Cultural Comparisons of Public Space, with a Focus on the Streetscape of Tehran

By

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“I end then in praise of small spaces. The multiplier effect is tremendous. It is not just the number of people using them, but the larger number who pass by and enjoy them vicariously, or even the larger number who feel better about the city center for knowledge of them. For a city, such places are priceless, whatever the cost. They are built of a set of basics and they are right in front of our noses. If we will look.”

William H. Whyte, 1980
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Abstract

Public space by itself does not create a community; rather, a community is built by people who participate in community-building activities. Despite being the capital city of Iran with so many public and semipublic spaces such as parks, restaurants, cafés and shopping malls, Tehran is still missing a dynamic and active public space. The current public spaces of Tehran suffer from dysfunctionality of features and lack of interaction among users which makes them uninviting for the younger generation. In this age of communication and interaction, young adults are looking for new experiences and they are eager to expand their social circle. Despite the rapid changes in social trends over the last few decades, there haven’t been any significant changes in the design of public spaces of Tehran. This study will try to address this issue by providing recommendations for a public space that could improve opportunities for young adults to interact with one another more easily.

The main emphasis of this study is to employ leisure and amusement as architectural programs to support opportunities for young adults to experience social interactions in public spaces that are examples of cooperation and social exchange. However, these activities must be within the boundaries of Islam which is the official religion of Iran. Valiasr Street, which is one of Tehran’s significant historical streets, was chosen as the area to be studied. Valiasr Street is a tree-lined street that divides the city into its eastern and western parts. It is one of the major paths for both pedestrians and motorists. Although this study has focused on a specific location (Valiasr Street) and collected on-site information about it with an innovative method (crowdsourcing), recommendations from this study are not limited to just one specific location. To allow for greater generalizability, information was also gathered about how users interact with a major public street, and with each other (through a literature review and archival resources, in addition to the
information from crowdsourcing by social media). From that information, this study developed useful material for design that will support social interaction of the young adults in public spaces.

The following questions are examined in this study: How is public space defined in different cultures (information from archival and literature review sources)? How is public space used, especially by young adults? How are young adults actually using public spaces in the area under study of this research? These questions are addressed by the use of information obtained through multiple methods: a literature review (which included cross-cultural information); archival information (e.g. existing photographs on the web); direct observations of site features (on-site experts); and the use of online crowdsourcing (e.g., self-report information from young adults using the site). Using information from all of these sources, the author developed recommendations for design, which considered cultural aspects.

There are two sets of findings from this research. The first one focuses on the findings from the research as a basis for recommending of key attributes for designing public space in Tehran. These are primarily for places that should promote a dynamic environment, e.g., ones which allow the younger generation to pause for a few moments from their daily routines and have opportunities to socialize. The second set of findings provides recommendations for researchers who might consider the use of crowdsourcing as an alternative (or additional) method of gathering information, particularly when it might be difficult or impossible for the researcher to actually go to a location for first-hand data collection.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

One of the important and worthy objectives in the field of architecture and urban planning is place-making in public spaces, in order to provide an optimal space for enhancing social interaction among people. Place-making is the process of shaping public spaces in a way to maximize shared value among users (Spaces, 2009). Public space plays an important role in each person’s spiritual and social life.

One of the new trends in the design process is the use of social science to learn more about the people for whom the design is intended. Any designer who wants to design for a specific place should consider not only the physical features of that environment, but also social aspects, such as the context and culture of the place, the imposed political and religious limitations of the place and the potential users’ behavior in that type of space and culture. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to address these issues (social and physical), by focusing on young adults in public spaces, with an emphasis on Tehrani young adults. To do this, different sources of information will be examined, in order to provide a rich platform for designing an optimal public space.

Since young adults play an important role in the society, urban designers should consider young adults’ needs in the design of public space. Therefore, the target population of this study is Tehrani young adults between the age of 18 to 26 (a category of people who are high school graduates and in their college age). This group of people is moving into the next stage of their life. They will have more freedom from parental control, and will have more free time before they take on the full responsibilities of adulthood. They are beginning to search for greater opportunities for social interaction, with both genders of young adults. They are an ideal group for a study of social interactions in public spaces, for the following reasons:
• They have just finished a hard nationwide exam (Payandeh Najafabadi, Najafabadi, & Farid-Rohani, 2013).

• They have been in gender segregated schools (Rezaee, 2005).

• They are financially supported by their families which gives them less responsibility and more time to have fun (Sheykhi, 2016).

• According to the views of many cultures, young adults have more freedom from their parents when they are the typical age for entering college (Pickhardt, 2013).

Because of the above characteristics of Tehrani young adults, it is particularly important that Tehran (which is a metropolis and the capital city of Iran) should also have decent public urban environments to support its young adults. The public spaces of Tehran should be designed in a way so that people feel comfortable and safe in their interactions with one another, particularly young adults who are beginning to become an important segment of the adult population.

To examine an issue in relation to a real setting, this study focuses on a specific location in Tehran. The chosen location is Valiasr Street, one of the longest and oldest tree lined streets in Tehran that connects the most southern part of Tehran to the most northern part of Tehran, with a length about 18 km. There are important ambient and physical features of the whole street that will be addressed in detail in the following literature review chapter. However, since this street is very long, the northern part of this street is the focus of this study. The reasons for this include the following:

• Historically, more social gathering and events happen in the northern part compared to the more southern parts of street.

• This area is the only two-way vehicular part of the street. There is a limited access by the private cars to the other parts.
• This street is famous for its trees, which offer shaded spaces for supporting public use: it has been chosen partially due to the high density of trees.

Iran is one those countries that has a collection of complexities in terms of politics, culture, and religion (which include social taboos) which not only influence the characteristics of public space, but also impact users’ behavior in that space. Therefore, it is important to think carefully about how all these complexities should be addressed in the design of public space.

Specifically, this thesis primarily relies on three major pillars that are examined through information gathered from multiple sources. These major pillars are: the study of Western public space design and Iranian public space design, the study of Iranian and Western young adults’ social behavior in public spaces, and the use of crowdsourcing as a relatively new method of gathering ‘real time’ information from young adults using the space of concern (especially when the researcher is unable to directly observer the spaces and activities).

Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the remainder of this thesis will be as follows:

Chapter 2, which is the review of literature, addresses four areas of information. First, the general dimensions of public space in Western countries and Iran will be presented. In Western countries, five dimensions of public pace design are defined and in Iran four dimensions are defined; these will be discussed in detail. Generally, in public space, dimensions are defined as the qualities of public space that make the space work. The purpose of doing this is to better understand the attributes of public space in Western countries and Iran by addressing the existing similarities and differences among them.
Second, the existing social taboos in Iran that impact on people’s behavior in public spaces are discussed. This part addresses the important milestone such as the revolution of 1979 in Iran and also imposed limitations of Iran such as hijab for women, gender segregation of public leisure space and official presence of morality police that is called “Gashte Ershad”.

Third is the comparison of Western young adults’ activities to Iranian young adults’ activities. While there are many differences between the two cultures, there are some similarities as well. The main reason to examine this issue is to be able to clarify the young adults’ cultural values as users of public space.

The fourth and last part of the chapter introduces the study location, which is Valiasr Street in Tehran. The ambient and physical features of this street are described, as is the role of this street in Tehran.

Chapter 3, explains the methods and procedures that were used in this research. While I was doing my literature review, I became curious about other current social activities of young adults in Iran that were not yet currently available in the literature. As the first step, web searching was used as a method of gathering information. Although this method provided an overview of general information about current activities of young adults, more specific information was needed from current users of the study area.

Therefore, the second method used social media crowdsourcing with Instagram as the platform. This method can be used in any research when the researcher cannot go to the place under study. The process of this crowdsourcing was based on two phases as follows: The first phase was an open-ended request for information about the location. A public page on Instagram was created by the author and people were asked to share their photos and videos with their point of views about
Valiasr Street. In the second phase (online participation for directed response to a request from the author), 12 examples of successful public space designs from other areas, were shared with followers of the Instagram page; then people were asked to give their opinion about those examples. Information from these responses to those images was examined qualitatively by the author.

The last method used two on-site observers to gather additional site information. One of the observers was a resident of the neighborhood who knew the site very well and the other one was an expert in urban design. They provided visual information about the current condition of the street characteristics such as the pavements, facades and so on.

Chapter 4, the results chapter provides substantive information about the thesis issues. It describes the results that were collected from the three methods. Finally, a comparison of dimensions of public space from the literature review (Western and Iranian viewpoints) will be made to findings from crowdsourcing information from young adults in Tehran. This information was employed to understand how public space is being used by Iranian young adults, what features are missing in the current infrastructure and how the current situation can be improved.

Chapter 5, provides two types of recommendations as outputs and conclusion. The first set of recommendation addresses the substantive thesis issues. It proposes key dimensions and attributes that should be useful for designing urban public space in Iran. This section also discusses how the recommendations can be adapted to fit within Iran’s existing cultural and physical conditions. These recommendations can be especially useful to any designer who wants to design a public space in Tehran.
The second set of recommendations are methodological. They primarily address the strengths and limitations of crowdsourcing of social media as a source of information. Since this method is a relatively unexplored one, there are no well-defined standards of how or when to use it; thus some suggestions are provided based on my experience while carrying out this thesis. Finally, this chapter ends with a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter provides information about previous scholarly theory and research about public spaces and social interaction, as well as cultural issues. One of the important outcomes of this section is to better understand the Iranian culture in order to determine how it affects different aspects of public space use. This will be done by considering the dominant culture in Iran and discussing social taboos that have roots in religious and political boundaries. This chapter also addresses the population under study and the similarities and differences between Iranian and Western countries’ young adults’ activities in terms of various aspects about the design and use of public spaces. In addition, this chapter specifies the area of interest in this study, which is a specific street. Furthermore, the role of street for young adults in Iran and Western countries is considered. Finally, the summary part some important information of literature review is compared together.

The first part of this chapter addresses public space in both Western countries and Iran. The dimensions of public space design in Iran and in Western countries are described and compared.

Dimensions of Public Space

This section will address public space in western countries and Iran.
Public Space in Western Countries

In this set of literature, public space is defined in different ways based on ownership, control, access and use (Mehta, 2014). One definition that is based on the ownership and control can be described as: “space that is not controlled by private individuals or organizations, and hence is open to the general public” (Madanipour, 1996, p. 144). Also, another definition is based on access and use: “publicly accessible places where people go for group or individual activities” (Carr, 1992, p. 50). There are different types of activities that occur in public space which can be categorized in three categories: necessary, optional or social activities. Necessary activities usually happen regardless of the quality of the existing environment, such as going to work or school. Optional activities only occur when conditions of the environment are optimal, such as going for walk for leisure or hanging out in a place. Finally, social activities arise from a high level of optional activities requiring a high quality of the environment (Gehl, 1987).

The roles of public space are addressed next. Public space can have different roles in different contexts such as political, social and cultural. One of the major roles of the public space is the emphasis on providing the capability for people to gather, communicate and recognize each other’s presence that is pivotal to democracy (Mehta, 2014). There are four social roles for public space which are identified by Thomas (1991):

1. As an arena for public life;
2. As a meeting place for different social groups;
3. As a space for the display of symbols and images in society;
4. As a part of the communication system between urban activities.

Since public open spaces in Western countries have the most actual and potential facilities to support the physical presence of the citizens, these spaces have a significant role in the citizens’
social lives and sustaining the public realm (Lawson, 2004; Mehta, 2014). The definition of public space has changed during the past few decades; historically, it referred to “Open Space”, meaning the streets, parks and recreation areas, plazas and other publicly owned and managed outdoor spaces. However, with recent changes in the form of urban settlements, due to the change of ownership from public to private partnerships, public spaces now often refer to a space that is accessible to the public (Tonnelat, 2010), even if it is privately owned. In Western countries it is also defined as an unrestrained public sphere where social and political movements can occur. It can be inferred that the primary role of the public space is to support sociability (Mehta, 2014). In Molavi and Jalili (2016), it is noted that more life occurs when people move slower in public since there is a higher chance for interacting with and experiencing the environment. Yet, this interaction should not be because of compulsion. In order for an urban space to be considered as vital, people need to stop and stay simply because the space is interesting. “Public Life” is viewed by Banerjee (2001) as a broader concept in comparison with “Public Space”, and he encourages designers to pay more attention to it. The two conditions that define public space in Western countries are:

1. Guaranteed access to all citizens

2. Guarantee of freedom of assembly and expressing one’s opinion (Habermas, 1991)

In the case of neighborhood public spaces, the general idea is the same, however, we should also consider that livability of each neighborhood is dependent on the face-to face human interactions that occur in every neighborhood public space (Singh, 2016). In order for each neighborhood public space to be defined as great, it needs to be attractive, active, open, walkable, entertaining and full of people (Rosales & Sousa, 2010).
Mehta’s Dimensions of Public Space Design in Western Countries

A major issue in discussing ‘public space’ is that various authors discuss it in terms of dimensions. Mehta (2014), who has written extensively about public space, has defined five dimensions, based on an extensive literature review of Western articles about public space. Figure 1 shows his five main aspects/dimensions of public space design in Western countries.

![Diagram of five dimensions of public space](image.png)

Figure 1. Five dimensions of public space in Western countries (Mehta, 2014)

**Inclusiveness** refers to the range of activities and different groups that a public space supports. This dimension also has a close relation with accessibility which emphasizes on the ability to reach, enter and use the public space (Mehta, 2014).

**Meaningfulness** is a complex term and is associated with several factors such as prior familiarity, and prior historic and political events. It is also described as the ability for a space to support activity and sociability and the resultant place attachment (Mehta, 2014).

**Safety** is another critical dimension for a public space. Safety from crime and safety from traffic or accidents are two major aspects of safety which play an important role in design. Perceptions
play a key role in making a place feel safe. Factors such as the physical condition of the setting and maintenance and presence of people can affect one’s perception of safety.

**Comfort** can be affected by several factors, such as weather and the physical condition of the setting and features within the setting. It also has a close relation with safety which was introduced above. For instance, Mehta states that sunshine plays an important role as a factor that affects comfort. Furthermore, an interesting factor that provides comfort in public spaces is the width of a sidewalk.

**Pleasurability** heavily relies on an important factor which is referred to as imageability. Lynch (1960) defined imageability as “quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer”. Although some places are imageable due to their negative characteristics, pleasurability is associated with positive attributes (Mehta, 2014).

Each and every one of these dimensions are important for this thesis, however, much less emphasis is focused on safety because it is not the primary issue of concern in this thesis. Safety from traffic should be addressed while the safety from crime will not be studied in this thesis.

The detailed description of features in each dimension can be found in Appendix 1.

Next, the role of public space in Iran will be addressed.

**Public Space in Iran**

There are relatively few research studies about public spaces in Iran, which is an Islamic country. The function of public spaces in Iran has always been primarily influenced by the Iranian political, economic, religious, and ecological changes (Sohrabi, 2015). Historically, there were many public spaces with the role of gathering places which became neglected in the modern era (1800 AD).
Before modernism, there were two significant ages of public space: Hellenic (between 323 BC to 31 BC) and Islamic-Iranian age (after 6th century). After the Seleucid Dynasty (from 312 BC to 63 BC) conquered Iran, the Greeks tried to restructure cities according to their own architecture with agoras, forums and other Greek model public spaces. During the Islamic age, new components such as bazars, streets and squares were introduced. At the beginning of the Pahlavi dynasty, European methods and patterns were integrated in Iran.

In the beginning of the modern era (1800 AD), the introduction of motor vehicles caused a separation between public spaces and people. Streets became the symbol of modernism and most of the public spaces such as shops and stores were moved to roadsides (Charkhchian & Daneshpour, 2009). Now, the young adults of Iran use public spaces as place to “see and be seen”. They usually prefer relationships with the opposite sex, to connect with friends, travel and fun, sports and entertainment (Sohrabi, 2015).

Dimensions of public space in Iran have been addressed more generally by two co-authors. Their work will be addressed in more detail below.

Dimensions of Public Space Design in Iran (Charkhchian & Daneshpour)

Similar to dimensions of public space design that were defined by Mehta (2014), four major dimensions for public space design in Iran were developed, based on a review of the relevant literature by Charkhchian and Daneshpour (2009). These four dimensions are shown in Figure 2 below. The square shape is used to visualize these four dimensions. The term “responsibility” in these dimensions refers to the fact that the designer of the public space is responsible for providing these dimensions in the public space.
Physical Responsibility includes many factors such as: comfort and security, accessibility, aesthetic value and amenities.

Activity Responsibility evaluates the capacity of the place for enabling users’ activities and considers how effective the place is in supporting both the individual and group activities.

Social Responsibility considers the availability of social events, gathering places, etc., as well as, providing privacy for users.

Meaning Responsibility is related to evaluating how memorable the public space is.

The detailed explanations of each dimension can be found in Appendix 1.

Although the dimensions of Western public design and public space design in Iran seem different at first, they have considerable overlap in content.

Comparison of the Dimensions

This section will address the dimension comparisons (between Western and Iranian theory) in more detail. As it was mentioned before, five dimensions of public space design are defined for Western countries and four dimensions of public space design are defined in Iran. Based on the
comparison between these two viewpoints, it can be seen that each dimension of Iran’s public space design overlaps with several dimensions of Western countries. For example, when we talk about physical responsibilities in public space of Iran, it has overlap with four aspects of Western countries which are inclusiveness, safety, comfort and pleasurability.

Figure 3, shows the numerous ways in which these two sets of dimensions overlap with each other. A color is assigned to each dimension of public space in Western countries and wherever there is an overlap between dimensions of Western countries and dimension in Iran, these colors are shown in the corresponding dimension of Iran’s public space.

![Figure 3. Comparison of public space dimensions (Western countries vs. Iran)](image)

In spite of the similarities between public space design criteria for Western countries and Iran, it is clear that the cultural differences may require different approaches in the design of public space. These cultural differences are partly caused by the dissimilarities of activities of Iranian and
Western young adults. Another important factor in cultural differences are the social taboos; Iranian young adult’s activities should comply with the religious beliefs and laws.

Heretofore, we had a general view about the public space in Iran and Western countries. Also, the defined dimensions of public space design in both of them were addressed. Each society has its own culture, routines and social taboos which affect people’s behavior in public spaces. Therefore, research on the subject of Iran’s social taboos is necessary. Both religious and political boundaries in Iran will be discussed below, as important determinants of social taboos in Iran.

Social Taboos: Religious and Political Boundaries in Iran

Since the revolution of 1979, gender segregation of public leisure spaces has been a major policy in Iran. There have been some efforts in creating mono gender spaces for women to increase their participation in urban spaces but real social interaction can only happen in mixed gender places where men and women with different social backgrounds have an opportunity to interact with each other (Zokaei, 2015). As an example, illicit gatherings of Iranian youth could be seen at a film festival in an improvised gallery inside a basement parking garage (Effendi, 2010) and illegal activities such as drinking alcohol at indoor, after midnight parties (Guardian, 2014).

Two of the most important religious boundaries in public spaces of Iran are the limited options of clothing [hijab] for women and permissible contacts with the opposite sex in social encounters (Zokaei, 2015). Women, and even in some cases men, are worried about the morality police that usually patrol in the streets searching for any deviation from religious laws (Effendi, 2010). Since these traditional and religious values have roots in Iranian culture and some of them cannot be disobeyed, there should be a redefining in design of public spaces that allows the social interaction of both genders within the boundaries of religion. Most of the activities in Iran are trying to address
this issue: of reducing gender segregation within the boundaries of religion (Daniel, 2006). However, it is unlikely that these boundaries are going to be removed in the near future. Therefore, the only way is to support activities that do not involve direct physical contact but can be done together.

In order to be able to understand the effect of the social taboos and cultural values on the young adults of Iran, the next section provides a comparison between cultural values of Iranian and Western young adults.

**A Comparison of Western Young Adults’ Cultural Values to Iranian Young Adults’ Values**

Just like all age groups, young people (between 18 to 26) also have different cultural values, perceptions and demands than those of differing age groups. In public spaces of most cultures, this group of people is looking for social integration, safety and freedom of movement (Chawla, 2016). However, general studies about all young adults do not represent the current Iranian young adults culture completely (Zokaei, 2015). During the last two decades, there has been a significant change in the cultural values of the young adults in Tehran. Currently, the young adults of Iran seek to improve their culture and lifestyle beyond those of earlier times, in comparison to older Iranian adults (Jafari, 2007). There is an influx of Western culture into the daily life of young adults of Iran which in some cases is incongruous with the current culture of older Iranians (Jafari, 2007). In some cases, this young generation perceives their identity in a way that is different from their parents and a society which has traditional beliefs; some of them want to be exactly the opposite of what their family wants them to be (Jafari, 2007). While this may be quite common across many cultures, the reasons may be different in Iran. One of the major problems of this generation is that they feel isolated because of the theocratic government and the restrictions that are imposed on them. This isolation, is also one the reasons that some of them tend to leave the country in hope of
living a better life (Mahdi, 2007). Also, Sheykhi (2016) mentions that many young men and women in their 20s are still financially supported by their parents which means they have less responsibility and more free time. The current trends of wanting independence but still being supported by their family may seem paradoxical. Zokaei (2015) suggests that the absence of public spaces in Tehran which young adults can discharge their tensions, may be a contributor to those feelings of isolation.

After discussing the current trends of Iranian young adults, explaining some of the limitations and barriers, the next step is to explore the activities of Iranian and Western young adults to discover the similarities and differences between the two groups.

Consideration of Similarities and Differences in Social Activities Between Young Adults in Iran and Western Cultures

Perhaps one of the main differences between the culture of young Iranian adults and those of Western countries has roots in the religious views of the government and public opinion. Since the target population of this study is young adults between the age of 18 to 26, most of their social activities related to leisure and entertainment occur during the evening (after class or work) and on weekends for both cultures (Martin & Mason, 2006). However, nightlife in Iran is different from how it is described in the Western countries. According to Grazian (2009), sociologists and urban scholars relate Western nightlife for social gatherings to nightclubs, bars and music venues, none of which are available or acceptable in Iran. One of the most common places for gathering of young people in Iran are coffee shops (cafes) which are more than a place just to get coffee (Sohrabi, 2015); they are places for social hangouts. Another hobby that is becoming prevalent in Iran, specially Tehran, is the new “Car Culture”; young people drive back and forth in famous
streets of cities as a way of dating and showing off to release their daily tension (Zokaei, 2015). The car culture is a new trend among young adults in which cars are used to provide opportunities for social interaction. Young people drive in their cars in the specific streets to show off. They exchange phone numbers and keep driving back and forth through the night. A very large amount of socializing time has involved cars, in the US culture, particularly before social media. However, one major difference might be that cars in the US are occupied by youth of both genders, while in Iran strangers meet each other by driving separate cars since they are not supported to be in the same car.

On the other hand, according to Sohrabi (2015), this young Iranian generation prefers gathering with friends and enjoying travel, sports, entertainment and shopping attractions, which is almost the same as any young generation throughout the world. Also, in the case of public spaces, everyone in the world uses them as soon as they leave their house and walk into the street, regardless of the age, nationality or income (Aftahi, 2014).

So far, we have examined a big picture of the population under study and young adult’s values and activities and the different types of their social issues in the public space and society. Now, it is time to address the role of the street for young adults in Western countries and Iran. Next, the area under study, which is a street in Tehran and its major characteristics will be described.

The Street and Its Role for Western Young Adults Versus Iranian Young Adults

The street can be defined as an element which can be used for many dynamic and live municipal and aesthetic purposes (Rehan, 2013). According to Fyfe (2006, p. 01), “Streets are the terrain of social encounters and political protest, sites of domination and resistance, places of pleasure and anxiety”. The impact of streets will be undermined and distorted, if it does not meet the
requirements of citizens, and if it is not standard in terms of functions and features (Molavi & Jalili, 2016). Streets should not only provide basic transportation access, but should support reasons for people to come to a place and want to return to that place over and over again (Spaces, 2015). Malone (2002) describes an ideal street as an inviting environment with an acceptance of differences between people, and it should also be unoppressive. The street provides a location for many young people to have social experiences outside the home, as well as opportunities for formal and informal interactions with friends, for finding new friends, and meeting people of the opposite sex or strolling to watch people (Fotouhi, Lichaei, & Mozhdehi, 2015)

When it comes to young people, regardless of nationality, the street plays an important role for their social activity (White, 1994). For this group of people, streets are used for constructing their social identity and it can also act as a stage for performance (Malone, 2002).

In Iran, gender and class differences influence the type of entertainment and activities in which they choose to participate on the streets. As an example, girls typically choose Valiasr Street as a fun shopping attraction (Fotouhi et al., 2015). As was mentioned, there is also a new “car culture” emerging in Tehran wherein many young adults (both male and females) use cars for dating and showing off as a way of discharging their tensions (Zokaei, 2015). One difference might be that in Western countries or in the US to be more precise, both male and females are in the same car, however, in Iran, strangers get to know each other by riding in separate cars where each car has only one gender in it.

The role of the street has been described in general, for both Iranian and Western countries’ young adults. In both cases, the street is seen to be very important street for young adults’ social activities. Since the area under study of this thesis is a specific location, describing the major characteristics
of this street (Valiasr Street) is necessity. Therefore, the following section will talk about the major points of Valiasr Street in details.

The Study Site: Valiasr Street in Tehran, Iran

Valiasr Street is one of the well-known streets of Tehran. It connects the most southern part of the city to the northern part and divides Tehran into Western and Eastern part (Mirrazavi, 2016). With the length of 11.1 miles, it is considered the longest street in Middle East (Mirrazavi, 2016). It’s history, geographical location, attractions and its importance for the young adults will be addressed in this section.

Figure 4 shows the map of the Tehran city and the Valiasr Street is highlighted by green color.

![Figure 4. Valiasr street in the Tehran city map](http://en.tehran.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=78)
Valiasr Street is typically distinguished by its long maple trees and wide pedestrian sidewalks on both sides.

Figure 5 shows the northern part of Valiasr Street with the high density of trees on its both sides.

![Image of Valiasr Street](image)

**Figure 5. Valiasr street (Mirazavi, 2016)**

Valiasr Street is a historical attraction (built in 1927) and provides access to many of the other historical places in Tehran. There are famous shopping centers and malls along this street. Cultural centers, museums, old palaces, Persian gardens, parks and so many other attractions can be found near Valiasr Street. The following figures (Figures 5,6,7,8, and 9) are some examples of attractions along Valiasr Street.

Many young adults choose to visit Valiasr Street attractions for their leisure time. They can either drive by car or many choose to walk down the street, because the street by itself can be used as a public space.
Figure 6 & 7 show two of the cultural buildings which are located along Valiasr Street. Also, these buildings are two of the most famous cultural buildings in Tehran. These places are usually the most point of interest of young people because most of cultural events happen over there and also there is no gender segregation in these places.

![Figure 6. City theater (Mirrazavi, 2016)](image)

Figure 6. City theater (Mirrazavi, 2016)

Figure 7 shows one of the historical buildings with a very beautiful garden which is located along Valiasr Street. In addition, a very famous café, that is called Viuna Café, is located in this garden. Tehrani young adults like this place because of its beauty, and they spend time there as a refreshing

![Figure 7. Mellat cinema complex (Mirrazavi, 2016)](image)

Figure 7. Mellat cinema complex (Mirrazavi, 2016)
activity. In addition, there is no gender segregation in its café and they can gather as a group (Mirrazavi, 2016).

Figure 8. Ferdows garden (Mirrazavi, 2016)

Figure 9 shows one of the most significant Tehran parks and figure 10 shows a traditional café in Tehran; both of them are located along Valiasr Street. These places are attractions for young adults for two reasons: First, both of them provide an opportunity for outdoor activity and are good places for young adult’s gatherings. Second, there is no gender segregation in these places.
Figure 9. Mellat park (Mirzazavi, 2016)

Figure 10. Traditional Azari teahouse (Mirzazavi, 2016)
Since this street is very long, a specific part of this street is chosen for this study. The northern part of this street was chosen for the following reasons:

- Historically, more social gathering events happen in the northern part (Khosravi, 2017).
- This part is the only two-way auto part compared to the other parts. There is a limited access by the car to the other parts.
- Since this street is very famous because of its trees, this part is chosen due to the highest density of trees (Guardian, 2013).

The next section will provide a summary about Valiasr Street.

Summary About Valiasr Street

As it was mentioned earlier, Valiasr Street was established in early 19th century and the last development of this street with today’s appearance was between 1953 and 1976. This street, from its establishment, has been a point of interest to many people, from young to old, as a leisure place because of its beautiful nature. This thesis is trying to address its potential as a social public space of Valiasr Street to enhance opportunities for social interaction for all, but especially for young adults.

The next chapter will discuss the methods and procedures that were used in this study.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Overview

The methodology chapter describes three methods of gathering new thesis-specific information about the attitudes and perspectives of Tehrani young adults. Multiple methods of gathering information were used in this study, in order to obtain design-relevant information. Each method provides information that complements the others.
The first method identifies and categorizes the public activities of young adults in Iran by searching through the many different websites (web-searching). This also provided information that later helped the researcher to determine the activities she should encourage, promote and support in her design recommendations for creating acceptable opportunities for social interaction.

Crowdsourcing, through the use of Instagram, was the second method, and focused on gathering information about the street (the area under study). In this approach, young Tehrani adults provided their opinions about public spaces in Tehran. There were two stages of Instagram use. The first stage was an open-ended and non-structured request, by the researcher from young Tehrani people asking them to share their visual data of street in order to investigate and explore their point of view about the features of the location. The second stage was a directed request by the researcher in which people were asked to share their opinion about what the researcher had just shared with them. In the second stage the researcher shared some examples of successful public space designs from the other countries and participants responded by sharing their comments and liking these photos.

And finally the third method provided additional site-specific information about Valiasr Street by getting observational information from on-site observers.

Sources of Information About Attitudes and Perspectives of Tehrani Young Adults

Web-Searching

While the literature review provided published information about many aspects of this study, additional information about social activities of Tehrani young adults was obtained by searching through various websites.
Images of young adult activities found on those websites were downloaded, and categorized according to the types of categories of activities (discussed in the results, Chapter 4). Those that were directly related to this thesis were used in the development of design solutions (Chapter 5).

While the information obtained from these images was very useful, it was still not coming directly from young Tehrani adults who were familiar with the study site, nor did it provide current information directly from them about the study site. Crowdsourcing was the general approach chosen to do that; this played a key role in this thesis research. More specifically, social media (via Instagram) was the platform that was used in the crowdsourcing approach. the target population.

Crowdsourcing of Social Media

An important type of information that can be useful for the design of public spaces information about how people are currently using those existing spaces. Since the researcher was unable to travel to Tehran to perform direct observations of the people in the chosen site, crowdsourcing was used as an alternative method to gather this kind of information.

The name crowdsourcing consists of two words: crowd, which refers to the people who participate in the cause; and sourcing, which refers to the actions that leads to achieving the intended results (Estellés-Aroles & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster, 2006) defines crowdsourcing as “the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers”. There are many definitions for crowdsourcing but in this study we can define crowdsourcing as: “one way of accessing external knowledge” (Burger-Helmchen & Pénin, 2010). There are also various other sources for using this method. During the past few years, Instagram has become one of the most widely used social networks (Boy & Uitermark, 2016) and it has proven that in some scenarios, pictures and short videos can
speak louder than words (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). One study showed that the level of engagement for Instagram is 57%, in terms of the amount of users who check this website at least once a day; and 35% of users visit Instagram multiple times a day (Zolkepli, Hasno, & Kamarulzaman, 2015). Because of this high usage, Instagram was chosen as the tool for crowdsourcing, for this thesis.

In the use of crowdsourcing, there are a number of different approaches, methods, trends, and tools for gathering information. This study focused on communicating with users of social media (Instagram) in two stages. In the first stage, users were asked to post their visual data about Valiasr Street (photos and videos). In the second stage, this researcher shared examples of public space designs from other locations with users and asked them to respond to those designs. The following will describe each stage of crowdsourcing method in detail.

*Stage 1: Open-Ended Request for Images of Valiasr Street*

An Instagram account was created by the author with the name of “Glory of Valiasr”. See Figure 11, below for the home page of Instagram profile. People who currently live in Tehran were invited to provide pictures or short videos of Valiasr Street. Some of these people were identified from the researcher’s followers in her private page on Instagram. Then those people were asked to invite their own friend on Instagram, and this process was continued for the next set of friends. The following letter (in the Persian language) was used to invite people: “Hello everyone, I hope you are fine. I am a graduate architecture student from University at Buffalo and I am working on my thesis with the title of Redefining Valiasr Street: Public Space for Youth. Since the accessibility to the site for observation (Valiasr Street from Parkway bridge to Tajrish square) is difficult for me from here, in the U.S., I am writing to invite you to participate in this thesis. This participation would help me to get to know your point of view about this place. It will also help me to gather
information about the street. To this end, an Instagram page was created with the name of ‘Glory of Valiasr’. Feel free to message your pictures/videos to this page. Then, they will be shared on the page with your name. Your help means a lot. Thank you, Leila.”

At this initial point, they were not asked to take pictures of any specific location or attraction; this was done so that there wouldn’t be any potential locational bias for where they took the pictures. The received images were posted on the Instagram page with the sender’s name (as a method to motivate the users, and it is also a typical way of sharing photos in social media).

Participation from the Tehrani young adults was as follows: There was a total of 118 images and videos which were shared on the site, which showed the interest of people about this street.
Figure 11. The home page of Instagram profile: Glory of Valiasr
In the second stage of crowdsourcing, discussed in detail below, the researcher was more active; examples of public space designs from other locations were shared with the people who responded in the first stage. These respondents were asked to provide their opinions about each public space design example.

**Stage 2: Directed response**

For this stage, the followers were no longer just sending their images in response to a general request from me. Instead I became more directly involved by first sharing more specific information about this research and what the next stage was going to be. I started with sharing announcement posts which explained the steps that were already taken for this thesis as well as the next steps. Later, I posted examples of successful public space designs from the other countries. (These were images I extracted from different websites, such as publicspace.org and archdaily.com, thefuntheory.com, insider.com, designcouncil.com, and so on.) Then, I asked followers to participate and give their opinion about the public spaces.

The purpose of this approach was to get qualitative information about how they felt about public spaces, and what factors might influence different aspects of public spaces in Iran. This open-ended approach of asking their opinions about the public spaces gave them an opportunity to offer more specific information (e.g. about their culture, activities, hobbies, thoughts, boundaries, etc.) about physical, social, or cultural aspects that might impact social interaction among young adults. These opinions were expected to offer information that would help me to suggest recommendations for the design of public space in Tehran (Ch. 5). It is important to note that this method of gathering information was, by the nature of social media, complex and open-ended.
To complement the crowdsourcing approach, another method was used to gather direct observations of specific site features and user behaviors. That method (Expert Observations) will be discussed below.

**Expert Observations**

Two on-site observers were asked to provide more in-depth observations of selected street locations (since the researcher was unable to go to the site to gather this information directly). The goal of these observations was two-fold: the first goal was to get an overview of the location. The second goal was to gather information about the users’ behavior. For this purpose, the observers were asked to take note of the type of activities they saw from the users. This information was intended to provide complementary information to the other methods, all of which could inform the design recommendations.

**Summary**

In this chapter, three methods were used to gather information. First, web-searching was used in order to identify and categorize social activities of young adults in Tehran. Then social media crowdsourcing (Instagram use) was used in two phases to gather information about Valiasr Street, as well as opinions about public spaces in other locations. Finally, with the help of expert observers, additional on-site information about site conditions and user behavior was obtained.

The results of these information gathering methods are provided in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Results & Discussion

Overview

This chapter contains the results and discussion for each of the methods described above. The aim of this chapter is to provide a results-based platform for developing and proposing recommendations in the final chapter.

Results:

This research used multiple methods of gathering information about young adults’ behaviors and perceptions of public space in Tehran. The first part describes the findings about the Tehrani young adults’ activities which were obtained from web-searching. The second and third parts presents information of the used from the two-part crowdsourcing method. The following lists the three sets of results:

- Part 1: Social media results of web-searching: Examples of young adult behaviors
- Part 2: Social media results of an open-ended request from the researcher by way of social media
- Part 3: Results of a directed response by the researcher from social media
Part 1: Results of Web-Searching

Based on the collection and categorization of information from web-searching, Table 1 describes typical social activities of the Tehrani young adults, as depicted on web-sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Gathering in coffee shops and restaurants | - Friends gather to relax for a while and talk  
- Celebrating birthdays  
- Playing games |
| Hanging out in outdoor areas such as streets | - Friends Hanging out to relax for a while and walk  
- A good hobby to get away from indoor places  
- Playing outdoor games |
| Driving back and forth in streets | - It is not the healthiest way to socialize with new people but it is the almost the only way (especially if of opposite genders)  
- It is often interrupted by police officers  
- This activity causes a lot of traffic |
| Going to cinemas and theaters | - A great place to raised their cultural values  
- A good hobby to spend their spare time  
- A great place to gather and see each other |
| Photography | - A new hobby for the youth to get out and spend their time in the society  
- Photos are shared on social media to show people’s daily life |
| Water fight or snow fight | - The good way to release energy and tension  
- It is seasonal |
| Historical and cultural tours | - A good way to spend their weekends and holidays  
- There is less control in this programs and the can be themselves  
- Also a good place to interact with new people |

Each behavior category and the typical location for that activity are described in greater detail below. Images all come from public websites.
• **Coffee Shops and Restaurants:** Gathering in coffee shops and restaurants is one of the most popular outdoor activities among the both gender of Tehrani young adults since it is acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other here. Figure 12 shows the examples of each behavior and activities of Tehrani young adults inside of the coffee shops and restaurants.

![Figure 12. Gathering in coffee shops and restaurants](image)

*Positive points:*

- Usually among friends to relax for a while and talk.
- Also they used cafés and restaurant for social events, like celebrating their birthday.
- Sometimes board games are played in these places.
- Acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other.
• **Outdoor Areas:** Hanging out in outdoor public areas such as streets is also popular and again, it is acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other here. Figure 13 shows the examples of each behavior and activities of Tehrani young adults in outdoor areas.

![Images of outdoor areas](image)

*Figure 13. Hanging out in outdoor areas*

**Characteristics:**

- Usually among friends to relax for a while and walk.
- A good hobby to get away from indoor places and to be in touch with the outside world.
- Outdoor games are often played in these places.
- Acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other.
• **Streets and Autos:** There is a popular car-related activity that Tehrani young people have. They use their cars to attract the attention of others; in some major streets there are often large numbers of cars being driven back and forth during the evening. Although this activity certainly occurs in other cultures and countries, it is particularly important for young adults here because of the rarity of other opportunities and places for young adults to acceptably socialize with new people. However, there are negative consequences of these activities: Even though it might not be the healthiest way to socialize with new people, it is the almost the only way. Figure 14 shows the examples of each behavior and activities of Tehrani young adults in driving back and forth in streets.

![Figure 14. Driving back and forth in streets](image-url)
Negative points:

- As it appears in the bottom of figure 14, it is often interrupted by police officers.
- This activity causes a lot of traffic, particularly at certain times of the day or night.

- **Performances:** Cinemas and theaters attract the young generation a lot. Figure 15 illustrates the examples of typical behaviors and activities of Tehrani young adults in cinemas and theaters.

Positive points:

- These locations provide a great opportunity to learn about their cultural values.
- A good hobby to spend their spare time. These places are acceptable for young adults to go and also these places are allowed for mixed gender.
- A great place to gather and see each other.
- Acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other.
• **Photography**: This might be a secondary activity in other countries but in Iran there is a recent and growing hobby among the youth to use DSLR cameras to take photos in different parts of the city where the different city elements provide a good opportunity for photography. Figure 16 illustrates examples of each behavior and activities of Tehrani young adults in outdoor for photography.

![Figure 16. Photography](image)

*Positive points:*

- It has become a new opportunity for the youth to get out and spend their time together in society.
- Photos are usually shared on social media to show people’s daily life.
- Acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other.
• **Games:** During summer and in the hot weather young people gather in various areas to play water fight games. Similarly, during winter they gather in almost the same places to snow fight. Figure 17 shows the examples of the behaviors and activities of Tehrani young adults interacting together while playing outdoor games.

![Figure 17. Games: water fight or snow fight](image)

*Positive point:*

- Provides a good way to release energy and tension.

*Negative point:*

- It is seasonal; they cannot have these outdoor games all the time.
• **Touring:** The youth tend to go on tours to find out more about their own history and culture that increase their maturity; these tours are held in both inside and outside the city. Figure 18 shows the examples of some behaviors and activities of Tehrani young adults in their group traveling.

![Group traveling](image)

*Figure 18. Group traveling*

**Positive points:**

- A good way to spend their weekends and holidays.
- There is less control in this programs and the can be themselves.
- Also a good place to interact with new people.
- Acceptable for opposite gender people to be with each other

This part was about the results of the gathered information from web-searching. Notice that most of the images show both young men and women together, when in reality this is often not
acceptable behavior. Perhaps the websites don’t wish to call attention to the impact of social taboos on young adult interactions. The permissibility of having mixed gender events is relative, as an example, although in concerts both genders are allowed, dancing is not allowed. The next part describes the results of an open-ended request from the researcher to the followers by way of social media.

Part 2: Results of an Open-Ended Request from the Researcher by Way of Social Media

The first stage of using social media to collect information from the followers of the Glory of Valiasr site resulted in the collection of 118 images and videos of Valiasr Street. Two types of analyses were carried out by the researcher: (1) a content analysis of the images received from the followers, (2) and mapping the locations of a sample of the images, along Valiasr. Carrying out these two steps provided helpful information for the researcher, useful for the development of recommendations to be discussed in the final chapter. These steps are explained in more detail below.

Step 1. Analysis of Images: Image Categories and Descriptions

A content analysis of the obtained images/videos was used to identify sets of categories which described the images; 8 different categories were found. These categories were created based on comments by the followers when they shared their photos, as well as on the researcher’s personal knowledge of the site. The second step was to determine the main characteristics of each category. Table 2 shows the eight categories of elements in or along Valiasr that were represented by the images.
Table 2. Image categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Categories</th>
<th>Percentage of Visual Data/Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalks of Valiasr</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arched tree lined views along the Valiasr street</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building facades in Valiasr</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic on Valiasr</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple trees along Valiasr</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streams of water near the sidewalks</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky view of Valiasr</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic monuments on sidewalks of Valiasr</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each category is described in more detail below. In each category has some positive and negative points which are based on participant’s comments and also researcher’s perception.

1. **The Sidewalks of Valiasr:**

Twenty-eight pictures out of 118 (23%) were submitted which focused primarily on sidewalk issues along this street. Some of these suggest opportunities for improvement; others provide examples of things that seem to be working well for pedestrians. Figure 19 shows some of the examples of the photos of sidewalks of Valiasr Street.
Positive points:

- The shading of trees on the sidewalk makes it an optimal environment when people are walking along, especially on hot days.
- Another positive element in portions of the street is the existence of street performances. This provides an opportunity for people to stop. It also provides them with an opportunity to talk to one another about the performance, to gather in a culturally acceptable way.
- The existence of streams of water, adjacent to the sidewalk, is an attractive component along portions of this sidewalk.

Negative points:

- The type of concrete paving slabs used in the sidewalk are shown in 80% of the images in this category. More than 45% of these images provided information about the material, color and design of these paving slabs. In most cases they are neither appropriate for use nor attractive to look at.
- Availability of exterior furniture, for sitting, gathering, or standing, is relatively rare.
- Additionally, the arrangement of the existing furniture is not designed to encourage pedestrians to use it.
- About 70% of the sidewalk related pictures showed that the number of pedestrians is very low at times. Some of the issues discussed above suggest possible reasons for that.
- The number of pedestrians present on the street during the day were less than their numbers during the night. At night, people tend to be outside of their home more than during the day.
2. **Arched tree Lined Portions of the Street:**

Of the submitted photos, 26 pictures out of 118 (22%) were taken from the middle of the street. In this part of Valiasr Street there is no a sidewalk for pedestrians. There is just a center line of curb-like material which divides the street in half. There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the content of this category of the images. Figure 20 shows typical examples of the photos of arched tree lined of Valiasr Street.

![Figure 20. The photos of arched tree lined views along Valiasr](image)

*Positive points:*

- One of the noticeable things that is very interesting, is the attention given to the presence of arched trees lining this portion of the street. For example, more that 70% of these photos focus on the center point of the arched trees. The images that were taken at night show that this street is very bright at nighttime. Therefore, it will provide more of an opportunity for nightlife than a space that is darker and may be less safe.
- The pictures that were taken at night are very colorful because of the lights which were applied at the base of the trees.

*Negative points:*

- The middle of the street does not provide any place for the pedestrians to safely sit or stand on while taking photographs of memorable views.
3. **Building Facades along Valiasr:**

Based on the submitted photos, a total of 19 pictures out of 118 (16%) focused on various building facades along Valiasr Street. These images demonstrate some interesting aspects that can be seen in figure 21 below.

![Figure 21. Examples of photos of building facades along Valiasr street](image)

**Positive point:**

- The old urban texture of Tehran façade, that mostly consists of bricks, was a noticeable point for people to photograph. The façade material seemed to be of interest to them, perhaps in a nostalgic way, or as a way of representing the history of the street.

**Negative points:**

- The facades of some of the old restaurants and stores are nostalgic for people based on their comments.
- There is a lot of construction equipment shown in these images that would hinder the flow of passage along the sidewalks.
- There are examples of some ruined and damaged facades.
4. Traffic on Valiasr:

Based on the submitted photos, around 18 pictures out of 118 (15%) are from traffic in Valiasr. Because this is one of the most important streets of the city, there is usually heavy traffic. On weekends, the amount of traffic is considerably heavier than other days. Figure 22 shows some examples of traffic in Valiasr Street, which illustrate some important points about the street.

![Figure 22. The photos of traffic on Valiasr street](image)

**Positive points:**

- The street provides a location for one of the entertainment activities for the younger generation. That is, for them to drive around in their cars and socialize with other young drivers in Valiasr Street.
- The arched tree lined view of the street is easier to see when you are driving.

**Negative points:**

- Based on comments from the followers who sent photos, the existence of heavy traffic is one of the significant flaws of this street.
- Throughout the street no parking is allowed along the street.
Most of the photos were taken after 5 pm. Also, the pictures that were taken at night, were usually taken during the weekends. That would be when the youth are most likely to be using the street.

5. Maple Trees of Valiasr:

Based on the submitted photos, around 9 pictures out of 118 (7%) focus on the trees of the street. One of the most significant features of this street is its Maple trees. Figure 23 illustrates some examples of the maple trees of Valiasr Street.

![Figure 23. The photos of maple trees of Valiasr street](image)

Positive points:

- The fact that people focused specifically on the trees, as the subject of their pictures, implies that they have positive feelings about the street trees.
- Four of the images focused on trees whose trunks have been wrapped in decorative cloth. This suggests that the trees are important to people along the street, that people are taking care and maintaining them.
➢ The tallness of trees is one of the key elements of Valiasr Street based on the comments.
➢ All of these points suggest that, somehow, the trees of Valiasr Street represent some aspect of identity of the street.

6. Stream of Water near the Sidewalks:

Eight of the submitted photos (6%) are of the stream of water that occasionally is seen running along Valiasr street. Figure 24 illustrates some examples of the photos of the water stream along the Valiasr Street.

![Figure 24. The photos of the water stream near the sidewalks](image)

*Positive points:*
➢ The sound of stream of water is pleasant for pedestrians and people seating nearby.
➢ The flower kiosks near the stream are an attraction for people.
➢ The colorful lighting beneath the flowing water during the night is attractive for people.

*Negative point:*

➢ The overall maintenance of the stream of water is not good. There is garbage in the stream; also tiles and curbs are broken or in poor condition.

7. **Sky View of Valiasr:**

Smaller number of photos, around 6 pictures out of 118 (5%), were views of the sky above Valiasr Street. There are some points that can be concluded from the content of this category of the images. Figure 25 shows some of the examples of the photos of sky view of Valiasr Street.

![Figure 25. The photos of sky view of Valiasr street](image)

*Positive point:*

➢ Long trees with their arch on the top is an attraction for participants based on their comments.

*Negative point:*

➢ The construction equipment and ongoing construction projects are blocking the sky view based on participants’ comments.
8. Public Art along Valiasr:

Four pictures out of 118 (3%) show examples of public art that is located along the sidewalks of Valiasr Street. Figure 26 shows some examples of the types of public art along the sidewalk of Valiasr Street.

![Image of public art along Valiasr Street]

Figure 26. The photos of artistic monuments in sidewalk of Valiasr street

*Positive points:*
- Based on the comments, people felt that most of these artistic works are really interesting and meaningful.
- Based on the comments, people love to see artistic works along this street, and they think it would be good to have more.

*Negative points:*
- According to the comments, some of them are not appropriate for being located on this street based on their concepts, size and application.
- Some of these monuments do not seem to be as successful as others because they are not easily visible to pedestrians.
The detailed outcome of this analysis can be found in appendix 2. All images, associated with each of the categories discussed above, can be found in this appendix.

**Step 2. Mapping the Images to Their Location on Valiasr Street**

After categorizing the gathered images, the next step was locating the images on the site-plan of the area under study. In order to accurately map the submitted images to the street, after all the images were gathered the author sent a street map to the all senders and asked them to mark the locations that they took their photos. The site plan of the street, with its associated images, can be seen in appendix 3.

**Part 3: Results of Directed Response from Social Media**

In this phase, followers were asked to give their opinions about a selection of design examples around the world. This was intended to give them an opportunity to provide comments that related not only to the images, but to also include information about physical, social, or cultural aspects that might impact social interaction among young adults in Iran.

These responses were gathered from the followers and then examined by a content analysis approach (sorting and developing categories of responses). This information was used to define some dimensions for public space design based on followers’ participation in the directed response.

The following results are a summary of the categories that describe the ways in which people responded to the public space images. Detailed information about these categories can be seen in Appendix 4. These dimensions were defined based on the points of views of online participators. The users want to be more control over some aspects of the public space or they want
enhancements over some other aspects of the public space and they want some other aspects to be more appropriate.

**Control of:**
- Users’ Behavior
- Cleanliness and order of the surroundings

** Appropriateness:**
- Imposed Religious and Political Limitations

**Enhancing:**
- Safety
- Aesthetic
- Enjoyability
- Sociability
- Comfortability
- Memorability
- Encouraging Physical Activity

The next section compares the dimensions of public space previously discussed in the literature review (Western and Iranian dimensions) to the dimensions extracted from the information obtained via social media, in this research.

**Comparison of Dimensions of Public Space**

The dimensions of public space that were discussed in the literature review (Western vs Iran) and the dimensions of public space that were found from an examination of the information obtained by social media in this research will be addressed in this section. The comparisons will primarily be made by visual information.
Figure 27, below, shows the dimensions of public space that were discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). They represent the views of two well-established authors, who used extensive literature reviews to develop their dimensions. This figure was explained in detail in the literature chapter and is brought here again in order to help in the understanding of the figures that follow it.

As can be seen, there are different dimensions in each; however, there is considerable overlap of concepts.

The following figure (Figure 28) provides a comparison of the dimensions found through an examination of social media (shown in the new categories above) to the dimensions shown by Mehta for western countries. Again, each dimension corresponding to Western countries is assigned with a color; with the help of these colors, it is easier to see the overlapping aspects. For example, both models appear to address the same general issues, however they differ, in terms of how they are conceptualized.
This suggests that in general, the specifics (even though organized differently) still are relevant to all. That would provide a stronger base for making design recommendations, using this information, as long as there is an awareness of culturally specific aspect.

The following figure (Figure 29) provides the same type of comparison, but it is between dimensions of public space in Iran and dimensions of public space that identified through social media (where the responses came not from a literature review but through young adults living in Tehran). The four dimensions in the rectangle are related to the dimensions of public space in Iran and dimensions that are represented in the branches are related to social media.
It can be seen that there are overlaps between the public space dimensions of western countries, Iran and Tehrani youth, via social media. One interesting finding is that although some aspects of public space exist in both cultures, users have different perceptions about their definition. One of these differences is the perception of safety. See Figure 30, below. In the literature, it is more related to crime and accidents but the people in social media participation referred to it as imposed political and religious limitations, such as the use of the Hijab for women, or the common official presence of morality police (Gashte Ershad). Another difference is about the control aspect. The
social media respondents were more concerned about users’ behavior when they were faced with attractive elements in public space such as the movable furniture or the memory wall, since they showed concerns about how the users might misuse these elements.

Figure 30. Examples of the comparison between Western countries and crowdsourcing

In the next chapter of this study, the final recommendations will be proposed and explained based on the results from the thesis.
Chapter 5: Recommendations

Overview

Unlike many architecture theses which are focused on design solutions for a specific location, this research has taken a different direction. This study provides two types of recommendations: 1) general, cultural-based recommendations for designing public space in Tehran, and 2) methodological recommendations for researchers who might consider crowdsourcing as a method of gathering information from people they cannot interact with, in person (for example, gathering information about a location that the researcher is unable to access directly).

This study has focused on a specific location in Tehran (Valiasr Street) and collected information about both the site conditions and young adults’ behaviors and perceptions of that site, by the use of a relatively unexplored method: crowdsourcing. However, the recommendations for public space in this thesis are not limited to the specific location of Valiasr Street in Tehran. These recommendations offer guidance that can be used by any designer who is interested in creating a public space design solution for Tehran or any other city in Iran.

Key Aspects for Designing Public Space in Tehran

The main purpose of this section is to offer a guide for designing urban public spaces in Tehran that allow and support a high level of social interaction among young adults. Public space plays a significant role in every metropolis by providing a platform for connecting people to each other and to the environment. And Tehran, as a metropolis and capital city of the country with valuable history and cultures, needs to have public spaces that are able to achieve this goal. Therefore, if a public space designer considers the proposed criteria before designing an urban physical
environment in Tehran or elsewhere in Iran, his/her work should be able to address many of the implicit and explicit social aspects of Tehran.

Multiple sources of information have provided the basis of the following recommendations, for public spaces in Tehran. They include:

1. Archival information based on ideas and information from the past (e.g., a comparison of literature reviews of Iranian public spaces to public spaces of western countries)
2. Information obtained via web-searching
3. Current conditions and behaviors in public spaces in Tehran, primarily based on the use of two stages of crowdsourcing via Instagram
4. Personal knowledge and experience of the author, who has lived in Tehran since birth.

From the use of Instagram (crowdsourcing), it was possible to gather information from Tehrani young adults about public space in terms of a) types of public spaces on Valiasr Street that were of interest to them, and b) their perceptions about a variety of worldwide examples of successful public spaces. In addition, the literature review and the author’s first-hand experience of living in Tehran provided insight about the nature of existing cultural, social and political aspects in Tehran that also impact general conditions of public space there.

**General Recommendations**

General recommendations for the spatial organization of public space, intended to support interaction, are proposed below. These recommendations are intended to be for Valiasr street, although they are relevant for other public spaces in Iran as well. These are organized in the following section:
General Recommendation 1. Create a Variety of Small Plazas Along the Street: Use a Variety of Different Design Elements Within These Small Plazas

Herdoiza (2011) says “the potential for social integration depends on possibilities for social encounter and exchange among people. In this sense, the use of public space, and particularly the plaza, is an effective instrument for social cohesion.” There are opportunities along Valiasr street for smaller plazas to be created. Small plazas along the street can maximize the opportunities for social interaction without taking up a lot of space. Specific recommendations for some of the general features (including physical and cultural features) that need to be included in plaza spaces are presented below:

Specific Recommendations:

1. Lighting
Because there are so many different ways of using lighting in design, designers should utilize a variety of types of lighting for different types of plazas. The main point is that designers should think about the many possible ways of lighting that can be used to make the space special. For example, they can provide special lighting that can be used on trees or inside of furniture for making the space ‘alive’ and ‘attractive’ during the night, since people prefer to go out during the night in good weather or in hot climates.

2. Artistic Elements
Make the space more interesting and attractive by providing artistic works and interactive elements, such as using conceptual sculptures in a plaza. Figures 30 and 31 show examples of the use of artistic elements in public space.
3. Materials

One of the most important tools for every designer is the type of material that can be used in the design of spaces. For example, the use of reflective materials, (such as mirrors, or mirror-like materials, in an innovative shape and scale) could serve as a focal point that would attract young people to a public space. However, based on the Tehrani participant comments and the literature review, Tehran’s social taboos must also be considered. Mirrors should be used in a very sensitive and careful way. Young people might feel sensitive if they are too easily or directly visible by others, in the reflective surface of an object. Therefore, the mirror material needs to be used artistically (for example, applying small pieces of mirror-like material in a geometric pattern, which would prevent the appearance of someone’s whole, non-distorted image). Figures 31 and 32 are some good examples of installations using reflective material which provide fragmented reflections.

Figure 31. An example of reflective material used in an artistic element

More information at: www.archdaily.com/
Figure 32. An example of reflective material used in an artistic element (sculpture by Anish Kapoor)


Also, figures 31 and 32 are the examples of both recommendations for artistic elements and materials.

4. Technology
Using various types of technology is another interesting and important way to make a space more interesting and attractive. These days, technology and design are often combined together; they are inseparable from each other. The online participation comments about technology suggested that there are various opportunities for the application of technology in Tehran’s public spaces. These include LED screen displays/touchable LED screen displays, and LED sensors or digital musical sensors (applied to floors or walls). For example, the application of LED sensors/ Digital musical sensors in floors can evoke young people to use them, leading to physical movements among them.
However, these physical movements could be perceived as dance movements by the political and religious views, and dance movements in public spaces are forbidden actions. Therefore, to provide safety for users and avoid conflicts with political and cultural views, the sensors could be designed in a way to provide exercise movements instead of dance movements among users.

LED touchable screens in a public space of Tehran (allowing people to write/draw on them) could also provide a platform for people to express their thoughts or feelings. However, these elements should be designed and controlled in an appropriate way, to prevent people from writing inappropriate slogans or curses. Also these screens could show nostalgic programs such as old childhood cartoons or TV shows. Or they could show cultural programs, such as “Hafez Poetry” to enhance young people’s cultural levels. Figures 33, 34, 35 and 36 represent examples of people’s interaction with touchable screens. Interaction with a non-person object, with which others are also interacting, can lead to social interaction among the participants.

According to the social media participants, one of the major concerns of Iranian young adults about the installation of different kinds of interactive instruments (such as interactive walls or touchable screens) and modern playing instruments, e.g., glowing swings) in public spaces is how to control and maintain them. So an urban designer, who wants to apply interactive instruments in public space in Tehran, should also consider both maintenance and management plans for each instrument. Additionally, it is important to control the space to avoid having a messy and/or uncomfortable place. For
instance, when a designer proposes the use of an interactive wall with touchable screen that everyone can type their post upon, it would be necessary to install a software program inside that instrument which recognizes unacceptable slogans or curses and does not let people post such things. Therefore, by controlling installations which are available for use in public space, people can have a more pleasant public space in which social interaction can more easily occur.

The following examples of the use of technology for public use can be used in multiple ways but in all cases, they involve the interaction of people with the features. That in turn, provides a culturally acceptable opportunity for other participants to interact with one another.

Figure 33 is one of the examples of interactive screen as a technology instrument. There is a screen with a camera in public space that people can see themselves inside of the screen and it makes them to stop and do something funny.

Figure 33. An example of interactive screen as a technology instrument

Figure 34 shows the other example of interactive screen as a technology instrument which captures the kinetic movements of the user and maps them into the screen.

![Figure 34. An example of interactive screen as a technology instrument](image)


Figure 35 shows an example of touchable screen as a technology instrument which is used as an opportunity for game.

![Figure 35. An example of touchable screen as a technology instrument is used as a game](image)

Figure 36 illustrates an example of the screen that is serving an opportunity for people in the area to view and talk about the media on the screen.

Figure 36. An example of screen as a technology instrument


5. **Street Furniture**

- Fixed seating, e.g. ledges, fountains, sculptures, benches, chairs, stairs, etc. should be provided.

- Seating areas, around the trees that have water nearby, can make an optimal space for users to sit and relax. It could also provide opportunities for interaction. Figure 37 shows an example of providing a seating area around the trees. This simple recommendation could be used for some of the maple trees of Valiasr street.
Flexible seating should be provided, especially furniture which could be arranged by a single person. For every designer, one of the important tools that he/she has for designing a space is the material that can be used. One of these includes furniture in public space. Also, the arrangement of furniture plays an important role in public urban space. Unlike other metropolises where flexible furniture is used a lot in their public spaces, there are few cases of the use of flexible furniture in the public spaces of Tehran. Figures 38, 39, 40 and 41 illustrate some good examples of movable furniture.

Figures 38 and 39 show how one type of furniture can be used in multiple ways to support different kinds of social interaction.
Figure 38. An example of flexible furniture


Figure 39. An example of flexible furniture


Figure 40 shows more examples of how this type of furniture can be arranged to support social interaction.
Figure 40. An example of flexible furniture


Figure 41 shows a different version of flexible furniture. In this case, there are individual elements that can be rearranged as needed.

6. **Semi Atrium/Atrium**

Providing a semi atrium/atrium could be another way of providing a gathering area for young adults (as well as others). These places are very appropriate spots for small street performances, or for small exhibitions by musicians and artists. These types of events are often announced by young people through social media. Figures 42 and 43 shows some good examples of semi atrium/atrium places.

The following atrium examples can be used in multiple ways. They encourage people to interact with their features.

Figures 42 and 43 (below, in the section about transparency) show examples that make a space more functional and attractive. For example, figure 42 allows/provides an exhibition inside of the atrium. Figure 43 shows an atrium that can be used as a small gathering area for a group of friends or a good spot for small street performance.

![Figure 42. An example of atriums](image)

General Recommendation 2. Transparency: Creating Semi-Private Spaces in a Public Area

In regard to the existing constraints concerning social interaction, especially of young adults, in public areas in Iran, there are some recommendations can mitigate the effect of these limitations. In Iran most of the rules about public interaction have been institutionalized in both of culture and society: therefore, it is not something that can be easily changed, or even changed at all. This part of the recommendation section tries to improve some aspects of public space, without confronting these rules. It and provides solutions by considering and respecting these culturally imposed limitations.

For example, older people often feel the need to monitor young adults’ behavior. Although some monitoring is needed, some freedom should be given to young adults. In order to provide a balance between these two aspects, the use of semitransparent partitions can be a good way of providing semi-private spaces in public spaces. This recommendation can support comfortability and safety
aspects for young people, as well as being an attempt to reflect cultural values. Figures 44, 45, 46 and 47 demonstrate some good examples of semitransparent materials that could be used as partitions, and also provide beauty, to enhance the use of those areas.

Figure 44. An example of semitransparent partitions

More information at: http://www.thereference-online.com/gerriets-art-curtain

Figure 45. An example of semitransparent partitions

More information at: https://twitter.com/MGProjekt
Figure 46. An example of semitransparent partitions

More information at:
https://www.artfire.com/ext/shop/product_view/stainedglassheirlooms/6094432/clear_textures_geometric_abstract_beveled_stained_glass_window_panel/fine_art/glass/stained_glass/panel

Figure 47. An example of semitransparent partitions

More information at: http://www.stainedglassheirlooms.net/
As shown above, these examples can be used in multiple ways. But in all cases, they allow quiet interaction among people. Semitransparent partitions, used in different locations and in different ways, could offer acceptable opportunities for social interaction among young adults and for all people. In fact, it allows people to be together with some privacy but they are still under some surveillance because they are partially observable.

Summary

Two major aspects of design (the use of small plazas as a place to support social interaction, and the use of transparency of materials, to provide some level of privacy which could support social interaction) have been addressed in this section. Within each, many of the specific recommendations are applicable for many different locations with the public realm of the street. However, in this thesis, these recommendations were additionally fine-tuned to address issues of cultural appropriateness for Iran. It is quite important that there be an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences in the design of public spaces. This thesis attempts to address those cultural issues in Iran in these recommendations, where relevant.

The next section will discuss methodological issues related to this research.

Methodological Aspects of Using Social Media as a Source of Information

An innovative method for gathering information, crowdsourcing by social medial (Instagram), was used in this study primarily because the author was not able to have direct personal access either to the site location or the people who used it. However, the technological availability of crowdsourcing provided a very interesting alternative way of gathering that information. In fact, it seems possible that it might be a very useful platform for researchers to gather information that previously has been considered to be nearly inaccessible information.
In this section, the researcher will provide lessons learned that she gained from using this method. Also, recommendations for using this method of gathering information more effectively will also be made.

**Lessons Learned from Using Social Media as a Method of Gathering Information**

As a quick review, the process of using crowdsourcing in this study was carried out in two phases:

*Phase 1 Steps*

1. A public page was created on Instagram
5. An invitation message, with a brief explanation about the public page, was provided to viewers
6. The page asked viewers to go to the Valiasr street page and upload visual data (video and photos) of the street, with their optional comments
7. People shared their visual data on the Instagram page. The researcher (also the site administrator) posted that visual data, and added the sender’s name on the Instagram page
8. The researcher then categorized and mapped the gathered photos
9. Researcher made a diary of every single activity from the Instagram page

Phase 1 summary: This procedure for information gathering continued for 2 months. There were three important points that encouraged people to participate and trust the page: (1) Gradually by continuing to follow the page, they found their information was really useful for the researcher. So, they felt that they were doing something important for their city. (2) When they noticed that the copyright law was considered in the page by mentioning their name, they participated more. (3) When they saw the amount of attention their photos received, by likes or comments of other
followers, they were encouraged to gather more visual data. The amount of their curiosity about the final output was noticeable. In other words, they got more involved with the whole process and expressed curiosity about receiving more updated news. This phase took about six months in total.

One of the major lessons that researcher learned from this method was including every single data information in my diary. This diary helped her for extracting information easily. Generally, this point should be considered by everyone: crowdsourcing is an exploratory, and qualitative, method of gathering information. No one cannot predict exactly the types or amount of information that is obtained. Therefore, one must expect to spend a lot of time on this type of unstructured qualitative information. In contrast, more structured requests for information, about more specific issues (e.g. a direct interview or a survey of people) typically would need less time to gather and analyze the information.

**Phase 2 Steps**

1. A summary of the information gathered from the first phase was shared with all followers on the Instagram page
2. Researcher shared an announcement in the page about the next steps of the research
3. Researcher shared examples of other countries’ public space designs
4. People respond to the shared examples by their likes, views and comments

Phase 2 summary: In this second phase of crowdsourcing, my role as a researcher/admin was more active than phase one. When the researcher started to summarize information from people’s responses in this second phase, she realized that there was a lot of valuable and interesting points of view that she had not anticipated.
Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Social Media

This method, as with all other methods of gathering information, has both advantages and disadvantages. The followings are ones which are based on this researcher’s experience:

**Advantages**

- Many types of information, about many issues, were gained by the researcher.
  
  One of the advantages of this method is that the amount and the richness and complexity of the information can provide unexpected information. This can, in turn, lead to questions for new research.

- Accessibility:
  
  Although gathering information for literature reviews, for example, is accessible by using virtual libraries, gathering information and doing in-person, on-site observations and interviews is hard to do remotely. However, crowdsourcing provides a platform for gathering on-site information from people actually using the site, when the researcher is unable to go to that site to gather information directly.

- Immediacy of information:
  
  Information can be gathered from people about perceptions and actions that are occurring at that particular time, in the location of interest. Current events, and immediate responses to conditions and locations, can be gathered at the moment in time in which they occur.

- Increased Freedom of speech:
  
  Based on the cultural issues and boundaries that currently exist in Iran, social media provides a platform for people, especially young adults, to feel freer to say what they
think. One of the advantages of using this method is when people agree to participate, they feel comfortable in sharing their opinions. Thus, the information that they share may more accurately reflect their real feelings.

**Disadvantages**

- **Time:**
  One of the disadvantages of using crowdsourcing as a dynamic method is the consideration of the time it takes to carry out a multi-stage process, such as was used in this thesis. Convincing people to participate virtually took more time than was expected, by this author. (So, if you want to do a master’s thesis in one year, you should start to run your crowdsourcing method very early in your process.)

- **Need for having a constant on-line presence, as an administrator:**
  When you use social media for gathering information that needs people’s continuing participation over time, you have to be always online and active. This is not like running a typical online survey where people interact only once, by themselves. Crowdsourcing is an interactive communication, so whomever is using this method should always be online, present and active. This will take more time than conducting a typical survey (especially in terms of time to gather the information).

- **Need for the administrator to be cautious about the validity of the information that is obtained:** As it was mentioned in the method section, there are several trends, ways and tools for using social media as a crowdsourcing method. When you are using social media, such as Instagram, you should be focused on information that is relevant to the area of the research. You should not be distracted by the vast amount of information that is available in social media. In the process of gathering information
via social media, the researcher might encounter non-relevant or misleading information from a participant. Therefore, the researcher must be cautious about accepting all responses as accurate and true (the reliability and validity of the content). Remember that this method is an exploratory method.

This is a method that is still relatively new as a research method, and there are many aspects that require further, more controlled, research. But it seems to have great promise as an alternative (or complementary) method of doing qualitative research. It was certainly very valuable for this thesis in providing access to current information, from young adults in Tehran, who were providing direct information about the study site.

Complexity of Information Received over Time on Social Media

Social media certainly facilitates sharing of information from those who are using the particular form. As such, it provides a stream of information that occurs over time, thus the information becomes very complex. For example, somebody does something one day, somebody else does something a day later, and somebody else may respond within four days or four hours. Or they go back and forth at the same time. Basically these are almost real-time social interactions that are occurring through time. It becomes very difficult to follow the ‘thread’ of information. The best solution that the researcher had for controlling this complexity was to make a diary by recording every single bit of data, day by day. From this mapping of the information through time, it was easier to examine and evaluate the information that was later used as the basis of these recommendations for design.
Limits of this Type of Research

Although the fundamental concept of using crowdsourcing as the primary method of gathering information for this thesis was due to inaccessibility of the location and target population under study, it should be understood that it is also one of the limits of this research. Crowdsourcing is a beneficial tool for researchers who do not have direct access to their research area; it can even be beneficial to researchers that have direct access to their study subjects by being used as a complementary source of information. However, direct access to a study site, and those people who are using it, is also an important aspect of research.

Also, the amount of participation (number of people involved) in the use of crowdsourcing is an important issue; it should be noted that a small group of a certain population may not reflect all of that population. Furthermore, the respondents self-selected themselves into the study. If they weren’t interested, they didn’t participate. This also may limit generalizations to the population under consideration.

Opportunities for Future Research

The goal of this research was to answer a number of questions about how young adults in different countries might use public space as a location for social interaction. One of these questions was “How is public space defined in different cultures?” To answer this question, dimensions of public space in Western countries were compared with dimensions of public space in Iran. This comparison was essential for this research. However, as an opportunity for future studies, more cultures should be included in these types of studies (e.g.: countries from the Eastern world or more countries from the Middle East). Also, ‘Western culture’ is a very broad term, and should be divided into more specific countries, e.g., from Europe and the continents of North and South America. Dimensions of public space, different design circumstances, and cultural issues must
surely all play a part influencing how, where, and when social interaction among young adults might occur.

**Conclusion**

This research resulted in two major sets of information. The primary set of information was upon improving the design of public spaces for young adults, and was based on analyzing the information gathered from numerous methods. The second set of information was primarily methodological in nature, and was intended for researchers who are considering the use of crowdsourcing for gathering information from people.

Since crowdsourcing is a relatively new internet-based method of gathering information for research purposes, it should be recognized that there are many aspects that require further research. The method that was used in this research (the use of social media) is exploratory. Furthermore, many aspects of the interaction of the participants were not able to be carried out in fully controlled conditions. Although the participants’ inputs were not always focused on the topic under study, they were rich in content overall. This method of gathering information was still able to provide valuable information, from which design recommendations could be made.
References


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Details of Dimensions of Public Space (Western Countries and Iran)

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed description of each dimension of public space in western countries and Iran.

General Dimensions of Public Space in Western Countries

Evaluating Public Space by: Vikas Mehta

Inclusiveness
- Space of participation
  - The collective voice
  - The differences and conflicts of various groups play out
  - Inclusiveness refers to range of activities and different groups that a public space supports
- Access to public space is concerned with two aspects—the ability to reach the space and to enter and use it

Meaningful Activities
- This paper measures meaningfulness in the context of the ability for space to support activity and sociability and the resultant place attachment
- Tolerance into a familiarity with the environment and become a routine, creating a sense of place and place-attachment
- It has been suggested that associations with people, places and events contribute to sense of familiarity and belonging to the community
- A sense of belonging and emotional attachment along with an ability to influence and fulfill certain needs is required to achieve a sense of community in a neighborhood in order to define it as a community rather than just a group of people
- Using explicit means and controls
- Perceptions play a significant role in making places appear safe or unsafe
- Safety in a person's ability to feel safe from the social and physical factors—from crime and traffic
- The appropriateness of physical condition and maintenance of space, and if the presence of surveillance measures in the public space makes them feel safer or not.
- Perceptions of presence or absence of, and the type of, people

Safety
- Using explicit means and controls
- Perceptions play a significant role in making places appear safe or unsafe
- Safety in a person's ability to feel safe from the social and physical factors—from crime and traffic
- The appropriateness of physical condition and maintenance of space, and if the presence of surveillance measures in the public space makes them feel safer or not.
- Perceptions of presence or absence of, and the type of, people

Pleasurability
- Using explicit means and controls
- Perceptions play a significant role in making places appear safe or unsafe
- Safety in a person's ability to feel safe from the social and physical factors—from crime and traffic
- The appropriateness of physical condition and maintenance of space, and if the presence of surveillance measures in the public space makes them feel safer or not.
- Perceptions of presence or absence of, and the type of, people

Comfort
- Places with high environmental inequity provided comfort and were pleasurable
- How people orient and navigate the city
- High level of spatial quality and sensory complexity.
- Create a coherent impression
General Dimensions of Public Space in Iran

Interaction Among Different Dimensions of a Responsive Public Space: Case Study in Iran
by Maryam Charkhian

Physical responsibility

Accessibility

Comfort and security: mental and social hunger needs that have direct effect on place satisfaction. Comfort refers to supporting the user’s activities in public spaces, and security to protecting users against crime, vehicles and undesirable weather conditions.

Natural elements: Green space and Water

Aesthetics values: Formal aesthetics, Symbolic aesthetics, Schemas aesthetics

Amenities and facilities

Meaning (Connotative) responsibility

Sign

Place history

Time

Cost of place

Memories

Social responsibility

Privacy and Territory

Social Events

Focal point gathering space

Activity responsibility

Programming different activity

Active engagement

Passive engagement
Appendix 2: Categories of Images Obtained from Phase 1 Use of Social Media (Instagram)

Appendix 2 contains the images that were obtained from the followers who were asked to submit images to the Valiasr Instagram page (Phase 1). A total of 118 images were sorted into the following eight categories by a visual content analysis done by the researcher. These are considered to be the major types of features that caught people’s attention.
Category: Sidewalks of Valiasr
Category: Arched Tree Lined Views Along the Valiasr

The percentage of photos from the middle of the street
Category: Building Facade in Valiasr

The percentage of photos of facade in Valiasr street
Category: Traffic on Valiasr

The percentage of photos from the Traffic in Valiasr

15%
Category: Maple Trees Along Valiasr

The percentage of photos from the trees of Valiasr

Category: Artistic Monuments on Sidewalk of Valiasr

The percentage of photos artistic monuments of Valiasr street
Appendix 3: Mapping Images from Instagram to Valiasr Locations

Appendix 3 shows the location of all the images (from Appendix 2) along Valiasr Street. They are shown by their categories. This information was useful in identifying specific existing features on Valiasr Street. Also, the expert observers helped the researcher to identify where these were taken. All of the images, associated with each category, are shown on the following pages.
Sidewalk of Valiasr
Arched Tree Lined Along the Valiasr
Traffic on Valiasr
Sky View and Artistic Monuments on Sidewalk of Valiasr
Maple Trees and Stream of Water in Valiasr
Appendix 4: Timeline of Activities for the Instagram Online Participation

Appendix 4 shows the timeline for Phase 2 (asking followers to comment on examples of public spaces that were not in Iran). This part provides a documentation of all the Instagram page activities, over time. Each date in the following figures contains three sets of information. First, the screenshot of the image that were posted on that date. Second, the summary of what happened that day and the third part is the themes. These themes represent types of comments that were made that day.
Summary:
Like: 23 people out of 70 followers
Views: 54 views
Comment: 16 people
Like of the Comments: each comment has 1 like

Themes:
4 followers: What an interesting type of gathering information
3 followers: Consideration of culture and social and political contexts
1 follower: “The design shouldn’t change the streets appearance.”
1 follower: “Increasing social interaction among people will enhance the level of our culture”
1 follower: “Trading different countries’ public spaces”

Summary:
Like: 22 people out of 75 followers
Views: —
Comment: 16 people
Like of the Comments: each comment has 1 like

Themes:
4 followers: Distinction of the environment by some instruments such as mirrors
4 followers: “They can see themselves and the ‘summary’ of the space around them in it”
3 followers: “Give us a more beautiful and have a direct effect on the people’s spirit”
2 followers: “This idea makes the street more beautiful and has a direct effect on the people’s spirit”
2 followers: “Let’s control the comments in terms of bad words or cars”
2 followers: “Time of the comment should be less than 1 day”
1 follower: “It should be LED wall”

Summary:
Like: 32 people out of 79 followers
Views: —
Comment: 10 people
Like of the Comments: each comment has 1 like

Themes:
3 followers: “We should control the comments in terms of bad words or cars”
2 followers: “The duration of each comment should be less than 1 day”
1 follower: “Nostalgic cartoons will make passion for people”

Summary:
Like: 26 people out of 71 followers
Views: —
Comment: 12 people
Like of the Comments: each comment has 1 like

Themes:
2 followers: “Is better than painting on walls”
1 follower: “Should have some furniture in front of the screen that people can lay on them and watch!”
2 followers: “In terms of its content what it will showed, it can decreased the amount of people stress”
2 followers: “In terms of its content what it will showed, it can decreased the amount of people stress”