Evaluating and Analyzing the Livability Indices in Mashhad from the Views of Tourists and Pilgrims (Case Study: Samen District, Mashhad)

Zahra Pouri
PhD Candidate in Geography and Urban Planning, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Mashhad, Iran; Faculty Member of Binaloud Institute of Higher Education

Mohammadali Ahmadian [1]
Associate Professor in Geography and Urban Planning, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Mashhad, Iran

Hadi Ghanbarzadeh Darban
Associate Professor in Geography and Urban Planning, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Mashhad, Iran

Received: 24 September 2018 Accepted: 15 January 2019

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Today, continued urbanization has become intertwined with social, economic, physical, and environmental issues and can be considered as a warning message on urban unsustainability. Meanwhile, other issues such as various types of pollutions, traffic, mental problems, etc. reduce the quality of life and subsequently, the livability of cities. As a result, the necessity and significance of sustainable environment and livability in cities are highly evident. Livability is a broad concept which is connected to a variety of other notions such as sustainability, quality of life, satisfaction, and healthy communities; it has been the focus of recent theories on urban planning that guides humans towards having more desirable cities for living and sustainable urban development, similar to other modern theories such as the capable city, creative city, sustainable city, and resilient city. As the spiritual capital of the Islamic world and the most prominent tourist-attracting city in Iran, Mashhad occupies a special place where it is necessary to pay attention to livability indices to attract more tourists, achieve a better ranking in terms of environmental indices and health, and offer a secure and livable space for the city's permanent residents. The case investigated in this study is Samen District which is the financial, cultural, and tourism heart of Mashhad city due to the presence of the Holy Shrine, attracting tens of millions of both national and global pilgrims; subsequently, it requires special attention paid to livability problems. It also requires a comprehensive study to identify and analyze the livability indices in this region from the tourists' perspectives.

2. Review of Literature

Livability is a broad concept which is connected to a variety of other notions such as sustainability, quality of life, satisfaction, and healthy communities; it has been a dominant discourse since the 1970s when the limited attention paid to the health of the society sparked competition between groups over the ability to define the quality of urban life. Today, livability is the essential key that urban life lacks. The term, "livability" refers to the degree of a society's requirements based upon the needs and capacities of individuals living in that society. In a society with no livability, the needs of the population are ignored and overlooked. A livable city is where there is a connection

1. Corresponding Author- Email: ahmadian@um.ac.ir

between the past and the future, considering the respect given to groups of people who lived and will live there; it also battles wasting natural resources and attempts to conserve them for the sake of human survival. The physical and social dimensions of such a city cooperate together in line with the community's welfare and progress. Here, public spaces are where the people spend their social lives. Livability is also a set of features that transforms urban environment into an attractive place to live in. These features can be classified into two groups including tangible (access to urban infrastructure) and intangible (sense of place, local identity, etc.) features.

3. Method

This study serves applied purposes because the managers from various urban management organizations in Mashhad, particularly the municipality and Samen District, can use the results of this research. In terms of method, this inquiry is a descriptive-analytical study. Following a review of livability indices reflected in different studies, the Delphi technique was employed to classify the indices; subsequently, the conceptual model for the study was formed which involves the four social, cultural, financial, and environmental groups. Next, according to this conceptual model, the effects of more than one mediator variable is required to be tested in this study; therefore, structural equations (SEM) were used.

The population of the study are as follows: 1) Experts and professionals from Samen District municipality branch of Mashhad and Khorasan Razavi cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism headquarters (n=25); and 2) The population to examine the effect of different factors on the livability of Samen District included the tourists and pilgrims (n=291). Considering the characteristics of the population, simple random sampling was used. Additionally, the required sample population for questionnaire distribution was indicated using Cochran's formula.

4. Results and Discussion

The results show that among social sub-indices, public security was found to have the highest effect on livability in Samen District. Clearly, security is the first and most important necessary condition for livability in a region; according to the views of tourists and pilgrims, the general security status of Samen District in Mashhad was assessed to be at a high level (Score: 4.19). Moreover, results also show that among cultural sub-indices, quality of pilgrimage services had the highest impact on livability in this district. As the findings showed, most of the examined tourists and pilgrims (70.1%) stated that their motivation has been pilgrimage, assessing the quality of pilgrimage services to be at a high level (Score: 4.07). On the other hand, findings suggest that among financial sub-indices, the place of residence had the highest effect on livability in Samen district. It was also obvious for accommodation conditions to follow security as the second most important aspect in livability of a regions. Additionally, findings demonstrate that among environmental sub-indices, traffic status was found to have the highest effect on livability in this district; accordingly, unsuitable traffic conditions results in wasting time and reduce the tourists' comfort levels. According to the examined tourists, the traffic status in Samen District was assessed to be at an undesirable level (Score: 2.48). Ultimately, results suggest that among the main livability indices, social and cultural indices had the highest and lowest impacts on the livability of the region, respectively.

5. Conclusion

As the second Iranian metropolitan city and the second religious metropolitan area in the world, Mashhad hosts numerous tourists and pilgrims with a variety of tastes and mentalities coming from various cities and countries with different cultures; therefore, focusing on urban livability is of substantial importance which require more attention and exploration through different aspects. Tourists would appreciate Samen District if it can reach a desirable level in terms of

financial, social, and environmental indices so that they can make use of their intended attraction to the fullest. On the other hand, the presence of tourists at a place may compromise livability, and it requires bilateral actions in line with increasing urban livability by both tourists and authorities. Given the critical approach adopted in livability, the results of this study can respond to theoretical conflicts faced by planners and actors involved in the area of tourism and pilgrimage management in Iran and Mashhad City.

Keywords: Livability, Urban Planning, Religious Tourism, Semen District, Mashhad

References (In Persian)

1. Azadkhani, P., Mohamadzade, Z., Teymouri, S., & Sarabi, M. (2016). بررسی اثرات زیست محیطی توسعه گردشگری شهری ازدیدگاه شهروندان مطالعه موردی شهرایلام [The investigation of environmental impacts on urban tourism development from citizens' perspective, case study: Ilam city]. Paper presented at *7th International Conference on New Research Achievements in Civil Engineering, Architecture, and urban Management*. IFIA, Tehran, Iran
2. Amiri, D., & Janbaz Qobadi, G. (2016). سنجش و ارزیابی نقش گردشگری در زیست‌پذیری اجتماعی فرهنگی مطالعه موردی: شهر نور [Measurement and evaluation of tourism on cultural and social livability, case study: Nur city]. Paper presented at *3rd International Conference on Science and Engineering*. Istanbul, Turkey.
3. Bandarabad, A. (2011). *شهر زیست‌پذیر، از مبانی تا معانی* [The livable city from theory to the meanings]. Tehran, Iran: Azarakhsh.
4. Foroughzadeh, S., Shariati, S., & Danaee, M. (2012). تحلیل جامعه شناختی مدت اقامت زائران ایرانی در شهر مشهد، مطالعات اجتماعی ایران [The Iranian pilgrims' length of stay in Mashhad, a sociological analysis]. *Iranian Social Studies, 6*(3-4), 157-179.
5. Ghafarian, M., Parizadi, T., Shamaei, A., Khatibizade, M., & Shahsavar, A. (2017). تحلیل فضایی زیست‌پذیری محلات شهری مورد مطالعه: منطقه ۱۸ تهران [Spatial analysis livability of urban neighborhoods (Case study: Region 18 of Tehran)]. *Environmental Research, 7*(14), 45-58.
6. Ghanbari, M., Ajza Shokouhi, M., Rahnama, M. R., & Kharazmi, O. A. (2016). تحلیلی بر زیست پذیری شهری با تاکید بر شاخص امنیت و پایداری (مطالعه موردی: کلانشهر مشهد [Analyzing urban livability with emphasis on security and sustainability indexes]. *Geopolitical Researches, 1*(3), 129-154.
7. Heydari, T., Shamai, A., Sasanpour, F., Soleymani, M., & Ahadnezhad, M. (2017). تحلیل عوامل موثر بر زیست پذیری بافتهای فرسوده شهری، مطالعه موردی: بافت فرسوده شهر زنجان [Analysis of factors affecting livability in urban distressed areas, case study: Old texture of Zanjan city]. *Geographical Space*, *59*(17), 1-25.
8. Irandoost, K., Isaloo, A. A., & Shahmoradi, B. (2016). شاخص زیست‌پذیری در محیط‌های شهری (مطالعه موردی: بخش مرکزی شهر مقدس قم) [Viability index in urban environments, Case study: The central part of holy city of Qom]. *Journal of Urban Economics and Management*, *4*(13), 101-118.
9. Jafari Asadabadi, H., & Azizi, A. (2014). زیست پذیری وتوسعه پایدار ضرورتی برای شهرهای امروزی [The nescassity of livability and sustainable development for contemporary cities]. Paper presented at *National Conference on Architecture and Sustainable Urban Landscape*. International Institution of Architecture and Urbanism Studies of Mehrazshahr.

10. Jani, S., & Donyabin, F. (2017). بررسی عوامل مؤثر بر تعداد و طول اقامت گردشگران ملی: مطالعه بین استانی [Analyzing the effective factors on the number of national tourists and tourists' length of stay: A province-wide study]. *Tourism Planning and Development*, *6*(22), 30-53.
11. Kalantari, K. (2009). *مدلیابی معادله ساختاری در تحقیقات اجتماعی-اقتصادی* [Structural equation modeling in socio-economic research, with Lisrel and Simplis software]. Tehran, Iran: Farhang Saba.
12. Khorasani, M. A. (2012). [The explanation of livability in peri-urban villages based on quality of life approach, Case study: Varamin county]. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
13. Mohamadi, M., & Bahrami, S. (2014). ارائه الگوی فضایی توسعه شهری بر مبنای اصول شهر زیست پذیر ((نمونه موردی: منطقه ۲۲ تهران [Providing a spatial model of urban development based on the principles of libable city]. Paper presented at *National Conference on Architecture and Sustainable Urban Landscape*. International Institution of Architecture and Urbanism Studies of Mehrazshahr.
14. Nazari, M., Esfidani, M. R., & Tabatabaee, S. M. (2017). ارزیابی عوامل مؤثر بر جذب گردشگران بین المللی به ایران با استفاده از مدل جاذبه [A gravity model analysis on determinants of tourism flow to Iran]. *Journal of Economic research*, *52*(1), 215-243.
15. Parsapour, S., Rafiei, H.a & Rahnama, A. (2016). بررسی عوامل اقتصادی و دموگرافیک مؤثر بر تمایل به خرید زائران و گردشگران از بازار (مطالعه موردی: بازار سنتی رضا (ع) و بازار مدرن الماس شرق در شهر مشهد) [Investigation of the economic and demographic factors influencing the tendency of pilgrims and tourists to shopping, Case study: Traditional market of Reza and Modern Market of Almas-e Shargh in Mashhad city]. Paper presented at *International Conference on Urban Economy*, Mashhad, Iran.
16. Rafiei, H., Parsapour, S., & Rahnama, A. (2016). عوامل اقتصادی اجتماعی مؤثر بر ماندگاری گردشگران داخلی، مطالعه موردی: شهر مشهد [Socio-economic factors affecting overnight stays of domestic tourists (Case study: Mashhad)]. *Tourism Social Studies*, *4*(7), 8-35.
17. Rashidi, E., Hesari, A., Movahed, A., Tavalayi, S., & Mousavi, M. (2016). تحلیل فضایی منطقه کلانشری تبریز با رویکرد زیست‌پذیری [Spatial Analysis of Tabriz metropolitan based on livability approach]. *Geographical Space*, *16*(54), 155-176.
18. Saghaei, M., Khajavi, M., & Eslami, A. (2014). واکاوی ضریب ماندگاری پایین گردشگران در استان گلستان با تأکید بر گردشگران عبوری [Analyzing the low overnight stay rate of tourists in Golestan province with emphasis on transit tourists]. Paper presented at *The First Scientific-Strategic International Conference on Iran Tourism Development, Challenges and Perspectives*. Mashhad, Iran.
19. Sasanpour, Tavalayi, S., & Jafari Asasabadi, H. (2015). سنجش و ارزیابی زیست پذیری شهری در مناطق بیست و دوگانه کلانشهر تهران [Study of urban livability in twenty-two districts of Tehran metropolitan]. *Regional Planning*, *5*(18), 27-42.
20. Sojasi Qidari, H., & Sadeghloo, T. (2015). بررسی رابطه‌ی زیست‌پذیری سکونتگاه‌های روستایی بر تاب‌آوری روستاییان در برابر مخاطرات طبیعی نواحی روستایی دهستان مراوه‌تپه و پالیزان [Survey relationship between rural settlement livability and rural resilience in front of natural disaster in rural areas of Mravehtapeh and Palizan County]. *Emergency Management*, *3*(2), 37-44.

21. Soleimani Mehrenjani, M., Tavallai, S., Rafieian, M., Zanganeh, A., & Khazaei Nezhad, F. (2016). زیست‌پذیری شهری: مفهوم، اصول، ابعاد و شاخصها [Urban livability: Concept, principles, aspects and parameters]. *Geographical Urban Planning Research*, *4*(1), 27-50.
22. Soltani, A., Dashti, A., Babaei, E., & Ghazaie, M. (2015). ارزیابی کیفیت خدمات گردشگری مذهبی کلانشهر مشهد ازدیدگاه گردشگران [Evaluation of Mashhad religious tourism services from the perspective of tourists]. *Armanshahr*, *7*(13), 333-342.

References (In English)

1. Alén, E., Nicolau, J. L., Losada, N., & Domínguez, T. (2014). Determinant factors of senior tourists' length of stay, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *49*, 19–32.
2. Balsas, C. J. L. (2004). Measuring the livability of an urban center, An exploratory study of key performance indicators planning. *Practice and Research*, *19*(1), 101-110.
3. Radcliff, B. (2015). Politics, markets and lifesatis faction: The political economy of human happiness. *The American Political Science Review*, *95*(4), 939-952.
4. Howley, P., Scotl, M., & Redmondb, D. (2009). Sustainability versus livability: An investigation of neighborhood satisfaction. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, *52*(6), 847-864.
5. Landry, C. (2000). Urban vitality: A new source of urban competitiveness. *Prince Claus Fund Journal*, *12*, 8-13.
6. Litman, T. A. (2003). Economic value of walkability. *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, *1828*(1), 3-11.
7. Ottawa County Planning Commission. (2004). Ottawa county urban smart growth. *Planning and Grants Department*.
8. Southworth, M. (2003). Measuring the Livable City. Measuring Quality in Planning: An International Review, *29*(4), 343-354.
9. Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission. (2008). A state of liveability: An in inguir in to enhancing Victoria's liveability, *Final Report.*
10. Wheeler, S. M. (2001). Livable communities: Creating safe and livable neighborhoods, towns and regions in California. *University of California at Berkeley, Institute of Urban and Regional Development, Working Paper*, 2001–2004. Retrieved from https:// escholarship.org/ content/ qt8xf2d6jg/qt8xf2d6jg.pdf
11. Yang, Y., Wong, K. F., & Zhang, J. (2011). Determinants of length of stay for domestic tourists: Case study of Yixing. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *16*(6), 619-633.
12. Yusup, M.F., Kanyan, A., Kasuma, J., Kamaruddin, H. and Adlin, J. (2016). Determinants of factors and the growth of tourism industry in Langkawi island, *Journal of Scientific Research and Development*, *3*(2), 13-20.

How to cite this article:

Pouri, Z., Ahmadian, M. A., & Ghanbarzadeh Darban, H. (2020). Evaluating and analyzing the livability Indices in Mashhad from the views of tourists and pilgrims (Case study: Samen District, Mashhad). *Journal of Geography and Urban Space Development, 6*(2), 49-69.

URL http://jgusd.um.ac.ir/index.php/gud/article/view/75541

ISSN: 2538-3531