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Master's Degree Program in
Territorial, Urban, Environmental, and Landscape Planning

**The quality of public space:
an inquiry into how pedestrian pathways shape urban life in Tabriz**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates Tarbiat street in Tabriz, Iran, with the aim of identifying the urban design factors that contribute to urban vitality in a historic pedestrian street. Public spaces are essential components of urban life by providing settings for social interactions, cultural events and daily activities and individual experiences. Pedestrian streets that provide diverse land uses, good accessibility and opportunities for social interaction are considered important contributors to urban life. As one of the key pedestrian streets in Tabriz, Tarbiat street provides an opportunity to examine how urban design influences the quality and vitality of public space. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach using spatial analysis and secondary demographic data, supported by a review of relevant literature. The findings indicate that the vitality of Tarbiat street cannot be explained by pedestrianization alone, but rather emerges from the interaction of several dimensions such as accessibility, social interactions and activities.

These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how urban design can support vibrant and sustainable open public spaces in urban environments.

Keywords: Urban life, pedestrian street, public space, vitality

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Topic and context	2
1.2 Research aims and questions	5
1.3 Research structure	8
Chapter Two: Literature review	9
2.1 Urban space and public space	10
2.1.1 Place	11
2.1.2 Social interaction in public space	12
2.2 Pedestrian street	14
2.2.1 Definition of Pedestrian streets	15
2.2.2 History of pedestrian streets	15
2.2.3 Categories of pedestrianization	16
2.3 Pedestrianization and urban public space	18
2.3.1 Conversion of streets into pedestrian streets	18
2.3.2 Advantages of pedestrian streets	19
2.4 Urban vitality and pedestrian streets	21
2.4.1 The role of urban vitality	22
2.4.2 Vitality in pedestrian streets	23
2.4.3 Pedestrian streets and vitality enhancement	24

2.4.4 Pedestrian and social interactions	25
2.5 Pedestrian behaviour	25
2.5.1 The importance of walking	26
2.5.2 Dimensions of pedestrian streets	27
2.5.3 Theoretical perspectives	31
Chapter Three: Methodology of investigation	35
3.1 Methodology	36
3.1.1 Data sources	36
3.1.2 Data analysis	37
3.2 Why study Tabriz?	40
Chapter Four: The case study	41
4.1 A brief exploration of pedestrian street in Tehran	42
4.2 Tabriz	44
4.3 History of Tarbiat street	45
4.3.1 Tarbiat street	49
4.3.2 Review of the current situation	55
4.3.3 Navigating safety issues in Tarbiat street	65

Chapter Five: Conclusion	69
5.1 Main findings	70
5.2 Research limitations	71
5.3 Future research directions	72
References and figures	73
References	74
List of figures and tables	79

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Topic and context

These days, with continued growth of urban populations, the design of open spaces has become more significant than ever. These open spaces support communication activities, social and economic activities while contributing to make a sense of place and belonging as well. Within different urban interventions, a main strategy of revitalizing cities is represented by pedestrian streets. Consequently, developing and improving pedestrian streets has emerged as an important part of the urban design for creating sustainable and livable cities.

Urban vitality is an occurrence that shows the dynamic and energetic atmosphere surrounding people and reflects the social interactions, cultural performances and economic processes that take place in public spaces. Pedestrian streets have a crucial role in the public space and are regarded as the main stage of the public realm (Mehta, 2013).

Urban streets are not only used for mobility and movement but also function as social spaces. Many people use these spaces for daily activities, such as social interactions and leisure time. They serve as an extension of the urban environment for many urban inhabitants (Jacobs, 1961).

Pedestrians are always exposed to harm and safety risks. Pedestrianism has not only failed to gain recognition, but also at present its status is so insignificant that it has not even found a share in its form as a system of urban transportation, and thus the pedestrian finds their rights are overlooked (Rafieian et al., 2010, p: 42).

At the same time, increasing attention to pedestrian mobility can improve the quality of the environment, strengthen social activities, and make cities more human centered in urban environments (Hillman et al.,1990).

Among the studies on public space, the relationship between public spaces and social communities has received particular attention. Additionally, have shown that urban environments can make physical connectivity for social interactions, while the qualities of open spaces facilitate communication and relation between people, thereby fostering social interactions and urban life style (Habib, 2012).

Tarbiat street, Tabriz, Iran

Tarbiat Street, located in the center of Tabriz, is an important example of a pedestrian space. It has rich historical roots going back to the Pahlavi era. Initially, Tarbiat street cut through the residential complex of Qajar-Batmanghelich, in 1925 but in the 1990s, under Mayor Darvish Zadeh, it transformed into a pedestrian street, enhancing its appeal and accessibility.

Today, Tarbiat street is considered a vibrant hub in Tabriz's city center, partly because of its proximity to important places such as a grand bazaar, sound museum, and Kalkatechi house. This street is not only a destination for shopping and commercial activities but also shows the historical identity and cultural richness of Tabriz (Naghshe Jahan Pars, 2005). Figure 1 illustrates the location of Tabriz province in Iran, while figure 2 presents the location of Tarbiat street and its main access routes.



Figure1:Location of Tabriz. Source: Aljazeera



Figure 2: Aerial image of Tarbiat street and its divisions. Source: Google Earth, Processed by author, accessed in November 2025

Additionally, because of its location, historical significance and commercial function, Tarbiat street provides a case for understanding how pedestrian-oriented urban design contribute to urban vitality.

1.2 Research aims and question

Achieving a livable city requires urban life as a fundamental component. Urban vitality encompasses social interaction, economic activity, cultural expression and overall quality of life. Among the urban design elements that contribute to vitality, pedestrian streets have received considerable attention. These pedestrian priority spaces encourage walking, social interaction and activities, accessibilities, thereby increasing the vibrancy of urban environments. (Ahmad Nia, 2021; Chen et al., 2022).

Previous studies have also highlighted the benefits of pedestrian streets, emphasizing their positive effects on urban life (Soni and Soni, 2016; Ahmad Nia, 2021).

The pedestrian streets have actual potential regarding uplifting urban vibrancy for particular settings that could improve the social aspects and quality of life in the city. To achieve this goal, the case study analyses Tarbiat pedestrian streets located in Tabriz, Iran. Despite the strategic location and potential of this area, it is necessary to consider the following research issues. The first point is inadequate understanding of the impact of Tarbiat pedestrian street on urban vitality. As pedestrian streets could be a strong component for enhancing urban vitality, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the effect of Tarbiat street in Tabriz. The second point is environmental

conditions. Pedestrian streets have the power to make a positive contribution to urban vitality, but various environmental conditions can have an important bearing on effectiveness. Although the street has strong potential due to its location, there is still limited research on how effective are some relevant specific factors, which is including the historical and cultural importance of the street, the effect of a close distance to a significant commercial zone (bazaar) and culture buildings, and convenient access to other parts of the city. The pedestrian streets have increasingly become common in urban planning and design. However, their actual potential regarding uplifting urban vitality remains under examined. To achieve this goal, case study analyses Tarbiat pedestrian street located in Tabriz, Iran. According to the strategic location and potential of this area, it is necessary to address the following research gaps:

- Challenges and opportunities for improvement: However, improving the role of Tarbiat pedestrian street in increasing urban vibrancy and vitality requires identifying and evaluating the existing challenges as well as the opportunities for improvement.
- Lack of understanding of the impact of Tarbiat pedestrian street on urban vitality: While pedestrian streets are perceived as space for enhancing urban vitality, comprehensive research examining the role and impact of this street in Tabriz remains limited. It is important to explore how pedestrian streets influence dimensions of urban life, such as social interaction, economic activities, and cultural practices.

In general, there have been very few studies on the effect of pedestrian pathways on shaping urban life. Although some studies have been conducted on the historical fabric of various areas in Tabriz, none have talked about the urban vitality in Tarbiat street and its effects on urban life.

Although some studies have researched about pedestrian streets and public spaces in other cities in Iran, limited attention has been paid to how pedestrianization contributes to urban life in historic Iranian cities. Existing studies focus on physical characteristics or heritage conservation of buildings along the pedestrian streets, and urban vitality remain insufficiently explored.

Therefore, regarding the case of Tarbiat pedestrian street in Tabriz and more widely regarding pedestrian streets' quality and planning, this study aims to address this gap. The research focuses on understanding how social interaction, accessibility and activities influences the vitality of this pedestrian street.

The project aims to achieve the following these two objectives in general:

- To examine the role of Tarbiat pedestrian street in supporting various dimensions of urban vitality, including social interaction, economic activity, lifestyle and cultural vibrancy through data analysis.
- To explore the urban context of Tarbiat pedestrian street, including its spatial structure, historical background, cultural significance and to discuss how these contextual characteristics may relate to urban vitality.

By achieving these aims, this thesis aims at improving our understanding of the role of pedestrian streets in enhancing urban vitality and provide valuable insights for urban planning and design practices in Tabriz and beyond. Based on the considerations, this study mainly following this research question:

- What are the most important factors in urban design strategies for increasing the potential of pedestrian streets as primary drivers toward enhancing urban vitality?

1.3 Research structure

This thesis has been structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the importance of pedestrian streets in urban life and to the specific case of Tarbiat street in Tabriz. The literature review in Chapter 2 provides a theoretical foundation and literature for the work's development. Chapter 3 is dedicated to methodology, presenting the outcomes of the research. Moving forward, Chapter 4 is about an in-depth case study analysis of the Tarbiat pedestrian street in Tabriz and the last chapter, Chapter 5 is the conclusion that summarizes the main findings of the thesis and their implications for public spaces.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Urban space and public space

In the city, there are some specific spaces that belong to all citizens rather than individuals. These areas are not only physical but also get meaning through personal presence and activities. Urban spaces are closely related to public spaces which include social, psychological and spatial forms of space. Public space can be defined as an environment where people gather in a common place in order to engage in various activities or social interactions. This space is part of the urban fabric and is accessible to everyone (Tibbalds, 1992).

The public space is related to an environment which provides opportunities for both functional activities and having social events, contributing to creating connections among people. In addition, public space can be defined as a scene reflecting social life and everyday lifestyle, whether these activities are permanent or temporary.

These functions may include political, economic, commercial or artistic activities.

Public space constitutes an essential component of the city and the urban environment that people should access freely. In these spaces people share experiences and engage in social interaction. This social interaction and activity can be seen in many forms of functions and daily routines (Rafieian et al., 2010).

According to this, public space includes all of the urban elements where people have physical, emotional and visual access, such as streets, stores, buildings, landscapes, and squares. In fact, public space is one of the most important components of a city, where most people's interactions and functions take place (Tibbalds, 1992, p:1). The nature of contemporary public space is directly affected by the complex socio-economic conditions. According to Carmona, public space is a place

that allows free access and interaction, although it may still be shaped by different levels of control, including commercial and governmental influences, and could be a space for particular or general purposes (Carmona, 2010).

Source	Main Idea	Key Points
Matthew Carmona (2010, p.10)	Public space is shaped by different historical, political, cultural, and economic factors.	-Historical trends and norms from the ancient world - Governance, regulation, legal control, and investment - Cultural traditions and variations - Political priorities and lifestyles -The relationship between political and market forces - The increasing complexity of public space and professional limitations
John T. Cacioppo & William Patrick (2008)	Public open spaces are designed to respond to human needs, especially social interaction.	-Social interaction is one of the essential human needs supported by public spaces.

Table 1: Theoretical framework of public space, Source: processed by author

2.1.1 Place

A Place is created when a location is defined by more than its physical characteristics. It is through the people who inhabit and use a location that it acquires meaning and begins to develop a distinct identity. Based on Gehl's view, the best public places are those that encourage social interaction and activities. A place combines all three attributes of geographical location, physical parameters and value identity (Gieryn, 2000). According to Steele, sense of place is the experience of all those things which people perform into a place. Therefore, it is clear that the factors which create a sense

of place are divided into two main categories: perceptual factors, physical characteristics (Steele, 1981).

To better understand urban space and its influence on people's daily life, it is essential to first understand the concept of space. A good public environment should be supportive, comfortable and meaningful and solve primary human needs, such as goods, safety, comfort (Gehl, 2010).

Improving public spaces in Iranian cities while respecting their local and historical context remains an important planning objective.

2.1.2 Social interaction in public space

From a sociological perspective, public space is mainly focused on the users and their perceptions of that space.

The city's vitality is linked to the presence of people in public spaces. Indeed, creating pedestrian friendly environments is critical to increase this vitality. When public spaces provide safety, comfort and recreational activities, they can encourage greater public presence and interaction. By identifying and strengthening the factors that affect urban vitality, cities can create more vibrant places and active environments. These spaces play a key role in shaping the lifestyle, urban culture and daily social interactions, while also being influenced by these elements (Carr et al., 1992, p: 11).

Urban activities can be divided into three different categories. The first includes necessary activities that occur under any circumstances, such as shopping or waiting in a bus station. The second includes optional activities, such as walking or spending time outdoors, which depend on

favorable conditions. The third category involves social activities taking place in urban spaces and a vast range of interactions among people and are influenced by the presence of others (Rafieian et al., 2010).

Social interaction refers to particular forms of relationships. In this behavior, the actions of a reference group affect an individual's preferences.

Social interaction refers to particular forms of externalities in which the actions of a reference group affect an individual's preference. The reference group depends on the context and is typically in an individual's family, neighbors and friends (Scheinkman, 2016).

Human place interaction influences the human perceptions of a place that form the place identity, while the experiential value of a place is derived from users' interaction with the associated place attributes (Marans, 2012).

One of the necessary elements of urban vitality is the existence of a mixed and diverse function. However, variety alone is not sufficient. Other components, such as urban design quality and entertainment activities at a micro scale, as well as social, cultural, and environment conditions which externally affect the place also play important roles (Khastoo et al., 2010, p: 65). According to Lynch (1981), vitality along with other features such as control, access, help to shape an efficient urban environment. Vibrant urban spaces are those where a different groups of people of different ages and backgrounds, and characteristics actively participate in social and everyday activities.

2.2 Pedestrian street

Encouraging a variety of activities at different times of the day forces people to use public spaces more frequently. Improving the quality of the environment in urban spaces, particularly through pedestrians, can also increase the sense of safety and social security in this environment for them.

Pedestrian streets are considered vibrant urban spaces that have the role to prioritize the needs of pedestrians. Walkability is one of the key elements in creating sustainable transportation in an urban environment (Salazar et al., 2021).

In recent years, walking has become one of the most popular modes of transportation advocated in urban plans (Campisi et al., 2020). A well-designed city that is practical, comfortable and visually appealing can better support pedestrian movement and pleasant urban environment (Mendzina et al., 2021).

Research showed that many social activities, which involve shopping, gatherings, entertainment, have traditionally taken place on the streets (Mendzina et al., 2021). Before the advancement of transportation systems, the balance between use of automobiles and people on the streets was relatively equal, but when the technology advanced, and the transportation system improved, the balance was disrupted.

2.2.1 Definition of pedestrian streets

A pedestrian zone is an area where automobiles are forbidden and the whole space is just accessible to people. The entrances and exits of these areas are usually marked with a sign or physical elements to tell all users when they are entering the pedestrian areas (Sisman, 2013).

Jane Jacobs (1961) mentioned that streets, sidewalks, and also parks are among the most important public spaces in a city. Pedestrian streets are typically designed to prioritize the needs of users, including physical comfort and psychological needs. When compared to the other transportation systems, pedestrian ways have a unique identity that may be shown as flexible, cost-effective and energy saving (Asl et al., 2012).

The aim of pedestrian streets varies, but includes increasing urban vitality and economic activity, and making a pleasant environment for pedestrians to move, having social interaction and leisure activities. Pedestrian streets are often located in commercial districts, historic areas and tourist destinations where pedestrian activity is high. Each street has a unique feature and function. Therefore, aspects such as visual image, sense of enclosure, scale, interactions may vary (Kumar et al., 2021).

2.2.2 History of the pedestrian streets

Pedestrian zones emerged many years ago in many active and populated cities. In earlier civilization, driving bans were implemented in order to decrease traffic congestion, prevent pollution and make more pleasant urban environments (Sisman, 2013).

Verma & Gahletia (2023) mentioned that in Roman, vehicles were restricted at particular times of the day, and organized urban spaces were planned in a way that they all met at central social areas known as Pompeii.

In the 20th century, urban planning witnessed a shift toward more human oriented design. Greater focus was given to improving urban environments and making pedestrian friendly spaces. People gradually began to return to city centers for social interaction, commercial activities, and entertainment (Karssenberget al., 2017).

More recently, the 15minute city (FMC) model, has emerged as an important approach in urban planning. According to Pozoukidou and Angelidou (2022), this model concentrated on designing cities in a way that allows people to access essential services such as work, education, culture, creation and commute within a 15 minutes-walk. This concept, considering the importance of pedestrian environments in improving urban life.

2.2.3 Categories of pedestrianization

Pedestrian spaces can be designed in different ways depending on the specific aims, primary needs, and characteristics of an area as well as the lifestyle of the people who will access the pathway. The following classification is adopted from Soni and Soni (2016) about pedestrianization. Two categories of pedestrianization are presented below.

- Part time pedestrianization refers to a street that is open to vehicles only at certain times of the day. In these areas parking is usually banned in order to decrease the traffic congestion. However, there are loading bays available for the commercial activities (Soni and Soni, 2016).

Temporary street closures are also common, where roads are closed to cars or motors during specific programs and occasions like festivals, market street and seasonal auction (Global street design guide, 2016).

These types of streets encourage people to have social interaction, improve safety especially for children, and contribute to having a better sense of community in these open spaces. In the case of Tarbiat street, there are some points where vehicles are allowed for purposes like goods delivery or helping people with disabilities.

- Full time pedestrianization refers to spaces with focus on people on foot. In this type pedestrian use is always prioritized and vehicle access is highly restricted, usually limited to emergency services. In some cases service access to streets may be permitted during some specific times (Soni and Soni, 2016).

Such environments play an important role in making a walkable, accessible and vibrant city is greatly influenced by the presence of pedestrian areas which are dynamic (Global street design guide, 2016).

Finally, these areas provide opportunities for people to walk, stay, interact and spend time in public spaces. They reduce congestion in crowded roads of the city, activate underused areas, and support local economies on a small scale.

2.3 Pedestrianization and urban public space

Beyond physical structure, one of the key elements influencing the presence of people and social interaction of people in urban spaces is the organization of social events and activities. These functions can improve social relationships and enhance people's sense of belonging to a place.

At this level people may have different levels of emotional relationships with place, depending on their experiences. According to Kenneth Frampton's view (1983), it is not possible to create a meaningful place without creating the sense of attachment to place. A place is shaped by its structures, features and activities that happen within it, therefore these components together encourage people to return and continue using the space.

In the case of Tarbiat street, the existence of suitable social and entertainment events supports various voluntary and social interactions.

People can make relationships with others while purchasing and spending their leisure time. Additionally, Tarbiat street has some certain physical and functional features that make it a recognizable and significant urban space in this city.

2.3.1 Conversion of street into pedestrian street

Until the mid-19th century, most cities were essentially walking cities. When the automobile came to the roads, the need for traffic congestion control, safety, and spatial planning in metropolitan areas emerged and became more significant (Parajuli et al., 2017). In Europe, pedestrianization began to be implemented as a traffic policy in the 1960s. (Elmokadem et al., 2016). According to

Kot (2016), places with high density, narrow streets and good public transit networks that allow people to reach their destinations are more suitable for successful pedestrianization.

Over time, many cities began transitioning from car mobility toward pedestrian environments, considering various strategies and procedures depending on their policies and goals. Some cities, have designed plans to forbid cars from city centers. For instance, Copenhagen and Paris, launched car-free days, investments in infrastructure for pedestrians, restricted car parking, and the expansion of pedestrian areas (Yassin, 2019).

From the 1950s to the 1960s, developed countries in the Western world began developing pedestrian zones as a strategy to revitalize and stop further deterioration of central business centers. Asian cities have also seen this transition, the pedestrianization, but in a different setting due to the cultural and environmental aspects. By the late 20th century, pedestrian streets were increasingly recognized as social activities and a place to engage in leisure activities (Ghahremanipouri et al., 2012).

2.3.2 Advantages of pedestrian streets

Pedestrian streets can support urban development and help to advance the quality of life in cities. The advantages of pedestrianization can be discussed in four main categories which are also related to Tarbiat street.

- Transportation

Pedestrian zones usually lead to increased use of public transportation, especially those which are in the center or have a connection with the main roads of the city. At the same time automobile usage tends to decrease.

Pedestrianization reduces the need for road development, and contributes to reducing reliance on cars, also helping to increase safe environment (Arup, 2016).

- Social advantages

Urban vitality depends on the interpersonal relations and social interactions and routine communication, which are increased in these environments (Soni and Soni, 2016). With the segregation of using cars, pedestrianization can be a useful strategy for increasing the standards of lifestyle. Pedestrians have the opportunity to become familiar with the local culture, historic buildings, environment and become aware of social life, which can increase their sense of belonging.

According to the Broken windows theory, a decline in the quality of the urban environment is closely related to the rise in antisocial conduct and the sense of insecurity, such as crime. Therefore, pedestrian streets have an important role in society by making a safe space for people and a sense of comfort (Arup, 2016).

- Environmental advantages

Environmental improvement and the reduction of traffic are closely associated, according to an examination of pedestrianization in cities plans. There will be significant reductions in fuel consumption in pedestrianized zones because of the increased in walking and public transport use and the decrease in air pollution. Furthermore, limiting car access contributes to protecting historic buildings and monuments from damage caused by vehicle pollution and vibrations. And this could help the environment by protecting urban heritage from damages (Soni and Soni, 2016).

- Economic advantages

A good quality urban environment is related to a stronger economic function. Roads infrastructure for vehicles requires more budget to create. Additionally, the maintenance cost is higher than having facilities for cyclists and pedestrians. Moreover, by encouraging people to use public transportation system instead of private cars, pedestrianization would save money by reducing harmful externalities (Soni and Soni, 2016).

Investment in public space is a major driver of local, social and economic vitality. It increases the economic aspect of local shops, makes them more attractive and supports local businesses in individual and community levels (Arup, 2016).

2.4 Urban vitality and pedestrian street

Urban life is shaped by the urban system and interconnected social and economic dimensions. These elements have relation with one another and are reflected in urban vitality, which affects urban development (Jiang et al., 2022).

Areas with a high degree of vitality demonstrate a higher quality of life via the display of social interactions, public events, and a sense of environment, all of which in turn shows the important features of a place. In addition, a vibrant city also provides accessible chances, reducing the time needed for people to connect and enhancing social efficiency (Chen et al., 2022).

According to Ahmad Nia (2021), the meaning of social life and vitality are used to describe people and social interactions which result in forming a dynamic society. Social vitality, in particular, reflects the stage of personal activity in an urban environment, and the most active parts of a city can be a good indicator of its power to improve and develop (Jiang et al., 2022).

Therefore, economic vitality is interrelated with mixed land uses and diverse urban activities within urban spaces and dynamic street life play a crucial role in supporting urban vitality (Jacobs, 1961). According to Jiang et al., (2022) economic vitality is the one of the most important indicators of urban growth potential, a significant part of urban development quality and an intuitive statement of urban power.

Among the most important features that improve the quality of urban space and its stability, there is vitality. Quality of life captures people's satisfaction or happiness with their surrounding environment and living conditions. It is vital to combine social, physical and spatial aspects for improving quality of life through well designed and managed built open spaces (Deniz, 2016).

2.4.1 The role of urban vitality

The presence of urban vitality in society is important because it reduces crime, increases economic activity, enhances the enjoyment of observing public life as a passive hobby, and creates strong

social interaction. However, the health of the urban environment is considered as having a strong connection with urban vitality (Jalaladdini et al., 2012).

The chance of social interaction is considerable in vibrant cities, therefore there are several places for people to make contact. A vibrant and lively city is also accessible, reducing the time spent finding spaces to form interactions and increasing social efficiency (Chen et al., 2022).

2.4.2 Vitality of pedestrian streets

While the cities continue to improve and develop, it remains unclear how new conditions and changes will affect the overall quality of life for their inhabitants. The quality of life has many dimensions including environment, lifestyle, employment and type of job, financial situation, age and education. It can vary across differences in size or spatial scale, from buildings to the local area to cities, regions, and even nations. It is widely emphasized that the place where people live influences their lives and quality of life (Marans et al., 2012).

Vitality can be considered an internal force in the way of urban growth and is closely linked to the city's aesthetic appeal (Pan et al., 2023). It is also understood as an essential aspect and fundamental component of urban life, arises from interactions through urban activities and the concept of urban vitality revolves around people's satisfaction with different aspects of urban life. However, due to its complexity, it is difficult to determine or measure all aspects of urban vitality (Fang et al., 2021). Yue et al. (2019) quantified urban vitality by considering the built environment, human activities, and interactions between people and their surroundings.

Urban vitality can be categorized into different aspects, including economic, cultural, and social vitality (Jalaladdini et al., 2012). According to Jane Jacobs (1961) a place becomes vibrant when people use and engage in activities in that place. Pedestrian streets become attractive and lively when they meet people's needs. Urban diversity and a variety of activities contribute to the vitality of both daytime and night hours environments, creating a more dynamic and lively urban spaces.

From the point of view of urban sociology, urban competitiveness is seen as a concrete representation of urban vitality, which is categorized into three parts: economic vitality, social vitality, and cultural vitality, demonstrating the capacity of cities to provide facilities for activities and life for people in urban space. One of the factors that contributes to the vitality and diversity of pedestrian streets is the provision of diverse and a diverse mix of land uses for each pedestrian of these streets (Jiang et al., 2022).

2.4.3 Pedestrian streets and vitality enhancement

The feature of the pedestrians in urban environments has declined in recent years due to rapid urban growth, and the excessive use of the car on the streets. Urban designers, therefore, tried to plan and design streets that support social connections and produce lively public environments.

These streets, which are now known as pedestrian streets, are in the main areas of the city like central areas and are designed to encourage people's activity and attract them. Walking in these streets allows people to engage with one another and build relationships (Molavi et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand the key elements of the pedestrian streets and know how they affect pedestrian mobility and behaviour in urban settings because a vibrant open space promotes

the underlying social connections among people, providing a social capital within the community (Samavati et al., 2013).

2.4.4 Pedestrian and social interactions

Social interaction is the establishment of a relationship between two or more people that leads to a mutual response among them, and this response is recognized and understood by both of them. Establishing communication can take the form of physical interaction, a glance, a conversation, or interpersonal connections among individuals.

This requires the definition of appropriate events and activities, which in turn lead to people's participation in the space and their sense of belonging to groups (Daneshpour et al., 2007).

Public spaces provide people with the opportunity for different generations to be present together alongside one another. In other words, achieving cohesive and sustainable social relationships, as well as enhancing interaction and presence in public spaces, requires the development of knowledge about the various patterns of socialization. When people interact with other members of society, they develop a stronger sense of connection to their place and community (Habib ,2012).

2.5 Pedestrian behaviour

As urban environments are expanding, daily travel to work or other destinations typically takes longer and can be increasingly affected by traffic congestion and delays for public transport modes. Alternative lifestyle choices such as walking and cycling can prove both healthy and efficient.

However, these are influenced by the features of the built environment and demographic factors (O’Flaherty et al., 1972, p: 434).

Figure 3 shows the examples of different pedestrian behavior depending on interaction with other users in urban spaces. These behaviors could happen during the day at different times by pedestrians depending on the level of activity and crowd density.

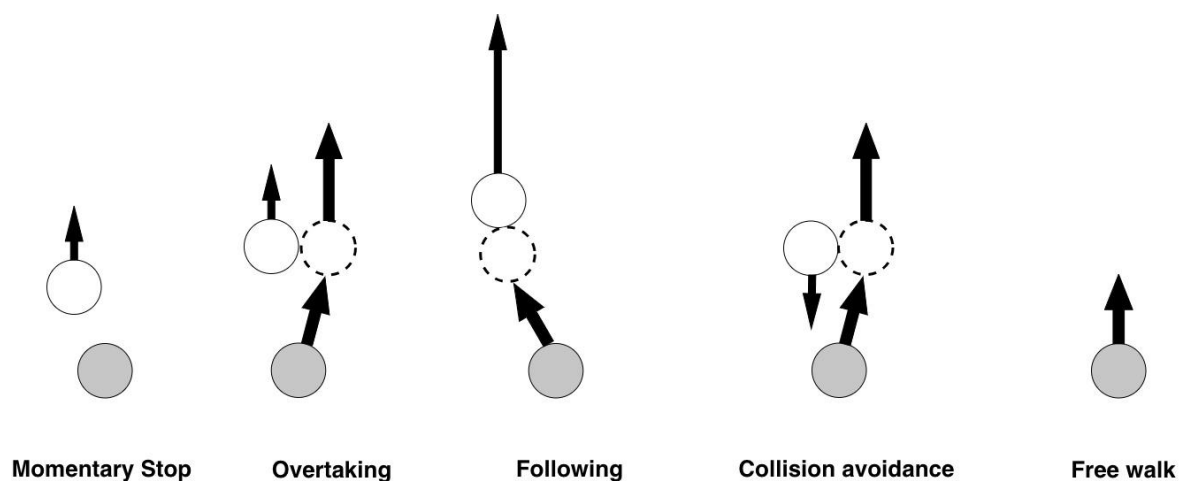


Figure 3: Examples of different pedestrian behaviour depending on interaction with other pedestrians during street crossing. Source: Bezbradica et al., 2019

2.5.1 The importance of walking

Walking is the simplest and the most fundamental form of moving between an origin and destination. It is a type of transportation that can be implemented without any dependency on the instrument or vehicles (Pakzad, 2002).

Despite the development of technology and modern transportation systems, walking is one of the few human activities that protects its primitive shape in human life. It provides a unique chance to

experience urban environments more effectively, allowing pedestrians to have activities, enjoy the environment and make a connection with the landscape.

Considering that social and cultural interactions occur in urban places, the role of pedestrians in improving the quality of urban life become significant.

In cities such as Tabriz, which involves valuable historical and cultural elements, walking is the most natural, oldest, and most necessary form of human movement in the environment and allows people to better experience and connect with these qualities.

As a result, pedestrian streets are the crossroads with the important role that can bring excitement and vitality to the central areas of this city. They attract and encourage people to participate in this area during the day, improving their social life. Pedestrian street is an enclosed street where vehicular traffic has been eliminated or removed, providing an environment in which people have greater control over the street.

2.5.2 Dimensions in pedestrian street

Pedestrian pathways help to urban spaces in many different ways, especially through their social and physical dimensions.

These two components have a significant effect on the people's lifestyle and the vitality of the pedestrian streets.

- Physical Features

In urban environments, pedestrian streets are crucial physical features that provide comfort, safety, and aesthetic appeal. Adequate width, high quality material of surfaces, appropriate lighting, cleanliness, and supplemental amenities are all important components to help to the effectiveness of these pathways.

In addition, these areas can be made more unique by incorporating local materials, traditional themes, or community structures that can give these areas a unique identity while maintaining harmony with the surrounding environment.

As a result, pathways not only support walkability, but also increase the overall visual and operational quality of urban areas, making them more approachable and pleasurable for locals and tourists. In some cases, they can even make that place a symbol of that city.

Moreover, the number of walking trips pedestrians take is greatly influenced by the physical design of pedestrian pathways. Features such as benches, trees, sculptures, lighting, can improve usability and encourage pedestrians to spend more time. This, in turn, builds the urban character, as well as fostering place identity and a sense of belonging.

Without the existence of pedestrians, environments lose their vitality and livability because they can no longer function as a lively social hub with a strong sense of community (Patria et al., 2024 p: 8).

- Social Significances

Pedestrian pathways are a vital element of urban spaces that increase social contact. These interactions have a profound emotional and psychological influence, fostering a sense of place attachment and belonging by creating emotional ties between individuals and their surroundings.

In addition, pedestrianizations help to maintain continuity and distinctiveness in the urban environment, and encourage the development of city identity. By developing livability standards and increasing vitality, pathways increase a sense of safety and divide responsibility through greater social relationships.

Thus, pathways serve as vibrant spaces for social interaction, enhancing residents' quality of life by establishing a shared urban identity based on everyday experiences (Patria et al., 2024 p:9).

Figure 4 illustrates the pedestrian pathway as an element of place identity and shows that accessibility, convenience and social engagement contribute to strengthening the connection between these contexts and pedestrians.

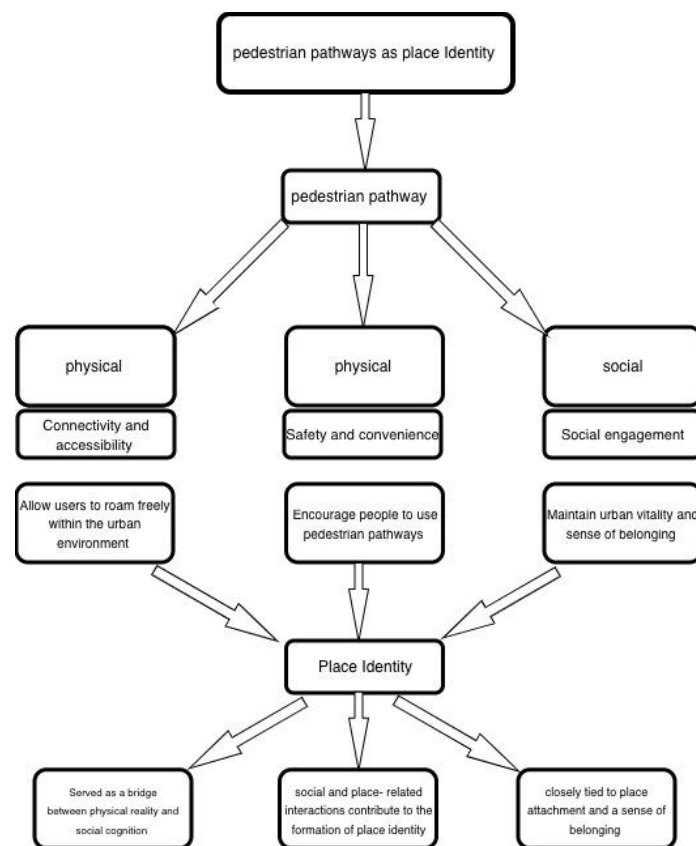


Figure 4: Summary of pedestrian pathways as place identity. Source: Patria et al., 2024

Following the discussion of the dimensions of pedestrian street, the dimensions of urban vitality should be clarified. Ahmad Nia (2021), in his study identified five categories (table 2) of urban vitality dimensions. But this study does not examine all dimensions in equal depth. According to the availability of data, the analysis focuses primarily on sociability, accessibility, public spaces activities.

Dimensions of urban vitality	Determinants of vitality
Social vitality	- Social interaction - Communication - Community participation
Economic vitality	- Retail activities - Commercial activities - Local businesses
Functional vitality	- Accessibility - Urban public transportation - Pedestrian mobility
Environmental vitality	- Safety and security - comfort
Cultural vitality	- Imageability - Sense of place - Cultural identity

Table 2: Dimensions of vitality. Source: Ahmad Nia (2021), processed by author

Ahmad Nia (2021) also indicated that vitality depends not only on the number of individuals present, but also on their importance and popularity and the idea of vitality depends on the existence of characteristics related to the socioeconomic system.

According to Jiang et al., (2022), environmental vitality demonstrates a city's carrying capability of green areas, public health, and other aspects. Pohan et al., (2019) stated that environmental vitality is a physical facet of urban vitality.

2.5.3 Theoretical perspectives

In the following, reviews the opinions of authors whose contributions have influenced the field of urban vitality and pedestrian life style.

Jan Gehl - Places for public and social interaction

Gehl (2010) argues that pedestrian activity in the city has a diversity of forms. Walking ranges from purposeful trips to different destinations. The fast walk from two points, or zig-zag movements of young people and the determined walk of older pedestrians. He emphasizes on necessary activities, which happen regardless of the quality of the public space and include general activities. The second one is about optional activities, which happen only when the space permits. The last one is social activities that are related to people gathering in urban spaces.

Kevin Lynch - Public image of the city

Another author who has greatly affected on study about urban design is Lynch. Particularly, he emphasized on how cities look and how the built environment and public spaces shape the people's urban life and experiences. Lynch identified the key elements that shape people's mental image of a city, and these elements are strengthened by improving accessibility and the overall pedestrian experience.

He also suggests some crucial parameters for urban design. These parameters are vitality and the basic needs of people, sense of belonging to the spaces, suitability of the urban space, access to the urban environment and managing and having control of the environment.

Allan Jacobs - Great streets

Jacobs (1993) emphasizes the role of streets in increasing social experiences in his studies. Jacobs also indicates how the local spaces influence the function of a given street or public space. He describes different types of street, ranging from historical districts, modern spaces and pedestrian zones.

Jane Jacobs - Urban environments

Jane Jacobs is concerned with how actions and strategies promote and contribute to economic and social interactions in urban life and which actions are not proper. Jane Jacobs argues that the cities serve an important social function in public spaces, a meeting place of strangers, where people

find people and make social interactions. He also argued that mixed land use encourages activity throughout the day by bringing together residential and commercial functions.

Frame work

This research adopts an urban life in public space framework combining theories of public space, pedestrian oriented urban design, and urban vitality. This research indicated Jane Jacobs' ideas about mixed use life and street vitality, Jan Gehl's approach to pedestrian activities and public life. Also, Kevin Lynch's concept of imageability and urban perception and Carmona's opinion of public space quality. These different perspectives are combined to analyze how pedestrianization, public space qualities, and social interactions contribute to urban vitality and enhance the quality of urban life in Tarbiat street.

Figure 5 presents the conceptual framework of the urban context. This study considers accessibility, social interaction and activities on Tarbiat street as key components that contribute to social and economic vitality, which, in turn, enhance the quality of urban life.

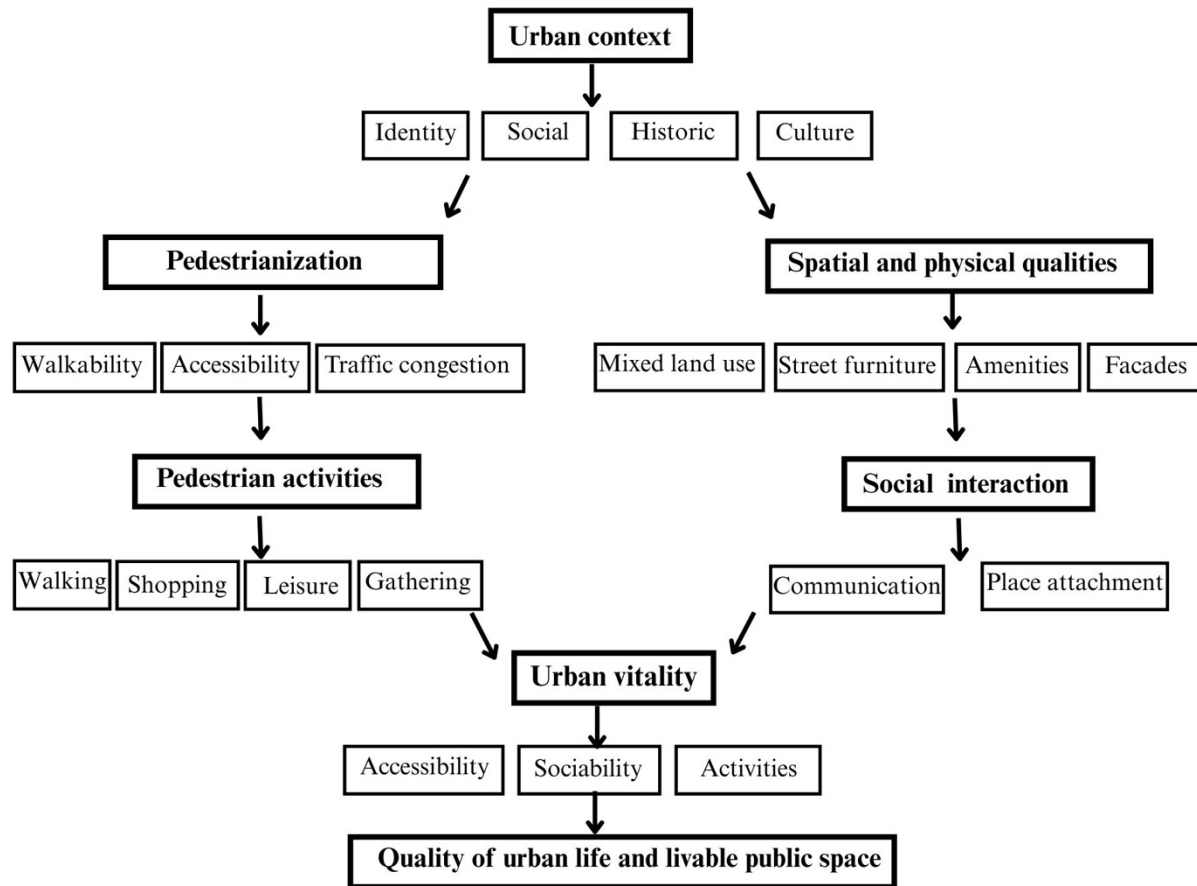


Figure 5: Conceptual framework. Source: processed by author

Chapter Three : Methodology

3.1 Methodology

The aim of this study is to identify the urban design factors that contribute to urban vitality in Tarbiat street, with emphasis on sociability, accessibility and activities in Tarbiat street in Tabriz. This chapter presents the research methodology adopted to investigate urban design factors as the primary drivers of urban vitality. It explains the research paradigm and the data sources used in this study.

These methodological choices provide a framework for examining the urban design factors that contribute to urban vitality, setting the stage for the chapters that follow. The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which conceptualizes urban life as constructed by experiences, activities and social interactions.

3.1.1 Data sources

The research adopted a qualitative approach based on academic literature and official documents, spatial data including GIS land use, secondary demographic data from previous studies and contextual insights derived from the author's prior familiarity with this street. This study employs a qualitative case study approach supported by secondary quantitative data and demographic information from the work of Kübra Cihangir Çamur et al. (2017) related to Tarbiat street.

The secondary data used in this study consisted of the following:

- Academic literature and previous studies on urban vitality and pedestrian streets (in both Persian and English).
- GIS land use map related to the city of Tabriz (modified by author).
- Transportations maps obtained from websites
- Secondary demographic and sociability data obtained from previous studies and articles, particularly the research conducted by Kübra Cihangir Çamur et al. (2017).

The author entered this study with an insider's familiarity with this city, its language, urban environment and its culture. This positionality has several advantages, including contextual knowledge that facilitated the interpretation of social behavior and the culture of open public spaces in this city.

3.1.2 Data analysis

This study utilizes pictures, road maps, GIS land use map, transportation map and literature review to understand which elements contribute to urban form, everyday urban activities and social aspect. Spatial maps were examined to identify patterns of roads and accessibility, land use distributions. Contextual insights based on the author's prior familiarity with the site and secondary demographic data were interpreted to analyze the sociability and economic conditions of the area.

First, theoretical discussions and thematic research literature in this field are studied, and during the discussion, the principles related to pedestrians in the city and the impact of factors on the

quality of urban life are presented. In the next stage, available data and information related to understanding the study area from reports and studies of the historical and cultural area of Tarbiat street were used.

Spatial data consisted of GIS land use maps and other maps of transportation of the study area. These maps were used to show the distribution of urban activities, the concentration of commercial activities and the alternative ways to access to this pedestrian street, such as metro and BRT systems.

The author had prior familiarity with Tarbiat street through personal visits conducted. These visits provided contextual knowledge regarding the characteristics of this street, patterns of pedestrian activities. However, these observations were not collected through a systematic research protocol and were not treated as primary empirical data. They were used only to support the interpretation of secondary sources. Additionally, this thesis does not include systematic fieldwork, interviews, questionnaires or original survey data.

In addition, secondary demographic data were obtained from previous study (Çamur et al., 2017). These data were used to better understand age group distribution and pedestrian characteristics in Tarbiat street.

Accessibility was assessed by examining the street's connection to public transportation network, including metro and BRT stations, as well as pedestrian access from nearest station to other parts of the city. Transportation map was analyzed to evaluate connectivity and ease of movement within the study area.

Land use was evaluated using a GIS-based land-use map. Different functional categories such as commercial, service, residentials were identified and showed in different colors along the Tarbiat street. Additionally, focused on examining how different land uses with different functions contribute to attracting pedestrians throughout the day in this street.

In GIS analysis, different categories were selected to represent different land-use functions on the map. For example, commercial, residential, open and green spaces were displayed using different colors to illustrate the spatial distribution of land uses along Tarbiat street. This analysis also helped identify which land-use category occupies the largest proportion of the street.

Sociability was analyzed through secondary demographic data and contextual understanding obtained from the author's prior familiarity with the study area. Particular attention was given to age groups, pattern of social interaction and the presence of people in this public space.

According to the framework, there is a summary of methods and data to reach the answer of the question of this study (table 3).

Analytical Dimension	Method	Data
Activities	Functional analysis	GIS Land use map
Accessibility	Spatial analysis	Transportation map
Sociability	Descriptive analysis	Contextual knowledge of the site/Secondary demographic data

Table 3: Summary of analytical framework. Source: processed by author

3.2 Why study Tabriz?

The city center of Tabriz is located almost in the geometric center of the city. This area, with an area of 213 hectares, accounts for about one percent of the total area of the city. This city has been growing fast over the past few years. More people are moving in, and the number of buildings and industries is increasing. The study area is Tarbiat street, which is located in a neighborhood of the same name in the central and old part of Tabriz city.

This center includes the most important urban elements, including:

the market, political administrative centers, historical monuments and symbols, and cultural elements. The old city fabric is also located in this area. The presence of the Grand Mosque and, most importantly, the old bazaar, which forms the backbone of the city, reflects the role and importance of this area in reflecting the city's identity and history. The existence of some incompatible uses, like construction of modern small malls, and the influence of production uses (such as warehouses) have jeopardized caused double pressure on this street, inconsistency, and even the destruction of many valuable textures and buildings in this street (Naghshe jahan pars 2005). Furthermore, the distinctive character of this street makes it an ideal case for examining the features that contribute to urban vitality in Iranian cities.

Chapter Four : The case study

4.1 A brief exploration of pedestrian street in Tehran

Many cities have tackled the problem of making urban spaces more pedestrian friendly. They want to make the open spaces more functional. Tehran has also implemented and developed urban spaces for pedestrians, to improve the walking space, promote social interactions and increase entertainment opportunities.

Here it provides a brief exploration of one of the pedestrian streets, Sepah Salar Street, and at the end of this chapter it explains Tarbiat street history and its features.

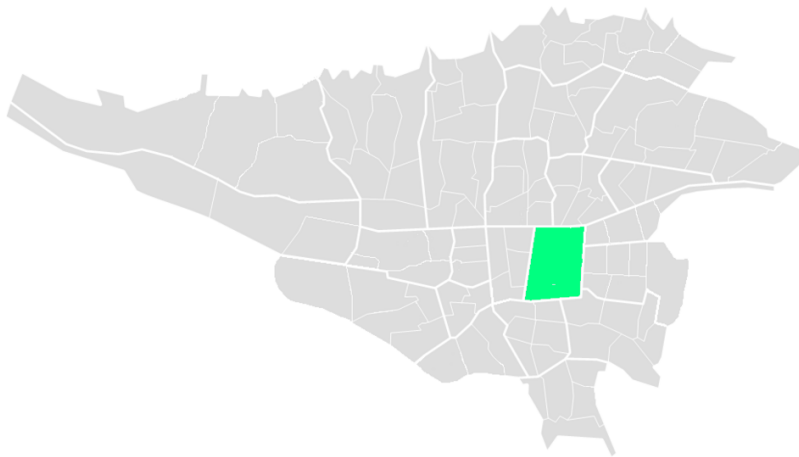


Figure 6: Overview map of the city of Tehran with 22 municipality zones. Source: Wikimedia commons

Sepah Salar Street, is a pedestrian walkway in district 12 of Tehran (figure 6) that extends north to south across central Tehran, connecting the squares of Baharestan and Sa'adi. This street is a major location for the sale of bags and shoes and it is a famous street due to its function (Shobeiri, 2023).

Sepah Salar street served primarily as a recreational and tourist hub for the people of Tehran during the first Pahlavi era (1925-1941) and was considered a promenade. The transformation of the appearance of this street took place during the second Pahlavi era (1941-1979). With the increasing commercial use in the city center, this street became a more important business hub, and more space was allocated to shops and malls (figure 7). Buildings with maximum density and various heights were constructed on the edges of this street, and have narrow width. The saturation of Sepah Salar Street with dense and unattractive buildings, and the congestion caused by the high population and the intersection of pedestrians and vehicles, led to the idea of changing the traffic role of this street from vehicular to pedestrian. In 2006, this street was experimentally closed to cars for a month to be examined in terms of traffic and other considerations (Ranjbar et al., 2010).



Figure 7: Sepah Salar Street. Source: Tehran offers

4.2 Tabriz

Tabriz is one of the big cities in northwest Iran and the capital of East Azerbaijan province (figure 8). This city is located in a valley surrounded by the Sahand Mountains near the borders of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia and with a population of approximately 1.6 million, it is a cultural and tourist hub.



Figure 8: Map of Iran. Source: The other Iran

Tabriz Metropolis has several modern pedestrian pathways, such as Ark Pedestrian Walk, Valiasr Pedestrian Walk and Maqsoodiyeh. Tabriz's urban planning combines historical preservation with modern expansion. The old city core, centered around the Tabriz Grand Bazaar, features traditional narrow streets and historic architecture, while newer districts in the northwest and southwest have seen rapid urbanization with high rise buildings and commercial centers. The city has developed BRT (bus rapid transit) and metro lines to improve public transportation and ease traffic congestion. Green spaces like El-Goli park are being expanded to enhance air quality and

recreational opportunities. Like many cities, Tabriz is struggling with several challenges that affect both its environment and its people.

Tabriz faces several environmental challenges. The high number of cars on the roads, along with industrial activity, contributes to poor air quality. This city has been repeatedly destroyed and reconstructed due to the earthquakes and other historical events.

Another important point of this city is that it is an important economic hub in Iran, especially for industries like manufacturing, textiles, carpet trade and food production. These industries bring in money and create jobs.

At present Tabriz has old, traditional, new foundational, designed, marginal and reportorial contexts. According to the definition that provided for public spaces, Tabriz has many suitable arenas for necessary activities such as work, shopping, and public transportation vehicles, but with regard to the large scale of this city, and also according to its historical tradition which is famous as the city of firsts, lack of recreational and lively public spaces is evident for doing recreational activities in comparison to Tehran and other cities such as Isfahan, Shiraz.

4.3 History of Tarbiat street

The area under study is Tarbiat street, which is located in the area of the same name in the central and ancient part of Tabriz city.

Tarbiat pedestrian walkway, as a historical walkway with a history of more than a century, is considered the most important pedestrian street in Tabriz, and its construction dates back to the end of the Safavi period and the beginning of the Qajar period (figure 9, 10).

Tarbiat was used as a car traffic route, but soon it became ineffective, this route was again considered for pedestrian traffic of citizens (Abbaszadeh et al., 2013). The street for the sake of problems related to the traffic converted into a pedestrian pathway.

It is important to clarify its traditional architecture, historical monuments, citizens' preferences, cultural and identity function of Tarbiat sidewalk and the interest of city officials to maintain this pathway (TotaKhoune et al., 2016).

The street can be entered from the city center at Saat Square and Imam Khomeini street, which is considered the main street of the city and ultimately leads to the old Bazaar of Tabriz. The main entrance to this street was the Nobar Gate, which was the main entrance for caravans and travelers from the eastern regions of Iran, and at the end of the street was the old bazaar of Tabriz. In fact, this street was the bridge connecting the city entrance and the big market, bazaar.

Tarbiat street, located in the central part of the Tabriz. It continues to the northwest of the Tarbiat neighborhood and it is cut off by Ferdowsi street and is limited to two sections: Big and Small Tarbiat (colloquial term) or Western and Eastern Tarbiat.



Figure 9: Tarbiat pedestrian crossing during construction. Source: Kojaro



Figure 10: Tarbiat pedestrian crossing during construction. Source: Kojaro

The Tarbiat neighborhood is important in several ways. This street, which is considered one of the commercial and cultural hubs of Tabriz, is located inside the complex, and on the other hand, it is surrounded by valuable historical buildings. The Arg Alisha complex, one of the ancient and grand buildings of Tabriz, is located in its southeastern corner. The Blue Mosque or Firuzeh Asalem is located 200 meters southeast of Tarbiat and the old Bazaar complex of Tabriz is located in the

north of the area. Tabriz Bazaar was previously connected to Tarbiat street by the Shishegarkhaneh route, but this connection was severed due to the events on Jomhuri Eslami street which is now one of the main streets in the city.



Figure 11: Old style facades and the special architectural pattern. Source: Last second

In figure 11 the traditional architectural facades are shown. The preservation of these historic buildings contributes to cultural continuity and also the identity of that space. Before the construction of the sidewalk on this street, the old facades and specific architecture that make up the bodies of this street were deteriorating, and there was also a heavy traffic load in this crowded area. Thus, in order to solve the traffic problem of this street and restore the traditional architectural

character and its facades, it was felt necessary to remove this street from the traffic congestion of the region. A notable point in choosing this axis is its history. Tarbiat street was part of the Silk Road trade route that passed through Tabriz. The buildings on both sides of this street are old buildings with a special architecture that gives the street a traditional and valuable appearance (Abbaszadeh et al., 2013).

In 1995, part of Tabriz's historical Tarbiat axis, between Imam Khomeini and Ferdowsi streets, was converted into a pedestrian path. Thus, this street acquired two different uses: Big Tarbiat (between Imam Khomeini and Ferdowsi streets) became a pedestrian path, and Little Tarbiat (between Ferdowsi and Namaz Square) retained its vehicular use. A distinct character has been created in Tarbiat crossing with gardens and fountains designed along the route and the provision of facilities such as benches, public amenities, furniture and lighting (Abbaszadeh et al., 2013).

4.3.1 Tarbiat street

This research mainly studies the current situation of vitality and social interactions in urban spaces of Tabriz with a focus on a street called Tarbiat. According to observation and comments, it has been recognized as a recreational destination by many people and also tourists. The street has become a cultural space in which any type of event, exhibition and performance aimed at introducing the diversity of Iranian culture onto our streets is welcome.

Tarbiat street is located at the center of the city and inside the ancient part of Tabriz city. The entering part of the street from Sa'at street and Imam Khomeini street is possible and finally faces the ancient Tabriz Bazar.

This big city has different issues, which depend on culture, economics and the structure of the city. Additionally, the spatial structure in Tabriz has been affected by its historical center and center of the city is the most important part of the urban space where major commercial, administrative and other activities are concentrated. Therefore, the arrangement of the city center influences the development and functional role of activities in Tabriz city.

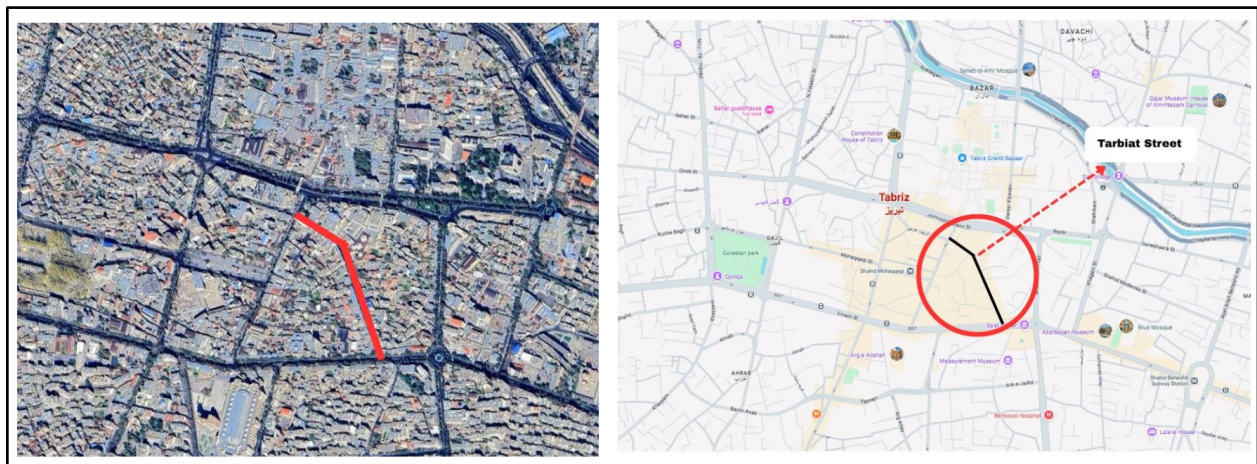


Figure 12: Tarbiat street district. Source: Google Earth, processed by the author, accessed in March 2026

The possibility of reaching main surrounding streets to this street play an important role in decreasing the traffic load of the center of the city and connecting the the Ferdowsi street to the Imam Khomeini street (figure 12). Existence of bus stations and public transportation and facilities like public parking in the two ends of the street causes easy access to these places. The combination of different land uses, including malls, public amenities and green spaces along the street attracts people and increases the street's urban life and vitality (figure 13). Therefore, the existence of such usages provides opportunities for spaces like restaurants and café shops. But beside these usages, lack of matching and incompatibilities with some servicing usages like production workshops in

buildings and existence of old damaged stores causes the decreasing of the quality of spaces of the street. In the recent years there has been changes to improve the quality of Tarbiat street that are replacement of pavement surface, equipping the street with suitable facilities, preserving trees and plant life in the streets with creating covers around them, planting flowers and new trees, distinguishing historical walls from boards and attachments, fixing the ancient monuments, creating historical monuments, creating Pardis mall with modern stores that causes attraction of many people.



Figure 13: Tarbiat street. Source: Wikimedia commons

The 8 zone of Tabriz (historical and cultural zone of Tabriz) is the primitive core of the city where there is the important historical element of the city like old market, Ali Shah Arg, Kabudmosque

and registered historical buildings. The different cultural zones share those activities with each other and in the whole create a cultural set.

By reviving the cultural spaces and also because of available potentials, especially historical buildings and important connections like Tarbiat street (Omrani et al., 2007).



Figure 14: Tarbiat street. Source: Surf Iran



Figure 15: The entrance of Tarbiat pedestrian street. Source: Wikimedia commons

All parts of Tarbiat street, making activity as a commerce and alive. Functionality, transitivity and social interaction. Several open spaces have been incorporated into this pedestrian street to provide spaces for sitting and social interaction (figure 14). The majority of this street building has historical importance and must be paid attention to its protection and conservation. One of the historical identities of this street is the main gate way for the entrance of Tarbiat street, Nobar gate way (figure 15) in Imam Khomeini street. It is the main gate for the entrance of passengers from Iran's west area and at the end of this street is the Tabriz old bazaar. In fact, this street with a length of 750 meters was the connection bridge of the city's entrance and main bazaar of it (Omrani et al., 2007). Nobar gate serves as a symbolic threshold and passing through this gate would make a sense of arrival and is like a visual frame.

Historical buildings and attractive commercial functionalities are the key elements of it. The functionality of Tarbiat is higher than a city limitation. On the other hand, the attendance and very high level of public attraction from this path causes the prosperity of activities and social interactions.

Paying no attention to the conservation of historical buildings and unsuitable combination of city declaration and some inefficiency are one of those inefficient points.

As a result of the studies conducted in this research regarding the Tarbiat pedestrian pathway, which is part of the urban public space, it can be understood that the presence of commercial, recreational, religious, educational, and similar uses on both sides of the street has led to the formation of active and attractive public spaces. As the number of vehicles in modern urban contexts globally accelerates, major cities, particularly metropolises and megalopolises, have confronted severe issues with the presence of pedestrians in urban environments.

The street's strategic location places it in close proximity to several significant administrative and cultural landmarks. Due to its historical age, Tarbiat street hosts many old places and buildings, including the Garkhaneh Glass Bazaar.

Also, the sound museum and the old Shaban Mosque is located at the beginning of Tarbiat street, which is important because of the Tabatabaei House. However, it is located in the heart of Tabriz city and close to the Grand Bazaar, which is considered one of the most important shopping centers.

Based on the material mentioned in the previous chapters, the answers to the questions of this research have been examined with respect to Tarbiat street from 3 dimensions: socio economic, accessibility and land-use diversity.

According to the research Tarbiat street is distinguished by a unique set of characteristics that contribute to its vitality and significance within the city and has an effect on urban life and the quality of social life.

4.3.2 Review of the current situation

In this section, the factors influencing Tarbiat street are analyzed based on the definitions provided. The first one is the functional aspects. This pedestrian street is a mixed functional commercial pedestrian street. The strategic location of the street in the central core of the city, and its spatial and functional connections with the Tabriz Bazaar have helped in making it strong in the commercial network. The land use map of the Tabriz plan shows that commercial activities are concentrated in the street and spread throughout the street. The mixed land uses strengthen the economic role of the pedestrian street.

The second aspect is the physical context. Tarbiat street is a relatively narrow street with old architectural facades and special patterns. The proper proportions and spatial integrity are the identifying characteristics of Tarbiat street. Regeneration of the old entrance on the south part of the street, makes a remarkable local symbol of the place.

The mixed land uses suggest that area provides a wide range of services for residents and visitors.. Being near to the Tabriz Bazaar and the function of this street as an active pedestrian route is likely to attract different groups of users and creates opportunities for social interaction.

The last factor could be the visual beauty. The perception of pedestrians in Tarbiat street depends on their personal characteristics, walking times and needs. The physical settings like monuments and street lighting, small sitting areas are the main contributors to enhancing the perception of users on Tarbiat street. The vitality of the street is formed by various business types, outdoor performers, and other pedestrian activities.

Tabriz city is the fifth largest metropolis in the country with a population of one million and five hundred thousand and has an area of approximately 11,811 square kilometers as capital of East Azerbaijan province. This city has ten municipal regions with region 6 as the largest and region 8 as the smallest. Increasing population growth in Tabriz metropolis especially in marginal regions, which mainly include regions 1 and 10.

In table 4 there is a comparison between regions and population of the ten municipal districts. The figure demonstrates demographic context for understanding the position of zone 8, where Tarbiat street is located.

Region	Area (km)	Population
1	15,41	218647
2	20,80	196,507
3	27,85	299,474
4	25,40	315,183
5	31,53	134,620
6	72,18	108,959
7	28,92	161,873
8	3,88	29,384
9	8,03	2,250
10	10,51	187,958

Table 4: Area and population of ten municipal regions in Tabriz. Source: Wikipedia contributors

This research using quality components of public spaces based on the features of Tarbiat street that consists of environmental and perceptual components and by evaluating criteria for each component deals with analysis and evaluation of these factors in the mentioned area.

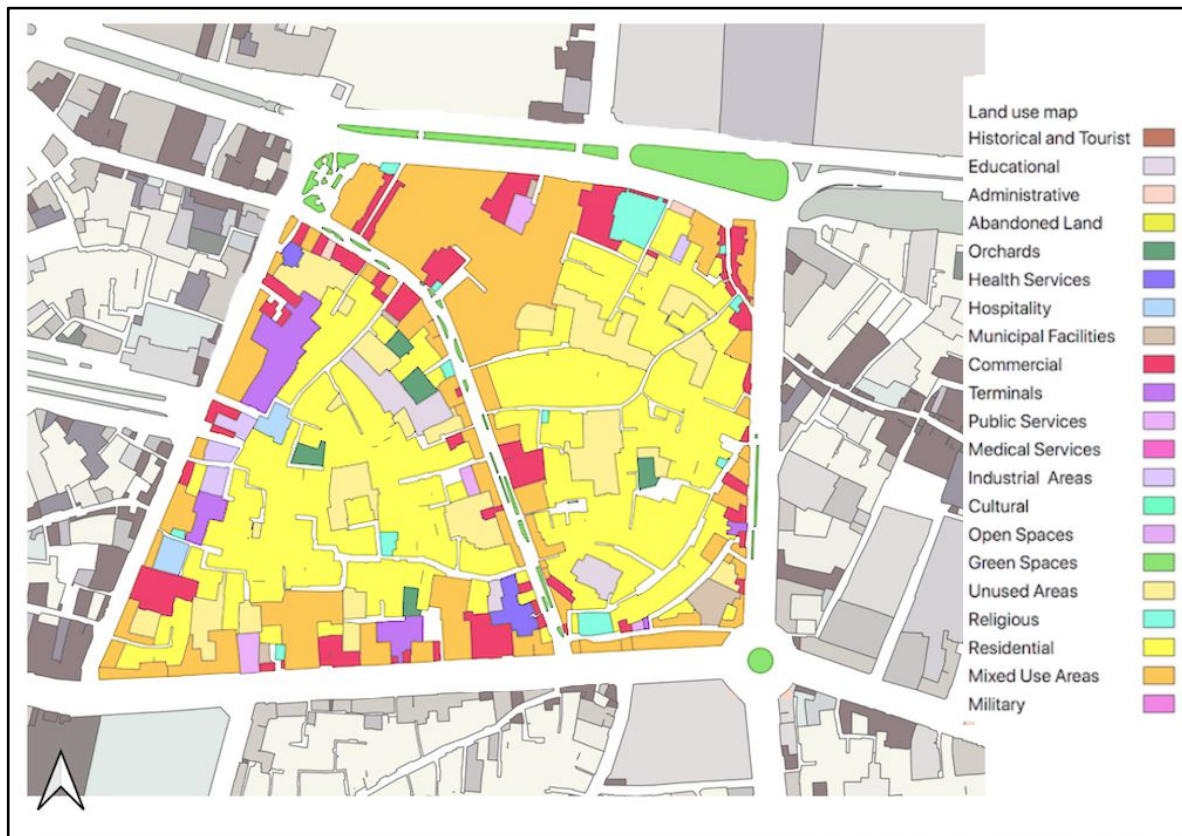


Figure 16: Land use map of Tarbiat street area. Source: prepared by author based on GIS data

The different types of land use along Tarbiat street contributes to urban vitality. The main parts involved in residential, commercial, mixed land use, historical buildings (figure 16).

Commercial land uses are concentrated along this street, generating continued pedestrian flows. The presence of historical and cultural buildings strengthens the identity of this place, while residential uses make a permanent user population that supports activities. In addition, public and open spaces make opportunities for social interactions and gatherings. The combination of these land uses contributes to functional diversity and increases the vitality of Tarbiat street as a dynamic space.

Based on evaluation about the quality of space of Tarbiat street in dimensions of access and communication, usages and activities, sociability, were analyzed and results were obtained. This demographic overview makes a crucial foundation for interpreting response, allowing for a more understanding of how diverse factors, including gender, age, and location, may influence perspectives on and interactions with this street. According to Çamur et al. (2017) a survey involving 170 respondents in Tarbiat street.

Diagram of gender

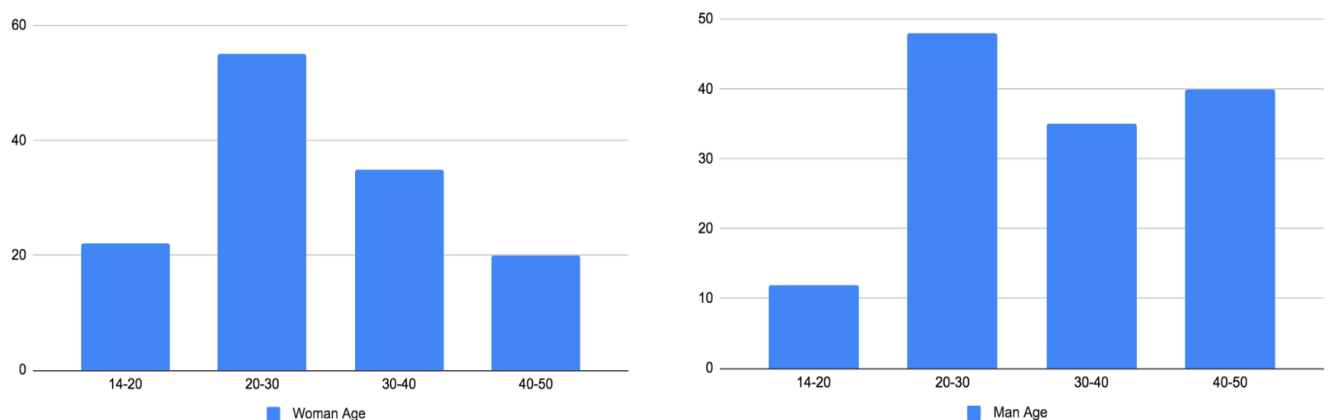


Figure 17: Diagram of gender. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

These two diagrams (figure 17), present the gender distribution. According to Çamur et al. (2017), among the 170 survey respondents, the 20-30 age group constituted the largest proportion of both female and male participants. This demographic profile describes the composition of the original survey sample and provides contextual information for interpreting the findings reported by Çamur et al.

Diagram of level of education

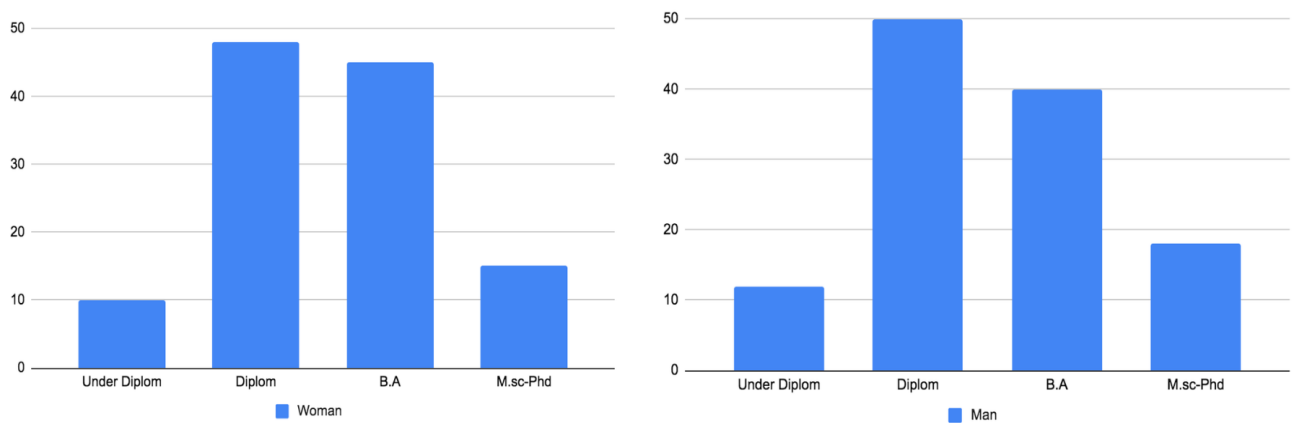


Figure 18: Diagram of level of education. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

Figure 18 illustrates the educational background of respondents in the survey conducted by Çamur et al. (2017). The results indicate that diploma holders constituted the largest educational group among both female and male respondents.

Diagram of occupation

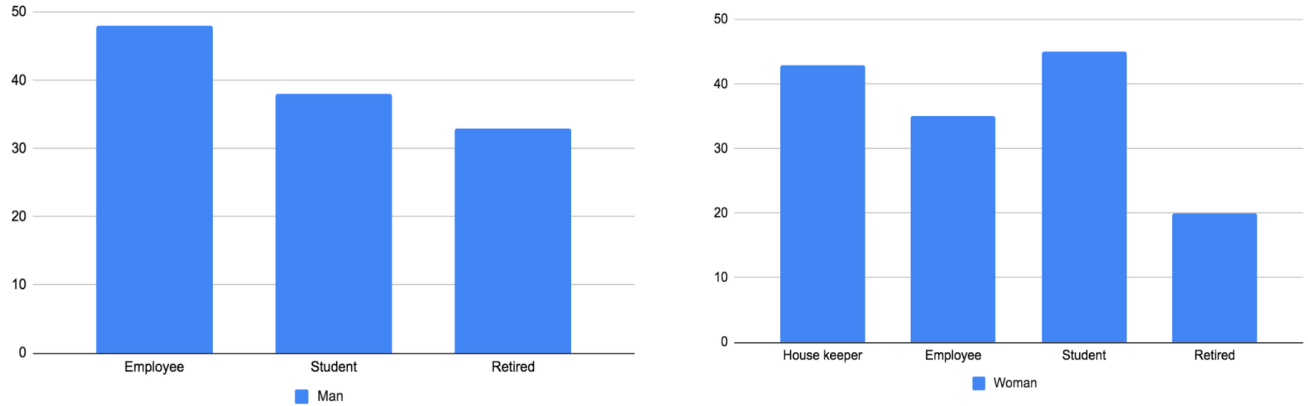


Figure 19: Diagram of occupation. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

Figure 19 illustrates the occupational distribution of the respondents. Students represented the largest group among female respondents, whereas employees formed the largest group among male respondents. Among women groups, the first stage is for students, while housekeepers represent the second largest category. However, in the male group, employees have the highest representation, followed by students and retired people.

The column chart (figure 20) illustrates the proportion of different land uses in this street. The dominance of commercial activities demonstrates the economic significance of Tarbiat street and its contribution to attracting pedestrians. This suggests that commercial land uses are an important contributor such as stores and small malls on this street.

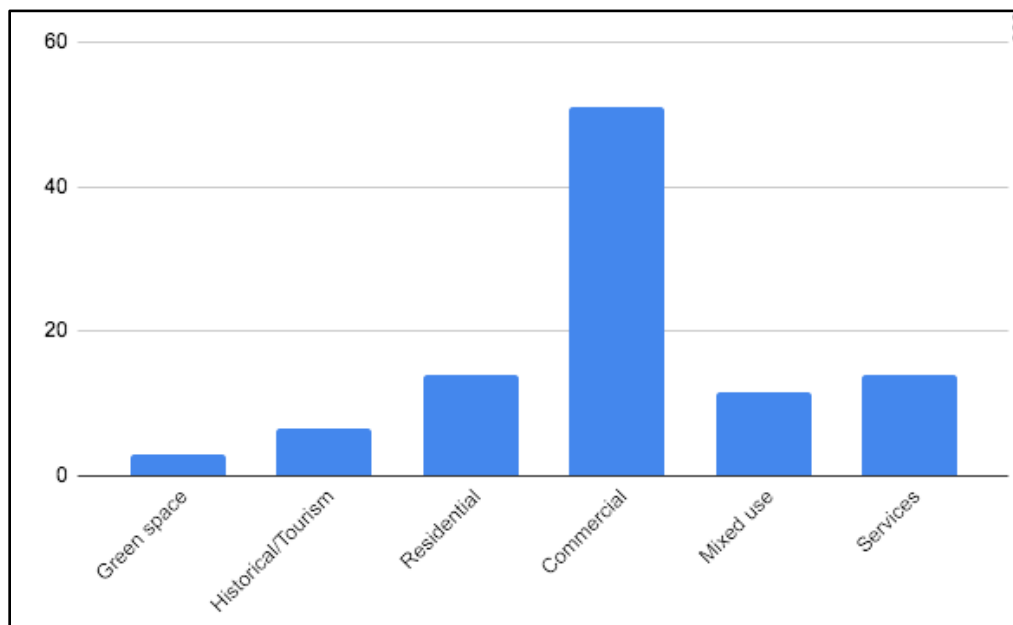


Figure 20: Column chart of land uses in percentage. Source: prepared by the author

Active frontages, shops create visual simulation and encourage pedestrians to walk, stop and have dynamic presence in the public spaces. Tourism and historical landmarks play an important role in strengthening the character and identity of Tarbiat street. Historic buildings, like mosques, museums, the traditional architectural elements and Bazaar contribute to collective memory and

reinforce the cultural character of the area. These elements increase place attachment, sense of belonging and enhance the experiential quality of the pedestrian environment.

The percentages indicate a strong perception of economic vitality, highlighted by the presence of vibrant local businesses, shops and commercial activities.



Figure 21: Bus station in Imam Khomeini street (Nobar gate). Source: Google map, processed by author, accessed in March 2026

According to field observations, easy access to Tarbiat street contributes to reducing traffic congestion in the city center. Its location near major roads enables the surrounding transportation network to manage traffic more efficiently.

The existence of bus station (BRT) and facilities like public parking in the two ends of the Imam khomeini street causes easy access to these places. But in the other streets there is no parking, which makes traffic congestion for people who want to come to Tarbiat street.

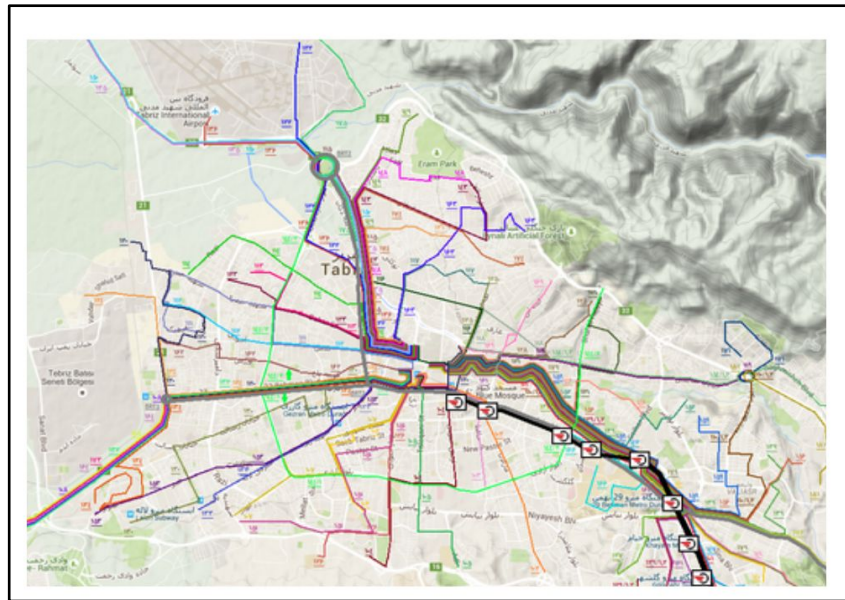


Figure 22: Map of Brt in Tabriz. Source: Wikimedia commons

The nearest stations to the pedestrian street are Shariati station or Ferdowsi station. Tarbiat station is in Iman Khomeini street and is the closest station to reach this street (figure 21). To access this street by BRT buses is possible. As shown in figure 22, BRT routs are cover most of the city.



Figure 23: The map of Tabriz urban railway lines. Source: Tabriz metro

This figure 23 illustrates the railway network of Tabriz and the central areas of this city connected by the metro lines. Tarbiat pedestrian street, located in the historical core of Tabriz (zone 8) near the city center, plays an important role in urban accessibility. Due to its proximity to major public transportation routes and commercial districts, the Tarbiat street plays a significant role that enhances connectivity between the bazaar, surrounding neighborhoods, and the urban transit system. Additionally, access to this street from different parts of the city is convenient, increasing the possibility of its use during most hours of the day.

This street can be accessed through metro line 1 (the green line). The nearest stations to Tarbiat street are Sa`at square station and Mohagheghi station.

4.3.3 Navigating issues in Tarbiat street

One of the critiques and issues to be managed in this pedestrian street to improve urban vitality, relate to safety, and security concerns. Despite the active and dynamic atmosphere during the day, the sense of security decreases during night time especially among women and vulnerable users at night. Also, nightlife activities are vibrant along this pedestrian street (figure 24), therefore, this place should be designed with adequate lighting and appropriate safety measures along this pedestrian way and improving inclusive urban design strategies to ensure a secure and vibrant nighttime environment.



Figure 24: Tarbiat street at night view. Source: Kojaro

Another important issue in this street is about the accessibility for disabled users. Although Tarbiat street is known as a good place for pedestrian movement, accessible to elderly people and with disabilities require improvement particularly proper flooring, ramps or slopes.

Seasonal weather conditions influence pedestrian activity patterns and the intensity of people's life. Tabriz is located in northwestern Iran, where cold winters and frequent snowfall affect urban vitality and pedestrian activity. In conclusion consideration should be given to weather conditions and urban design.

Another critique of this pedestrian street is about commercialization. Currently, this street relies heavily on retail and shopping activities. It is evident that commercial activities contribute to enhancing economic vitality. However, over commercialization can weaken the public presence, reduce the social quality by prioritizing consumption-oriented activities.

The whole analysis illuminates the intertwined relationship between accessibility, activities, and sociability and their effect on the urban vitality of Tarbiat street (table 5). These three principal dimensions influence urban vitality in the street. The interaction of these factors creates an active, attractive and sustainable public space.

Accessibility	Activities and land uses	Sociability
Easy access to public transportation	Diversity of land uses	Presence of different age groups
Close to public parking	Active day and night usages and attendance	Opportunities for social interactions
Connection of Tarbiat street to adjacent streets and urban network	Flexibility of spaces with the purpose of different activities	Community participation
Visual accessibility and permeability	Possibility of gathering and resting spaces	Sense of belonging and place attachment
Efficient access to different points of the city		Vibrant public space
		Social diversity among people

Table 5: Summary of three factors affecting urban vitality in Tarbiat street. Source: processed by author

Therefore, from the analysis presented above, several key conclusions can be drawn about the different aspects in Tarbiat street related to the question of this research:

- Using pedestrian streets for shopping in commercial centers

In this pedestrian street, strengthening commercial activities and retail spaces has been highly important, since the area functioned as a commercial corridor even before the pedestrianization project.

- Presence in pedestrian zones for walking and experiencing an open space

On Tarbiat street, this pedestrian corridor can be used by different group of people for walking and recreational purposes.

- Use of pedestrian spaces for communication and social gatherings

Due to its spatial structure, Tarbiat pedestrian street has been designed to promote social interaction, conversation and supports more frequent social encounters and dialogue, resulting in stronger social relationships.

- Social security and safety

Walking in Tarbiat street, which is a vehicle free environment separated from the noise of traffic, creates a pleasant experience for pedestrians due to the improved safety of the pedestrian-oriented space and the separation between pedestrian and vehicular movement. However, during certain night hours, the sense of safety, particularly for women and children, decreases.

- Enhancing place attachment and the connection to the central pedestrian area.

The presence of green areas and rest spaces has contributed to transforming this pedestrian street into a pleasant and comfortable environment, which in turn fosters a strong sense of place attachment and belonging among users.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Main findings

This study investigated the relationship between pedestrianization and urban life in Tarbiat street. It is important to clarify that previous studies have offered limited evidence regarding the precise mechanisms through which pedestrianization impacts the urban quality of life style in historical cities. The findings provide evidence that urban vitality is shaped by the interaction of multiple urban design factors.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing urban vitality on Tarbiat street, a historic commercial center defined by its immediate proximity to the grand bazaar. Rather than considering pedestrianization as a single solution for improving urban vitality, this study demonstrates that the other factors contribute to the vitality of Tarbiat street.

The findings suggest that the physical configuration of this street increases pedestrian activity by providing dedicated spaces for movement, rest, and gathering. In some spaces designated seating and resting spaces provide opportunities for pedestrians to engage in social interaction and extend their stay.

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that adequate lighting, perceived safety, transportation and parking facilities support the successful functioning as a pedestrian environment. Strategies in urban design and policy influence the street's character, attracts both local residents and tourists. Therefore, the findings show that the success of Tarbiat street cannot be explained only by pedestrianization. Rather, pedestrianization has reinforced the economic and social functions. Additionally, the street played an important role as commercial center, this suggests that the

historical identity and commercial significance of the street provide the foundation upon which pedestrianization further strengthened urban vitality.

The results from this study shows that urban vitality in this street is based on consumption. While commercial functions attract the public, social interactions happen through the street as a byproduct of shopping and leisure activities. The findings suggest that economic activities act as the primary driver of vitality, whereas social activities reinforce the attractiveness and continuity of urban life.

Although Tarbiat street attracts people, accessibility challenges and demographic differences indicate that the benefits of the space are unevenly distributed. Elderly people and individuals with mobility limitations may experience barriers that reduce their participation. Consequently, the spatial configuration of Tarbiat street favors younger demographics. To achieve urban vitality, planners must balance the intensity of use and inclusiveness.

5.2 Research limitations

This study has several limitations. Due to the security and travel restrictions resulting from the armed conflict during the research period, it was not possible to conduct direct fieldwork in Tabriz. Consequently, questionnaires, interviews could not be conducted. Therefore, this study relied partly on secondary demographic data from previous research, and may not capture all seasonal and temporal variations in Tarbiat street.

Since this study emphasized on a single case study, the findings and results are just related to this street not to all pedestrian streets.

5.3 Future research directions

This study paves the way for further studies into social sustainability along pedestrian streets. It is recommended that urban planners prioritize all pedestrians with sufficient accessible facilities for elderly people and disability inclusive infrastructure.

Additionally, future initiatives should enhance urban vitality for residents and tourists through public information systems for social programs in the open spaces, encouraging public participation in social interactions and community gatherings, improve visual access to historical landmarks and green spaces, contributing to a sustainable commercial environment for both businesses and population.

Given the cultural and historical significance of Tarbiat street, urban designers should prioritize social sustainability to ensure social justice for all visitors.

Additionally, while the pedestrianization process has successfully improved the sense of belonging among visitors and pedestrians during daylight hours, the decline in perceived security after dark highlights a key area requiring planning interventions.

This study is primarily based on secondary data, spatial analysis and contextual knowledge. Future research could strengthen and expand these findings through direct fieldwork. In addition, comparative research involving other pedestrian street or open public spaces in Tabriz and other cities could help identify whether the factors in Tarbiat street are specific or could offer broader insights for urban design practices.

Overall, the findings from this study demonstrate that successful pedestrian-oriented public spaces depend on integrating accessibility, social interaction and activities into urban design strategies.

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Figure

Figure 1: Location of Tabriz. Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/21/fighter-jet-crashes-in-irans-tabriz>

Figure 2: Aerial image of Tarbiat street and its divisions. Source: Google Earth, processed by author, accessed in November 2025

Figure 3: Examples of different pedestrian behaviour depending on interaction with other pedestrians during street crossing. Source: Bezbradica et al., 2019

Figure 4: Summary of pedestrian pathways as place identity. Source : Patria et al., 2024

Figure 5: Conceptual framework. Source: processed by author

Figure 6: Overview map of the city of Tehran with 22 municipality zones. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tehran12.PNG>

Figure 7: Sepah Salar Street. Source: <https://tehranoffers.com/walking-routs-inside-tehran/>

Figure 8: Map of Iran. Source: <https://theotheriran.com/2015/02/22/photo-series-winter-in-iran-snowfall-in-tabriz/iran-tabriz-map/>

Figure 9: Tarbiat pedestrian crossing during construction. Source: <https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/>

Figure 10: Tarbiat pedestrian crossing during construction. Source: <https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/>

Figure 11: Old style facades and the special architectural pattern. Source: <https://lastsecond.ir/attractions/7052-tarbiyat-street-tabriz>

Figure 12: Tarbiat street district. Source: Google Earth, processed by author, accessed in March 2026

Figure 13: Tarbiat street. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tarbiat_Street4.jpg

Figure 14: Tarbiat street. Source: <https://surfiran.com/mag/tarbiat-street-in-tabriz-a-historic-street/>

Figure 15: The entrance of Tarbiat pedestrian street. Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarbiat_street#/media/File:Nowbar_Gate.jpg

Figure 16: Land use map of Tarbiat street area. Source: prepared by author based on GIS data

Figure 17: Diagram of gender. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

Figure 18: Diagram of level of education. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

Figure 19: Diagram of occupation. Source: Çamur et al., (2017)

Figure 20: Column chart of land uses in percentage. Source: prepared by author

Figure 21: Bus station in Imam Khomeini street (Nobar gate). Source: Google map, processed by author, accessed in March 2026

Figure 22: Map of Brt in Tabriz. Source : https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tabriz_Bus_Map.png

Figure 23: The map of Tabriz urban railway lines. Source: Tabrizmetro.ir

Figure 24: Tarbiat street at night view. Source: [https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-](https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/)

[%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-](https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/)

[%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/](https://www.kojaro.com/attraction/6093-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2/)

Table

Table 1: Theoretical framework of public space, Source: processed by author

Table 2: Dimensions of vitality. Source: Ahmad Nia (2021), processed by author

Table 3: Summary of analytical framework. Source: processed by author

Table 4: Area and population of ten municipal regions in Tabriz. Source:

https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%82_%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C_%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%B2

Table 5: Summary of three factors affecting urban vitality in Tarbiat street. Source: processed by author