysis of the formalisation policies regarding street vending. *Majlis & Rahbord*, 28(107): 59–85. [In Persian]

Tallavajjula, N. S. (2023). Towards socio-spatial equity in public space: Urban design for street vendors in Hyderabad. *The Journal of Public Space*, 8(1), 103–122. https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v8i1.1652

Thomas, J. J. (1995). *Surviving in the city: The urban informal sector in Latin America*. Pluto Press.

Vahdat, S. .,Sajjad-Zadeh, H., & Karimi.M., M. (2015). Conceptualizing the factors affecting of streetscape to promote the legibility of urban spaces (Case Studies: Hamedan inner city streets). *Motaleate Shahri*, 4(15), 17-36.

Williams, C. C., & Lansky, M. A. (2013). Informal employment in developed and developing economies: Perspectives and policy responses. *International Labour Review*, 152(3–4), 355–380. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2013.00196.x

Woldeamanuel, M., Abebe, N., & Supangkat, F. (2023). Street vending on Addis Ababa's sidewalks: A sign of vibrancy and identity or a nuisance for pedestrians? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 45(3), 317–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2021.2014764

Zhang, X., & Zhao, L. (2025). The informal economy: A Veblenian perspective. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 59(2), 445–452. https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2025.2493535