

# Continuity in Urban Heritage Identity: A Tourists' and Residents' Perceptions Perspective (Case Study: Districts 11 and 12 of the City of Tehran)

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**ABSTRACT:** Today, places play a significant role in shaping individuals' identities. However, due to phenomena such as urbanization and urban development, places are often under threat and may lose their true meaning. The role of neighborhoods as elements that strengthen and preserve the sense of place identity among citizens is undeniable. As such, this study aims to explore the perceptions of residents and tourists regarding urban heritage identity and the old neighborhoods of Tehran to determine whether these neighborhoods still successfully create a sense of place identity among their inhabitants. The purpose of this research is to identify the aspects of continuity in urban heritage identity in Tehran's old neighborhoods, with an emphasis on the perceptions of tourists and residents. This research is practical and descriptive-analytical. Data and information were collected using library resources, field studies, and questionnaires. The study population includes tourism and cultural heritage experts, tourism officials, as well as residents and tourists who have visited the old fabric of Tehran. To test the hypotheses, a 21-item questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 188 residents and 245 tourists of the neighborhoods, selected through convenience sampling. The findings revealed six components—familiarity and attachment, nostalgia and memories, architecture, security, values, and vibrancy—that can be considered as the components of continuity in urban heritage identity. Furthermore, the findings indicated that residents and tourists have a relatively favorable perception of the components of continuity in urban heritage identity in the studied areas.

**Keywords:** Place Identity, Identity Continuity, Neighborhoods, Tourists, Residents, Tehran.

## INTRODUCTION

Identity crisis is one of the issues faced by modern societies (Nagizadeh, 2007; quoted from Shamayi et al., 2013). As Simandan (2011) argued, one of the areas where this identity crisis can be defined is the realm of place identity. Individuals often identify a part of their identity with a place and, in turn, use it to introduce themselves to others. In fact, this place also shapes a portion of their personality (Kaviani Rad & Azizi, 2011). The historical core of Tehran, encompassing the city's historical and cultural wealth, can serve as a leading element in guiding the cultural, social, economic, and identity-shaping functions of the metropolis of Tehran. With its public spaces and buildings, this center acts as a shared arena for citizens. It can offer a high-quality environment with distinct identity elements, attracting diverse cultural, civic, and tourism

activities for its residents and both domestic and international tourists. However, the historical center of Tehran can currently be considered a prime example of imbalance, instability, and urban unsustainability, grappling with various urban challenges. This area comprises several complexes and neighborhoods, each of which possesses unique historical, functional, and physical characteristics (Veisi & Zarei, 2011). According to Mousa (2013), in recent decades, cities have undergone significant changes in architecture and urban planning styles due to the phenomenon of globalization. These changes have influenced citizens' perceptions and interpretations of their identity in relation to cities. Consequently, as Radstrom (2011) suggested, the continuity of the sense of place in most urban areas is increasingly under threat. Taban et al. (2012) believe that the loss of place has led contemporary humans to feel a

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sense of alienation. The transformation of places into mere shelters, stripped of their primary and authentic function as havens and sanctuaries, has exacerbated this alienation. This, in turn, has diminished individuals' sense of attachment to places. Tehran includes neighborhoods that are symbols of the city's history and culture. This study seeks to examine the perceptions and interpretations of tourists and residents regarding the identity of Tehran's old neighborhoods. It aims to determine whether these neighborhoods still successfully foster a sense of belonging and identity. As Tehran grows and advances in modern times, it has lost valuable urban heritage opportunities and is gradually forgetting them. One factor that preserves this valuable heritage is the continuity of identity, which must be well-understood by tourists and residents. This identity must be sustained by designing effective and enduring solutions, so this reciprocal equation remains eternal and lasting. Since one critical piece of the puzzle in preserving the urban identity of old neighborhoods lies in understanding the host community and tourists, as well as their perceptions and awareness of urban heritage identity, this plays a significant role in maintaining and continuing this heritage.

Additionally, given that no prior study has specifically addressed this topic, particularly concerning Tehran's old neighborhoods, conducting this research is necessary. Accordingly, the main aim of this study is to identify the components of continuity in urban heritage identity within Tehran's old neighborhoods, with an emphasis on the perceptions of tourists and residents of these neighborhoods. Thus, the research questions are as follows: First, what are the components of continuity in urban heritage identity in Tehran's old neighborhoods? Second, what are the perceptions of tourists and residents regarding these components in Tehran's old neighborhoods?"

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### Urban Identity

As [Skelton and Gough \(2013\)](#) argued, some researchers equate the city with urbanization and consider urban identity to stem from the lifestyle of urban residents. For them, urban identity essentially reflects the identity of urban inhabitants who follow specific beliefs, values, customs, and traditions. At times, this type of urban identity refers to behavioral stability within an urban environment. In fact, urban identity signifies awareness of certain specific behavioral patterns that are characteristic of an urban individual. In this sense, the city imposes a set of behavioral requirements and necessities on the individual, and failing to adhere to them may lead to identity disruption. The underlying assumption of this approach is the membership of residents in a particular geographic and spatial territory known as the city. [Sağlık & Kelkit \(2019\)](#) suggested that the concept of membership within a spatial territory highlights the idea of citizenship. At the same time, some believe that urbanization is not synonymous with citizenship. While citizenship is a legal and political concept, urbanization is a social one. Citizenship

is broader and precedes urbanization. However, while urbanization refers to a specific lifestyle within a particular environment, when this lifestyle is defined within certain legal and formal frameworks, it approaches the conceptual space of citizenship.

Some consider urbanization as a process that leads to changes in the social structure of human settlements, resulting from population growth, concentration, and density. According to [Shokou'i's \(1995\)](#), from a structural perspective, urbanization leads to transformations in the socio-economic structure and population functions. This process brings changes to the internal spatial organization of cities. Generally, urbanization has two main characteristics: first, the migration of people from rural to urban areas, in pursuit of employment in non-agricultural activities and jobs. In other words, urbanization provides people with unique economic functions and creates new densities, ultimately leading to changes in urban land use. Second, changes in people's lifestyle, transitioning from rural to urban ways of living, accompanied by shifts in values and attitudes, resulting in new behaviors.

### Neighborhood Identity

[Skelton \(2013\)](#) argues that in most contemporary urban theories, the unity of citizens with the urban community has led to qualitative differences in the functioning and identity of modern cities ([Shokou'i, 1995, 12](#)). The identity of spaces or urban neighborhoods is revealed through the individuals within them (such as residents and visitors). These identities are shaped not only by landscapes and buildings but also by food, music, customs, language, relationships, and political views, creating unique representations. All of these aspects (both physical and cultural) interact with each other to form distinctive identities. Neighborhood identity is a collective representation formed by the subjective perceptions of each individual or group, rather than the objective reality of the neighborhood ([Yun & Kwon, 2023](#)). [Sadeque et al. \(2020\)](#) believe that neighborhood brand love, residents' relationship with the neighborhood, place attachment, and social bonds positively impact neighborhood identity, which in turn affects residents' satisfaction and their civic behavior. Urban identity is shaped by the identity of neighborhoods and the perceptions of their residents. The identity and social participation of citizens, within the framework of neighborhoods, serve as one of the structural pillars of urban physical form. The continuity of urban life underscores the significance of neighborhoods in the social and psychological development of urban dwellers. For this reason, neighborhoods are, in essence, the embodiment of social physicality, and their boundaries represent domains and territories ([Aptekar, 2017](#)).

### Place Identity

In attempting to establish the theoretical foundation of place research, the notion of place has been discussed in contrast to

space. From Tuan's perspective, space is an abstract physical environment lacking substantial meaning, whereas place is a "center of felt value" (Jang et al., 2024). As Belanche et al. (2017) suggested, "the concept of place identity has been addressed from different perspectives; the individualistic point of view focuses on the impact of place on residents' identity, while the social perspective emphasizes the nature of relationships between individuals, identities and places" (Bernardo et al., 2023, 2). There are places where individuals cannot imagine their lives and daily routines without being present there. For example, these places might include one's home, shopping areas, locations for meeting friends, and so on. These places hold significant importance for individuals who perceive a meaningful connection between themselves and these locations. Shamai (1991) believes that a sense of place is a mixture of conscious and unconscious feelings and perceptions. It is a rich concept that encompasses how individuals perceive, experience, and express themselves, giving meaning to a place. Therefore, an individual's sense of place influences their attitudes and behavior in that place. Lynch (1960) defines place identity as the distinction between places and considers it the basis for identifying a place as a unique entity. This indicates that each place has a single and unique address. In other words, it is identifiable. Therefore, place identity can be properly understood by making a place unique (Kashi & Bonyadi, 2012). From another perspective, Proshansky (1978) argued that people have a relationship with these places based on expectations, desires, memories, and everything that defines or alters this relationship (Golrok, 2015). Proshansky believes that the concept of place identity refers to those dimensions of self that define an individual's personal identity in connection with their physical environment. Azarian (2023) argues that the relationship with place has commonly been considered as a social construct, which results from shared behavior and cultural processes, having roots in the physical characteristics of space. However, Stedman (2002) believes that places are characterized not only by a physical set, but also by a series of social and psychological activities and processes that take place in them.

The term "identity" has two meanings: first, sameness, and second, distinction. Therefore, place identity must combine both aspects. In place identity, a place becomes a medium through which an individual distinguishes themselves from others (those outside the place) while maintaining a sense of sameness with individuals within the place (Lewicka, 2008). Relph (1976) also argues that people need a sense of belonging to a collective entity or a place, and an individual's identity may be shaped by physical differentiation and the feeling of entering a specific area (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). From the context perspective, Norberg-Schulz (1981) considers the study of place to be the study of the events and incidents that occur within a place. He believes that a set of events, shapes, colors, and textures shapes the character of a place or its identity.

He establishes a connection between architecture, place, and cultural identity, and believes that the experience of place is the experience of the meaning of place (Kashi & Bonyadi, 2012). Roszczynska-Kurasinska et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of identifying and understanding contributory factors to the identity of a place as perceived by its residents in facilitating planning and development that is coherent with that identity.

### Aspect of Continuity

Lalli (1992) argued that continuity is one of the aspects that shape identity. Its presence can contribute to the continuation, transformation, and preservation of a place's identity. For instance, the presence of an older building can help us recall a memory or take us back in time. In Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's (1996) opinion, continuity of place implies that a location can create aspects of continuity, such as the physical forms present in a place that might remind visitors of stories from the past. The definition of place-continuity aligns with the idea of an individual seeing their identity in a location that reflects their values in life, rather than merely due to its physical presence. Another theory, called "selective belonging," suggests that people firmly consider themselves part of a place. They choose a place not because of its physical form but because it represents values, ideas, and lifestyles. These values encompass traditions, religion, life principles, habits, and other aspects.

Numerous studies have been conducted on identity thus far. However, this section specifically focuses on research related to the cultural heritage identity and its impact on attitudes, travel intentions, tourism experiences, and destination marketing. For instance, Ramesht et al. (2015), in their study, consider place identity as a characteristic linked to the historical and natural memory of places, shaping the geographical context of a space. They believe that territorial landscapes are, in fact, unwritten geographical texts that can be considered spatial texts. From this perspective, given the presence of natural diversity, diverse geographical texts will also exist, each reflecting the historical characteristics and ongoing processes of that geographical territory.

On the other hand, Negarestan et al. (2010), in their research titled "The Theory of Landscape: An Approach to Continuity of Identity in Urban Renewal Processes," stated: The concentration of physical degradation conditions and weak socio-economic vitality in deteriorated neighborhoods outside of historical areas is such that apparent comprehensive intervention often justifies disregarding the preservation of existing neighborhood identity and values. However, the urban renewal experiences of recent years show that ignoring the existing qualities in cities can lead to the failure of the main objectives. Preserving urban identity is one of the goals of urban renewal in Iran and part of the government's urban development programs. They argue that since the theory of landscape considers various dimensions of the city's meaning, it can provide an appropriate solution to

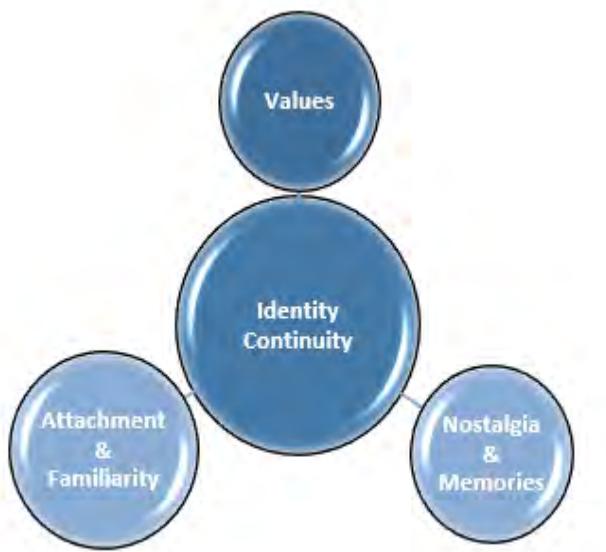


Fig. 1: Research theoretical framework (Source: [Ginting & Wahid, 2015](#))

this challenge in urban renewal processes.

One of the most important studies on identity continuity is by [Ginting & Wahid \(2015\)](#). According to them, continuity is one of the key aspects that shape the identity of a place. This study identifies three components—values, nostalgia and memories, and familiarity and attachment—as the pillars of place identity continuity. It demonstrates that the physical aspect, such as the presence of heritage buildings and past stories, plays the most significant role in shaping identity. This framework has served as the basis for the present study. [Figure 1](#) indicates the research theoretical framework adopted from [Ginting & Wahid \(2015\)](#).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach and is practical in terms of its objective. For the theoretical framework and literature review, the document analysis method was used, and surveys were employed in the field studies section. The statistical population of this research includes tourism and cultural heritage experts, tourism officials, as well as residents of the targeted areas and tourists who have visited these areas. To identify components, localize indicators, and evaluate the validity of the questionnaire, six experts were selected through purposive sampling. Additionally, for sampling among tourists and residents, convenience sampling was utilized. Since the number of residents in the targeted neighborhoods exceeded 30,000 people, the Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size, resulting in a sample of 381 individuals, of which 188 questionnaires were completed. For tourists, the Cochran formula for indefinite populations was used, estimating a sample size of 383 individuals, out

of which 245 questionnaires were completed. The inability to complete all questionnaires during the research timeframe was due to accessibility issues and the unwillingness of some residents and tourists to participate, which will be mentioned as part of the study's limitations. Nevertheless, the reliability of the research showed acceptable results.

Using Smart PLS software, the Cronbach's alpha for the variables was calculated. SmartPLS software can be used to calculate Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of an instrument. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability, specifically how well the items in a scale measure the same underlying construct. The results are as follows: values (0.823), familiarity and attachment (0.762), nostalgia (0.752), security and tranquility (0.838), architecture (0.852), liveliness (0.728), and identity continuity (0.861). The composite reliability of each variable was also above 0.7. The validity of the research was assessed based on content validity, where the questionnaire, after being prepared, was reviewed by several experts and then distributed among the research sample. For reliability evaluation, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated.

To quantitatively examine content validity, the content validity coefficient (CVR) was used. In the present study, a questionnaire was administered to 10 experts in the field, asking them to provide their opinions in the form of three answers: "necessary", "useful but not necessary", and "not necessary" to each question. The CVR value was then calculated. [Hyrkas et al. \(1998\)](#) have recommended a score of 0.79 and above for acceptance of items based on the CVI score. If the CVI score is between 0.70 and 0.79, the item needs to be revised. If the CVI score is less than 0.70, the item is deleted. Considering

that the minimum CVR value for a community of 10 experts is 0.62 and the values obtained for each questionnaire question are higher than the standard value, it can be stated that the questionnaire prepared in this study is acceptable in terms of content validity. **Table 1** indicates CVR and CVI values for questionnaire questions.

In this study, a researcher-designed questionnaire was used, which is based on the components of the conceptual model of the research. Drawing inspiration from the study by [Genting and Wahid \(2015\)](#), three components—values, familiarity, attachment, and nostalgia—were identified to examine the perceptions of tourists and residents regarding the heritage identity of the studied areas. Accordingly, a questionnaire was prepared and presented to six experts, whose demographic information is provided in **Table 2**. The experts were asked to determine the importance of each indicator, suggest necessary revisions, and add any elements they deemed essential. As a result of this process, three additional components, titled security and tranquility, architecture, and liveliness, were added. **Table 3** provides details on the scoring of the identified indicators by the experts.

In this study, SPSS software was used for data analysis. Additionally, the one-sample T-test and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were employed to examine the distribution fit of the desired data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Statistics Related to Residents

According to the results, 62.8% of respondents were female, and 37.2% were male. Regarding the duration of residence in the area, 25% of respondents had lived there for less than 10 years, 16.5% for over 10 years, 23.9% for over 20 years, and 34.6% for over 30 years. This indicates that the majority of respondents had resided in the area for more than 30 years. In terms of age, 1.6% of respondents were between 18 and 20 years old, 8.5% were between 21 and 30 years old, 28.2% were between 31 and 40 years old, 36.2% were between 41 and 50 years old, 14.4% were between 51 and 60 years old, and 11.2% were over 60 years old. Finally, in terms of occupation, 9.6% of respondents were students, 38.3% were self-employed, 17.6% worked in the public sector, 19.1% in the private sector, and 15.4% were unemployed.

Table 1: CVR and CVI values for questionnaire questions

Questions	CVR	CVI
Q1	0.664	0.859
Q2	0.697	0.845
Q3	0.689	0.871
Q4	0.690	0.846
Q5	0.687	0.868
Q6	0.668	0.894
Q7	0.666	0.839
Q8	0.670	0.839
Q9	0.668	0.831
Q10	0.687	0.845
Q11	0.713	0.847
Q12	0.670	0.892
Q13	0.696	0.902
Q14	0.674	0.887
Q15	0.672	0.910
Q16	0.681	0.859
Q17	0.696	0.870
Q18	0.670	0.909
Q19	0.683	0.837
Q20	0.663	0.898
Q21	0.714	0.884

Table 2: Demographic profiles of experts

	Gender	profession	Education	Experience (Year)
1	M	Cultural tour guide	Master	11
2	F	architect	Ph.D.	5
3	F	architect	Ph.D.	20
4	M	archaeologist	Ph.D.	25
5	F	tourism	Ph.D.	12
6	F	Cultural tour guide	Master	10

Table 3: The Results of the Questionnaire Validity Assessment by Experts

Element	Indicator/ item	Importance score (1 to 5)
Value	The cultural heritage of this area is unique.	4.3
	The social beliefs and traditional tales of the people in this region are fascinating to me.	4.6
	The cultural ceremonies, whether joyful celebrations or mourning rituals, are very captivating and interesting.	4.3
	The historical buildings in this area are incredibly intriguing and appealing.	4.6
Attachment & Familiarity	The historical background and the origins of the names of old neighborhoods are also fascinating to me.	4.8
	I enjoy walking through the streets and pathways here, taking in the buildings along the way.	4.8
	The streets and pathways of these areas are reminiscent of Iranian culture and traditions.	5
	I don't feel like a stranger in this neighborhood.	5
Nostalgia	I have memories and nostalgia tied to these areas.	4.3
	I wish to encourage the younger generations to visit these places so that they can create memories of their own.	5
	When I walk through this neighbourhood, I feel as though I have travelled back in time.	5
	I feel safe while exploring these areas.	4.1
Security & Tranquility	I also feel secure in these areas at night.	3.5
	When entering old buildings, I am not worried about collapse or structural damage.	5
	I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas.	5
	Walking through this neighborhood gives me a sense of peace.	5
Architecture	The inscriptions and doorways of houses are fascinating to me.	4.6
	The authentic Iranian architecture is evident in the buildings of these areas.	5
	The materials used in the construction of these buildings are old and traditional.	5
Vitality	Life flows actively in these neighborhoods.	5
	The hustle and vibrancy of these areas give me a sense of joy and energy.	5

### The Results of the Questionnaire Analysis

The descriptive statistics related to the questionnaire items are presented in [Table 4](#).

The results indicate that Item 15, with the statement "I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas," has the lowest mean at 2.590. Meanwhile, Item 5, with the statement "The historical background and the origins of the neighborhood

I live in are interesting to me," has the highest mean at 4.202. After conducting a descriptive analysis of each questionnaire item, the study proceeds to analyze the status of the research variables. The objective of this step is to determine the community's perceptual status regarding the variables. The descriptive analysis results and the one-sample T-test of the research variables are presented in [Table 5](#).

Due to the use of a 5-level Likert scale in answering the

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

	Indicator/ item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	The cultural heritage of this area is unique.	3.968	0.840
2	The social beliefs and traditional tales of the people in this region are fascinating to me.	3.979	0.794
3	The cultural ceremonies, whether joyful celebrations or mourning rituals, are very captivating and interesting.	3.803	0.852
4	The historical buildings in this area are incredibly intriguing and appealing.	4.016	0.777
5	The historical background and the origins of the names of old neighborhoods are also fascinating to me.	4.202	0.835
6	I enjoy walking through the streets and pathways here, taking in the buildings along the way.	3.872	0.824
7	The streets and pathways of these areas are reminiscent of Iranian culture and traditions.	3.580	0.964
8	I don't feel like a stranger in this neighborhood.	3.729	0.805
9	I have memories and nostalgia tied to these areas.	3.638	0.857
10	I wish to encourage the younger generations to visit these places so that they can create memories of their own.	3.989	0.853
11	When I walk through this neighbourhood, I feel as though I have travelled back in time.	3.484	1.072
12	I feel safe while exploring these areas.	3.138	0.938
13	I also feel secure in these areas at night.	2.612	0.898
14	When entering old buildings, I am not worried about collapse or structural damage.	2.899	0.837
15	I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas.	2.590	0.946
16	Walking through this neighborhood gives me a sense of peace.	3.223	0.927
17	The inscriptions and doorways of houses are fascinating to me.	3.809	0.811
18	The authentic Iranian architecture is evident in the buildings of these areas.	3.686	0.848
19	The materials used in the construction of these buildings are old and traditional.	3.596	0.831
20	Life flows actively in these neighborhoods.	3.920	0.677
21	The hustle and vibrancy of these areas give me a sense of joy and energy.	3.713	0.782

questionnaire questions, the number 3 is considered the middle or neutral number (Khaki, 2007), and the null hypothesis in the one-sample T-test will be that the average of the values obtained as a result of the responses is less than the hypothetical average of the test (number 3) and the society's perception of those variables is unfavorable. The overall result can be explained as follows: the society's perception of the research variables, including values, familiarity, nostalgia, security and peace, architecture, vitality, and continuity of urban heritage identity, is at a desirable level.

Since a 5-point Likert scale was used to answer the research questions, the results indicate that the mean values of the research variables fall within the range of 1 to 5, and the standard deviation demonstrates the dispersion of variable values around their means. Due to the use of the 5-point Likert scale, the number 3 is considered the midpoint or neutral value (Khaki, 2007). In the one-sample T-test, the null hypothesis assumes that the mean values derived from the responses are

less than the test's hypothetical mean (value 3), indicating that the community's perceptual status of those variables is unfavorable. The results of the one-sample T-test show that the significance level for the research variables is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, stating that the dimensions' mean is less than 3, is not confirmed. The T-statistic does not lie within the range of -1.96 to +1.96 and falls in the critical region of the test; in other words, the difference between the mean and the value of 3 is significant. Moreover, the two numbers shown in the columns related to the 95% confidence interval for the difference from the mean do not include the number zero. This also supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. Additionally, the positivity of the upper and lower bounds of this interval indicates that the mean values of the research variables are greater than 3.

The overall conclusion can be explained as follows: the residents' perceptual status regarding the research variables, including values, attachment and familiarity, nostalgia, security

Table 5: The descriptive analysis results and the one-sample T-test of the research variables-residents

T-value=3								variable
Confidence 95%		Mean Difference	Sig.	df	T-Value	Standard Deviation	Mean	
Upper	Lower							
1.084	0.904	0.994	0.000	187	21.753	0.626	3.994	Value
0.830	0.625	0.727	0.000	187	13.994	0.712	3.727	Attachment & Familiarity
0.814	0.595	0.704	0.000	187	12.692	0.761	3.704	Nostalgia
-0.005	-0.210	-0.107	0.039	187	-2.078	0.709	2.893	Security and Tranquility
0.802	0.592	0.697	0.000	187	13.101	0.729	3.697	Architecture
0.910	0.723	0.816	0.000	187	17.288	0.648	3.817	Vitality

and tranquility, architecture, vitality, and the continuity of urban heritage identity, is at a relatively favorable level. Among these, the residents' perception of "values" holds the highest level, while their perception of "security and tranquility" has the lowest level.

### Data Normality

Table 6 presents the results of the normality test using skewness and kurtosis. As can be observed, all the values in both columns fall within the acceptable range, thus confirming the precondition of data distribution normality. To check the normality of the data, the information in the two skewness and kurtosis columns should be examined. The skewness column may be between two numbers and +3, the receiver may be -3, and the receiver may be between -10 and +10; the assumption is normality (Habibi & Adanvar, 2017).

### Descriptive Statistics of Tourists

According to the findings, 71% of respondents were female, and 29% were male. Regarding the place of residence, 65.3% of respondents lived in Tehran, 12.7% in other cities within Tehran Province, and 22% in other provinces. These results indicate that the majority of respondents were residents of Tehran. 0.8% of respondents were between 18 and 20 years old, 13.9% were between 21 and 30, 35.5% were between 31 and 40, 31.8% were between 41 and 50, 11.4% were between 51 and 60, and 6.5% were over 60 years old. From an education perspective, 1.2% of respondents had less than a high school diploma, 14.3% held a high school diploma, 42.4% had a bachelor's degree, 32.7% had a master's degree, and 9.4% held a doctorate.

### Analysis of Responses

The descriptive statistics analysis for the questionnaire items is presented in Table 7. The results reveal that Item 13, with the statement "I feel secure in these areas at night," has the lowest mean at 2.796. On the other hand, Item 5, with the statement

"The historical background and the origins of the neighborhood I live in are interesting to me," holds the highest mean at 4.302. After conducting a descriptive analysis of each questionnaire item, the researcher proceeds to examine and analyze the status of the research variables. The main objective is to determine the community's perceptual state regarding these variables. The results of the descriptive analysis and the one-sample T-test for the research variables are presented in Table 8.

The overall conclusion can be explained as follows: tourists' perceptual status regarding the research variables, including values, attachment and familiarity, nostalgia, security and tranquility, architecture, vitality, and the continuity of urban heritage identity, is at a relatively favorable level. Among these variables, tourists' perception of "values" holds the highest level, while their perception of "security and tranquility" has the lowest level. Interestingly, this result mirrors the perceptions of the residents, highlighting a similarity in their views on these aspects.

Based on the use of the 5-point Likert scale for answering research questions, the results indicate that the mean values of the research variables fall within the range of 1 to 5. The standard deviation demonstrates the distribution of variable values around their mean. The results of the one-sample T-test show that the significance level for the research variables is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which assumes the mean dimensions are less than 3, is not confirmed. The T-statistic does not fall within the range of -1.96 to +1.96 but lies in the critical region of the test, indicating that the difference between the mean and the value of 3 is significant. Additionally, the two values presented in the columns related to the 95% confidence interval for the difference from the mean do not include the value zero, which further supports rejecting the null hypothesis. Furthermore, the positivity of the upper and lower bounds of this interval confirms that the mean values of the research variables are greater than the value of 3.

The overall conclusion can be summarized as follows: the community's perceptual status regarding the research

Table 6: Date Skewness and Kurtosis, residents

	Indicator/ item	skewness	kurtosi
1	The cultural heritage of this area is unique.	-0.816	0.950
2	.The social beliefs and traditional tales of the people in this region are fascinating to me	-0.869	1.490
3	The cultural ceremonies, whether joyful celebrations or mourning rituals, are very captivating and interesting.	-0.397	-0.120
4	The historical buildings in this area are incredibly intriguing and appealing.	-0.235	-0.776
5	The historical background and the origins of the names of old neighborhoods are also fascinating to me.	-0.953	0.734
6	I enjoy walking through the streets and pathways here, taking in the buildings along the way.	-0.222	-0.630
7	The streets and pathways of these areas are reminiscent of Iranian culture and traditions.	-0.120	-0.776
8	I don't feel like a stranger in this neighborhood.	-0.338	0.385
9	I have memories and nostalgia tied to these areas.	-0.257	-0.026
10	I wish to encourage the younger generations to visit these places so that they can create memories of their own.	-0.450	-0.023
11	When I walk through this neighbourhood, I feel as though I have travelled back in time.	-0.011	-1.046
12	I feel safe while exploring these areas.	0.310	-0.542
13	I also feel secure in these areas at night.	1.028	0.729
14	When entering old buildings, I am not worried about collapse or structural damage.	0.359	0.286
15	I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas.	0.751	0.105
16	Walking through this neighborhood gives me a sense of peace.	0.151	-0.223
17	The inscriptions and doorways of houses are fascinating to me.	0.000	-0.823
18	The authentic Iranian architecture is evident in the buildings of these areas.	-0.200	-0.536
19	The materials used in the construction of these buildings are old and traditional.	0.087	-0.610
20	Life flows actively in these neighborhoods.	-0.319	0.252
21	The hustle and vibrancy of these areas give me a sense of joy and energy.	-0.055	-0.479

Table 7: The descriptive statistics analysis of the questionnaire items

	Indicator/ item	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	The cultural heritage of this area is unique.	4.078	0.809
2	The social beliefs and traditional tales of the people in this region are fascinating to me.	4.122	0.821
3	The cultural ceremonies, whether joyful celebrations or mourning rituals, are very captivating and interesting.	3.861	0.922
4	The historical buildings in this area are incredibly intriguing and appealing.	4.106	0.761
5	The historical background and the origins of the names of old neighborhoods are also fascinating to me.	4.302	0.762
6	I enjoy walking through the streets and pathways here, taking in the buildings along the way.	4.135	0.831
7	The streets and pathways of these areas are reminiscent of Iranian culture and traditions.	3.959	0.922
8	I don't feel like a stranger in this neighborhood.	3.788	0.925

Continuie of Table 7: The descriptive statistics analysis of the questionnaire items

	Indicator/ item	Mean	Standard Deviation
9	I have memories and nostalgia tied to these areas.	3.580	0.957
10	I wish to encourage the younger generations to visit these places so that they can create memories of their own.	4.171	0.842
11	When I walk through this neighbourhood, I feel as though I have travelled back in time.	3.898	0.893
12	I feel safe while exploring these areas.	3.453	1.121
13	I also feel secure in these areas at night.	2.796	1.138
14	When entering old buildings, I am not worried about collapse or structural damage.	3.220	1.040
15	I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas.	2.976	1.163
16	Walking through this neighborhood gives me a sense of peace.	3.653	0.974
17	The inscriptions and doorways of houses are fascinating to me.	4.135	0.780
18	The authentic Iranian architecture is evident in the buildings of these areas.	3.984	0.892
19	The materials used in the construction of these buildings are old and traditional.	3.886	0.846
20	Life flows actively in these neighborhoods.	3.947	0.800
21	The hustle and vibrancy of these areas give me a sense of joy and energy.	3.837	0.909

Table 8: The descriptive analysis results and the one-sample T-test of the research Variables-Tourists

T-value=3							Mean	variable		
Confidence 95%		Mean Difference	Sig.	df	T-Value	Standard Deviation				
Upper	Lower									
1.166	1.021	1.094	0.000	244	29.702	0.576	4.094	Value		
1.051	0.870	0.961	0.000	244	20.860	0.721	3.961	Attachment & Familiarity		
0.973	0.793	0.883	0.000	244	19.287	0.717	3.883	Nostalgia		
0.328	0.112	0.220	0.000	244	4.005	0.858	3.220	Security and Tranquility		
1.089	0.914	1.002	0.000	244	22.528	0.696	4.002	Architecture		
0.989	0.795	0.892	0.000	244	18.178	0.768	3.892	Vitality		

variables—values, attachment and familiarity, nostalgia, security and tranquility, architecture, vitality, and the continuity of urban heritage identity—is at a desirable level. This indicates that the community holds positive perceptions of these variables, reflecting a generally favorable outlook.

#### Normality Test of Data

First, the skewness and kurtosis of the data are tested. Skewness and kurtosis are statistical measures describing the shape of a data distribution. Skewness indicates the asymmetry of the distribution. Kurtosis measures the tailedness or peakedness of the distribution. **Table 9** presents the results of the normality test. According to this table, all values in both columns fall within the acceptable range, thereby confirming the precondition of normality in the data distribution.

In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data. **Table 10** indicates the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The hypotheses are presented as follows:

Null Hypothesis: If the error in the significance parameter or

decision criterion is greater than 0.05, this indicates acceptance of the null hypothesis (data follows a normal distribution). Alternative Hypothesis: If the error in the significance parameter or decision criterion is less than 0.05, this indicates acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (data does not follow a normal distribution).

The output from the statistical software indicates that the distribution of variables, including values, attachment and familiarity, nostalgia, security and tranquility, architecture, vitality, and continuity of urban heritage identity, satisfies the normality condition at a 5% significance level. The acceptance of the null hypothesis confirms that the data are normally distributed. Additionally, the questionnaire for tourists was reviewed by 10 experts, who evaluated each question using three response options: "Essential," "Useful but not essential," and "Not essential." The Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was calculated for each question, and the results for all questions exceeded the standard threshold. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questionnaire designed for this study is valid in terms of content validity ratio.

Table 9: Data Skewness and Kurtosis, tourists

	Indicator/ item	skewness	kurtosis
1	The cultural heritage of this area is unique.	-0.518	-0.367
2	The social beliefs and traditional tales of the people in this region are fascinating to me.	-0.679	0.127
3	The cultural ceremonies, whether joyful celebrations or mourning rituals, are very captivating and interesting.	-0.544	-0.041
4	The historical buildings in this area are incredibly intriguing and appealing.	-0.518	-0.156
5	The historical background and the origins of the names of old neighborhoods are also fascinating to me.	-1.075	1.393
6	I enjoy walking through the streets and pathways here, taking in the buildings along the way.	-0.646	-0.301
7	The streets and pathways of these areas are reminiscent of Iranian culture and traditions.	-0.709	0.189
8	I don't feel like a stranger in this neighborhood.	-0.191	-0.770
9	I have memories and nostalgia tied to these areas.	-0.229	-0.397
10	I wish to encourage the younger generations to visit these places so that they can create memories of their own.	-0.791	0.175
11	When I walk through this neighbourhood, I feel as though I have travelled back in time.	-0.460	-0.362
12	I feel safe while exploring these areas.	-0.278	-0.718
13	I also feel secure in these areas at night.	0.273	-0.715
14	When entering old buildings, I am not worried about collapse or structural damage.	-0.100	-0.605
15	I am satisfied with the nighttime lighting in these areas.	0.206	-0.830
16	Walking through this neighborhood gives me a sense of peace.	-0.464	-0.097
17	The inscriptions and doorways of houses are fascinating to me.	-0.710	0.506
18	The authentic Iranian architecture is evident in the buildings of these areas.	-0.528	-0.352
19	The materials used in the construction of these buildings are old and traditional.	-0.271	-0.466
20	Life flows actively in these neighborhoods.	-0.581	0.351
21	The hustle and vibrancy of these areas give me a sense of joy and energy.	-0.629	0.173

Table 10: The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Variable	Statistic	.Sig
Value	0.092	0.435
Attachment & Familiarity	0.101	0.342
Nostalgia	0.109	0.841
Security and Tranquility	0.089	0.465
Architecture	0.121	0.465
Vitality	0.197	0.958
Value	0.047	0.201

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the components of urban heritage identity continuity and examine the perceptions of residents in specific neighborhoods in Tehran, as well as tourists and visitors to these areas. To answer the question of which components contribute to the continuity of urban heritage identity in old neighborhoods of Tehran, the research literature was first studied and analyzed. Based on the findings of

Jienting and Vahid (2015), three components—attachment and familiarity, nostalgia, and values—were identified. These components have also been emphasized in various ways in other studies. Subsequently, with these components in mind, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed. Experts were invited to provide their opinions on the identified components and their respective indicators, as well as to add any additional components and indicators they deemed relevant. This phase resulted in three additional components: vitality, architecture,

and security.

For the component of "Perceived Values," indicators such as the uniqueness of cultural heritage, social beliefs, cultural ceremonies, historical buildings, and neighborhood origins were considered. For the component of "Attachment and Familiarity," indicators included walking through streets, recalling past culture, and a sense of belonging. The component of "Nostalgia" encompasses indicators such as memories, the encouragement of younger generations, and exploring the past. Regarding "Security and Tranquility," indicators included feeling safe while walking, nighttime mobility, lack of fear of building destruction, satisfaction with nighttime lighting, and overall tranquility while strolling through neighborhoods. For the "Architecture" component, indicators such as inscriptions, traditional facades, architectural authenticity, and materials used were considered. Lastly, the "Vitality" component was examined through indicators like the flow of life and neighborhood dynamism.

**Figure 2** represents the proposed theoretical framework of the study, incorporating the three newly identified components from this research.

The findings of the study reveal that residents generally have a relatively favorable perception of the components of urban heritage identity continuity in the studied neighborhoods, although the levels of favorability vary among the different components. Similarly, the findings for tourists suggest that they also have a relatively favorable perception of the components of urban heritage identity continuity in the studied neighborhoods.

The component "Perceived Values" holds the highest level of favorability, while the component "Security and Tranquility" has the lowest level of favorability from the residents' perspective. It is important to note that the value for "Security and Tranquility" falls below the average, indicating a lower level of favorability.

A notable difference emerges regarding their perception of security and tranquility in these neighborhoods: residents exhibit lower favorability compared to tourists. The demographic data of the participants indicate that many residents have lived in these neighborhoods for an extended period, leading them to expect a higher sense of peace and security. While the perception of security among tourists is also not fully favorable, it is relatively better than that of the residents. Understanding the reasons behind this difference warrants further investigation, however, regarding Security and Tranquility, since this area has a relatively high population density and also the existence of some social problems and challenges such as theft, disorderly behavior, etc., some residents do not have the sense of security and tranquility that they should have in the past, especially at night when the likelihood of criminal behavior is higher. Although this issue can be felt in any other part of the city, the specific texture of this place and the economic conditions make it more noticeable

in this neighborhood. From a tourist perspective, as observed in the residents' perceptions, "Perceived Values" holds the highest level of favorability, and "Security and Tranquility" has the lowest level of favorability from the tourists' perspective. It is obvious that due to the aforementioned problems, tourists also do not feel very safe in the neighborhood. Like the locals, they lack familiarity and knowledge of the neighborhood. Although they understand its historical and heritage values and communicate with it, they still do not feel completely safe.

These parallel results highlight the shared perceptions of both residents and tourists, emphasizing the importance of addressing areas with lower favorability, such as "Security and Tranquility," to improve overall satisfaction. Place identity underscores the symbolic significance of a location as a reservoir of emotions and relationships that bring purpose and meaning to life. The findings of this research reveal that both residents and tourists perceive the components of urban heritage identity continuity in the studied neighborhoods as relatively favorable but not entirely ideal. On the other hand, both groups—residents and tourists—hold a more favorable perception of "values" compared to other components. This indicates that these neighborhoods are in relatively better conditions concerning unique cultural heritage, traditional and social beliefs, cultural ceremonies such as mourning and celebrations, and the historical aspects of buildings. The continuation and preservation of these factors play a crucial role in sustaining the urban heritage identity of these neighborhoods.

The results of this study could prove beneficial for planners and administrators in relevant organizations, such as municipalities and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, in efforts to preserve and sustain the heritage aspects of these neighborhoods.

Given the multifaceted nature of the dimensions of urban identity, it is essential to adopt a systemic and holistic approach that considers all dimensions collectively. Such an approach helps identify the environmental, social, economic, and physical components that shape the urban space, clarifying their role in the city and society, as well as their interaction with people in urban phenomena. In line with enhancing the quality of urban spaces and strengthening neighborhood identity, several strategies can be recommended. First, regarding [Skelton's \(2013\)](#) argument about the effect of the unity of citizens with the urban community on qualitative differences in the functioning and identity of modern cities, it is recommended to prevent the construction of new buildings with incompatible materials in the neighborhood, especially around valuable structures. According to [Sadeque et al.'s \(2020\)](#) idea about the positive effect of place attachment and social bonds on neighborhood identity, it is recommended to organize cultural ceremonies in the neighborhoods to preserve and enhance the social cohesion and bonds of the residents. As [Shokou'i's \(1995\)](#) has argued from a structural perspective, urbanization leads to transformations



Fig. 2: Proposed elements for continuity of place identity

in the socio-economic structure and population functions; therefore, diversification of the types of land use might be an effective strategy to shape and define new social and economic activities within the neighborhood. Another strategy might be preserving and enhancing functions that are aligned with the mental image of citizens regarding that space, which is in line with the [Sadeque et al. \(2020\)](#) argument on the relationship between neighborhood brand love and neighborhood identity. This study was conducted through a survey approach, with the necessary information collected via a researcher-designed questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively. Due to the inherent challenges and limitations of such survey-based studies, there may be shortcomings in achieving a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct similar studies using qualitative and exploratory methods to gain broader and deeper insights into the dimensions of the topic. For instance, employing the phenomenological approach could allow for a thorough examination of the lived experiences of neighborhood residents or the experiences of tourists. Another limitation refers to the Convenience Sampling Method, which includes concerns about sampling bias and limited generalizability, leading to potentially skewed results. Therefore, applying Random Sampling Methods is recommended for future studies.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

M. Abbasszadeh Zanjani performed the literature review, conducted a field study, and gathered data, analysis, and

interpretation. Z. Nadalipour prepared the research design, analysis and interpretation, manuscript text, and manuscript edition.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work. In addition, the authors have witnessed several ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy.

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