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## Constructing geographical place attachment through ritual tourism of cities (Yom al-Abbas ceremony in Zanjan)

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### Article Info

### Abstract

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Ritual tourism, as a reflection of local identity and culture, plays a significant role in shaping and renewing the tourism experience. This study aims to explain the effect of ritual tourism (with emphasis on the Yom al-Abbas ceremony in Zanjan) on the construction of place attachment among tourists. The research is descriptive-explanatory in nature and applied in terms of purpose. Data were collected through a standard questionnaire based on four indicators of place attachment: emotional attachment, place identity, place dependence, and social bonding, using a sample of 95 tourists selected through convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.1 through descriptive statistics, stepwise regression, path analysis, and Pearson correlation test. The findings indicate that the components of place attachment are interconnected and significantly related. Tourists had relatively homogeneous attitudes toward the ritual event, and the overall effect of the indicators on place attachment construction was strong ( $R=0.99$ ). Furthermore, emotional attachment had the greatest impact on place identity, and social bonding showed the highest influence on place dependence. In conclusion, ritual tourism can effectively contribute to strengthening individuals' sense of belonging to a place and provide favorable conditions for the construction of place identity and social cohesion.

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## Introduction

In the contemporary era of rapid transformation—marked by environmental crises, urban change, and increasing population displacement—place attachment has gained critical importance as a psychological and social defense mechanism (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2020). This attachment reflects the deep emotional bonds individuals form with spaces where lived experiences, personal memories, and symbolic meanings take shape (Seamon, 2020). Place identity refers to the internalization of a place's characteristics by individuals and groups. Research indicates that a person's perception of their environment can significantly shape their sense of self (Peng et al., 2020). Ritual events—such as religious ceremonies, traditional festivals, and local rites—are among the most powerful cultural tools for reproducing meaning, sustaining collective memory, and fostering social cohesion. These events not only transform urban spaces into meaningful places, but also play a key role in strengthening place attachment (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022). By attracting diverse audiences, including non-religious participants, these rituals facilitate social interaction. Socially engaging spaces are essential to human well-being, optimism for the future, and personal vitality.

Religious spaces, endowed with unique qualities, are distinct from other urban settings. They possess a recognizable identity and function as identity-building environments for their users. People who visit such spaces often experience a sense of belonging and view these centers as symbolic anchors within their urban fabric (Molaei, 2020). Moreover, ritual events consistently attract tourists who travel from various places with the intent of participating in or witnessing the ceremonies. As expressions of deep-rooted beliefs, rituals play a vital role in disseminating cultural knowledge. Through active participation, tourists transition from passive observers to engaged participants (Abarghouei Fard, 2020). In essence, rituals redefine the role of the tourist within the experience, enabling a shared recognition of belief systems (Fortes, 1962). Ritual tourism links travel with culture, allowing the values and beliefs of a community to become embodied in a particular place and experienced by the visitor. When such experiences are meaningful and positive, they can lead to the formation of place identity and place attachment, both of which contribute to the construction of spatial identity among tourists. Religious rituals rooted in faith traditions are particularly significant in Islamic societies, where structural diversity has led to the development of multiple ritual tourism routes. Iran, with its rich repertoire of religious practices—especially those based on Shi'a tradition—has established a wide range of ritual tourism pathways. One key outcome of such experiences is the transformation and refinement of tourists' perceptions of local culture and identity, ultimately influencing their mental image of the destination and deepening their emotional attachment to place.

The Yom al-Abbas<sup>1</sup> ritual in the city of Zanjan, nationally registered as a religious and spiritual heritage event, is held annually on the afternoon of the eighth day of Muharram. The ceremony attracts massive crowds to the dense urban center of Zanjan, welcoming both domestic and international visitors. Despite the sudden influx of participants and the spatial limitations of the city center, this ritual has become an integral part of Zanjan's urban culture. Beyond its religious significance, the ceremony embodies the place identity and emotional attachment of local residents. This study aims to examine the structure and role of religious rituals in shaping tourists' place identity and attachment, while also explaining their contribution to the sustainable reproduction of ritual tourism. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on how the Yom al-Abbas ritual constructs and reinforces place attachment and contributes to the continuity of religious tourism. Accordingly, the central research question is as follows:

What factors influence the construction of place attachment among tourists participating in religious events, and how do the internal relationships among these factors shape such attachment? Furthermore, this study seeks to investigate: How are the key components of place attachment interrelated within the context of tourism centered on religious rituals and events?

### Research Background

In the field of religious rituals in general, and ritual tourism in particular, extensive studies have been conducted, each approaching the subject from a distinct perspective. Field research indicates that ritual spaces—such as squares, Shia congregation halls (Hosseinieh), shrines, and ritual-oriented streets—hold the greatest potential for strengthening place attachment. A study conducted in Mazandaran Province revealed that the physical and symbolic components of rituals had the most significant impact on dimensions of place attachment, including emotional bonding, identity, dependence, and commitment (Hassanpour & Soltanzadeh, 2022, p. 39).

Among recent studies, Khorramrouei and Mahan (2021) examined the role of ritual landscapes in tourism development, using the shrine of Imamzadeh Mohsen in Hamedan as a case study. They demonstrated that ritual spaces, through features such as symbolism, repetition, and social interaction, can function as multifunctional landscapes that effectively attract tourists. Their research emphasized the integration of natural, historical, and social elements in the design of ritual spaces.

Mehrgan Sowmesaraei et al. (2022), in a study titled “Analyzing the Role of Religious Rituals in Sustainable Urban Tourism Development,” explored how religious ceremonies enhance social

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<sup>1</sup>. Yom al-Abbas literally means "The Day of Abbas." It refers to a religious mourning ritual held in Zanjan, Iran, in commemoration of Abbas ibn Ali (c. 647–680 CE), a prominent figure in Shia Islam and half-brother of Imam Husayn, who was martyred at the Battle of Karbala.

interactions, preserve intangible heritage, and stimulate economic vitality in pilgrimage cities. They proposed that urban planning should consider rituals as key elements in the design of public spaces.

Mohammadi Irloo and Heydar Netaj (2023), in their study on the impact of ritual landscapes on public perception—focusing on the Nowavesti ritual at Haft-Cheshmeh in Ardabil—concluded that understanding and developing religious rituals and the collective behaviors they generate lead to the creation and reinforcement of place attachment.

Gharehbaglou et al. (2024), in an article titled “The Impact of Collective Emotion on the Formation of Behavioral Anchors (Case Study: Ritual Communities in Tabriz),” using a post-event analysis method, found that the structural dynamics of ritual ceremonies in Tabriz are influenced by social and psychological factors, which are linked to age, perception, and environmental characteristics, and collectively shape emotional experience.

Nemati and Dezfoulian (2025), in their interdisciplinary article “Ritual and Religious Tourism in Iran: Linking Beliefs to Cultural Tourism Development,” investigated the role of religious and national rituals in attracting tourists and reinforcing cultural identity. They emphasized that rituals such as Ashura, Nowruz, and Yalda possess high potential for sustainable tourism development, while also identifying challenges such as commodification of rituals and lack of infrastructure.

Sterchele (2020), in a study on “Interactive Chains of Rituals in Tourism,” analyzed the tourism experience in Italy as a social and ritualistic process, concluding that multicultural festivals based on collective rituals can enhance emotional energy, shared memory, and social engagement among tourists.

Mair and Smith (2021), in their article “Events and Sustainability: Why Making Events More Sustainable Is Not Enough,” argued—based on theoretical analysis—that short-term events such as festivals, due to their temporary nature, may fail to produce lasting impacts on long-term development. To address this challenge, they advocated for a systemic approach that focuses not only on the outcomes of events but also on their design processes, implementation, and long-term effects.

Shmushko (2023), in an article titled “From the Tibetan Plateau to Eastern China: Representing Religious Tourism and Popular Ritual Practice Amid the COVID Crisis,” found that non-clerical religious rituals in Tibetan Buddhism demonstrated notable resilience. Although some ritual aspects required adaptation, pre-existing structural elements—such as government oversight of religion and physical distance from religious authorities—had already enabled compatibility with the practical, social, and psychological consequences of the pandemic.

Kapoor (2024), in a study titled “Promoting Sustainable Development in Festivals Through Ritual Reinterpretation,” examined the annual Hindu festival of Durga Puja and concluded that three central themes—disrupting patriarchal norms, adopting proactive approaches to invitation and participation, and visual storytelling—played a dominant role in shaping public consciousness.

Religious tourism is a phenomenon deeply rooted in history, first gaining significance in ancient times. For instance, the Celtic tribes, who inhabited regions of Western, Central, and Southern Europe, selected sacred natural spaces and burial grounds as sites for their religious and social rituals. In these places, religious leaders—often with political influence—conducted sacrificial rites and other religious ceremonies. With the expansion of major world religions, these ritual journeys gradually evolved into structured practices, paving the way for the emergence of globally recognized pilgrimage sites. Today, nearly all major religions promote some form of spiritual journey as a component of religious practice and spiritual renewal. This historical trajectory reflects a lasting relationship between movement, place, and religious experience, which continues today through new forms of religious, cultural, and spiritual tourism (Choe, 2024).

Religious tourism encompasses a wide range of activities, including missionary travel, visits to monasteries and religious communities, participation in rituals, pilgrimages to sacred sites, and faith-based ceremonies (Wight & Victoria, 2022). Contemporary scholarly literature indicates that religious tourism has undergone significant changes in its participant demographics. While in the past, most participants were traditionally religious individuals, today, a growing number of non-religious people are actively engaging in such experiences. These individuals often live in societies where traditional religion plays a diminished role, yet they still find value in the ritual, spiritual, or cultural aspects of religious tourism. This transformation reflects broader trends such as secularization, individualized religiosity, and the search for meaning in the postmodern era (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Houtman & Mascini, 2002; Prozano, 2021).

Ritual-based religious tourism is often understood as a form of heritage tourism closely tied to culture, primarily focusing on the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage. Ritual tourism constitutes an essential part of cultural tourism, founded on beliefs, rituals, and ceremonial practices, and contributes to enhancing social interactions (Das et al., 2024). According to Chen et al. (2022), ritual tourism not only fosters a connection between individuals and spiritual life but also helps revive the religious and cultural heritage of communities and strengthens the sense of spiritual belonging.

Higgins-Desbiolles (2018) identifies events as central elements of tourism destinations and considers them vital local assets for tourism development. In Carlsen's view, religious events, especially in the form of cultural festivals, can play a key role in the production and consumption of local culture, offering a platform for education, raising awareness, and promoting social inclusion (Carlsen et al., 2007). Wight and Victoria (2022) argue that today, two main types of religious tourists can be distinguished. The first group includes individuals whose spiritual or religious beliefs align with the destination, while the second consists of those whose beliefs differ from the site but are motivated by

the pursuit of novel experiences, cultural heritage, religious architecture as artistic expression, and educational opportunities.

According to McClinchey (2017), multicultural festivals, through sensory and emotional experiences, help visitors reconstruct their sense of belonging, personal identity, and collective well-being within a shared environment. Similarly, Csurgó and Smith (2022) assert that such events connect the sense of place to landscapes that reinforce authentic human attachment, heritage values, and elements of local history and culture—demonstrating that a sense of place cannot be separated from cultural heritage.

Wheeler (2017), in examining the relationship between place attachment and heritage, shows that the perceived characteristics of a place and its people are often intertwined with its historical meanings. In other words, the roots of a place and its identity are inextricably linked. The sense of place contributes to shaping the social and spatial identity of both the local community and tourists, who are influenced by the prevailing behaviors and atmosphere of the tourism setting. This identity comprises both tangible and intangible dimensions that emerge through relational interactions between people and places (Puren et al., 2018).

Studies indicate a complex relationship between place, religion, identity, and attachment. The three essential components of this relationship include the physical place, individuals, and the set of elements that foster attachment, which can contribute to social development through collective sentiment (Meshkini & Daviran, 2014, p. 36). Concepts such as place identity, attachment, emotional bonds, and social connection are key to conceptualizing local identity in event-based tourism. In ritual tourism, place identity refers to the connection between sacred spaces, ritual experiences, and individuals' cultural and social perceptions. From a geographical perspective, discourse around place often centers on its vital role in preserving and enhancing local identity (Shirghazi et al., 2024).

Place attachment, as a dimension of place experience, leads to a preference for specific locations for carrying out particular activities. This attachment is reinforced through the repetition of rituals at specific sites and can lead to a strong sense of belonging and even place-based identity (Csurgó & Smith, 2022). Social bonds in ritual tourism refer to interpersonal interactions, collective solidarity, and the reproduction of social capital within the context of religious rituals and ceremonies. These bonds not only enrich the tourist experience but also contribute to cultural cohesion and social sustainability in host communities. Moreover, such social connections play a vital role in preserving intangible cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations. They can also serve as a counterbalance to the commodification of religious practices (Lewicka, 2011).

## Case Study

Zanjan, with a population exceeding 430,000, is the capital of Zanjan Province, located in the northwestern part of Iran. This city, rooted in Shi'a Islamic beliefs, is nationally and internationally renowned for its observance of religious festivals and ceremonies related to the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). Zanjan's mourning rituals during the month of Muharram, the establishment of various religious processions and gatherings in mosques across the city, and the holding of large-scale mourning events—particularly The Yom al-Abbas procession (organized by Hosseinieh Azam Mosque) on the eve of Tasu'a, as well as ceremonies held at Zeynabiyeh Azam Mosque, the Fatimiyoun Mourning Assembly, and Ahmadieh Mosque, have led to Zanjan being recognized as the 'City of Passion and Reflection for Imam Hussein.

Due to the distinctive nature of its mourning traditions—marked by simplicity, sincerity, and mass participation—Zanjan's Muharram ceremonies were officially registered as the tenth intangible cultural heritage of Iran in March 2009, during a ceremony attended by the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance (Daviran, 2020).

The Yom al-Abbas procession takes place on the afternoon of the eighth day of Muharram and draws a massive crowd of local residents and pilgrims from across the country. The route of the procession extends approximately two kilometers, from the entrance of Hosseinieh Azam Mosque (located on Ferdowsi Street) to the Seyyede Ebrahim Shrine (located on Imam Street). Survey-based estimates indicate that nearly 200,000 people participate in the ceremony at its peak. Despite the density of the crowd, the event is managed in an organized and structured manner, thanks to the city's administrative and logistical planning (Figure 1).

## Research Methodology

### Research Method

The present study is a survey-based research with applied objectives and an explanatory nature.

### Population and Statistical Sample

The study population consists of pilgrims and tourists attending the 2025 Yom al-Abbas ritual ceremony in the city of Zanjan.

### Data Collection Method

Due to time and location constraints, as well as the short duration of tourists' stays in the city, **convenience sampling** was employed for data collection. As a result, a sample of 95 individuals was obtained, all of whom stayed for at least two days in pilgrim hostels, guesthouses, inns, and hotels in Zanjan city in order to participate in the Yom al-Abbas ceremony. The research variables comprised four main components: identity, emotional attachment, place dependence, and social bonding,

operationalized through 36 items. The validity of these components and items was established based on the theoretical framework drawn from the studies of Shirghazi et al. (2024), Lewicka (2011), Meshkini and Daviran (2014), Wheeler (2017), Csurgó & Smith (2022), Das et al. (2024), Sajjadzadeh (2013), Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), and Kyle et al. (2004). To localize and enhance the questionnaire's validity, expert opinions were also solicited. Accordingly, the components and variables under investigation were sent to 30 experts in the fields of tourism and religious tourism from various disciplines including geography, Islamic studies, tourism, urban planning, city planning, sociology, and psychology. They were asked to assign importance scores ranging from 1 to 9 to each component and variable. Following the collection of feedback from 16 experts, the scores were aggregated and categorized, and variables with mean scores below 5 were excluded from further analysis. The average score of the remaining variables was 7.21, indicating relatively satisfactory validity. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was calculated to be 0.65, demonstrating acceptable reliability.

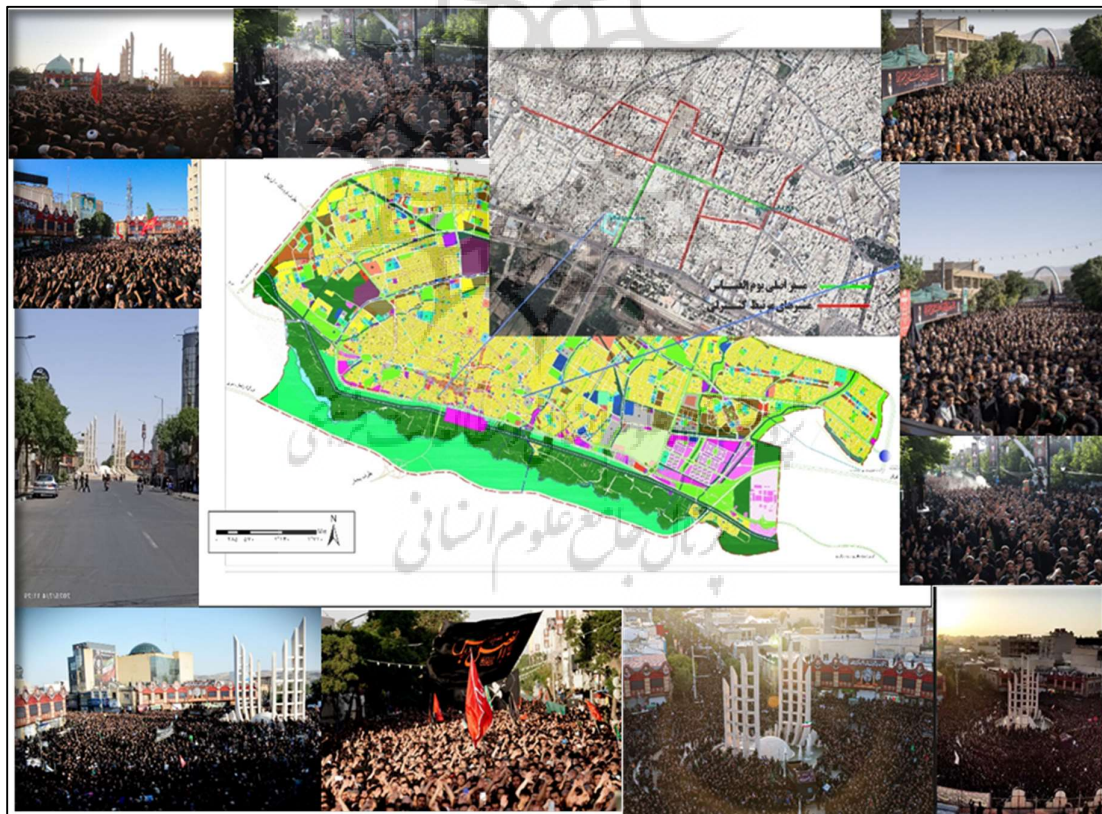


Figure 1. Location and Images of the Ritual Route of Yom al-Abbas in Zanjan City

### **Data Analysis Method**

The collected data were entered into SPSS version 27.1 and analyzed using descriptive statistics focusing on measures of central tendency and dispersion. Inferential analyses were conducted employing stepwise multiple regression, path analysis, and Pearson correlation.

### **Findings from Qualitative Data**

The demographic findings indicate that the accommodation capacity in Zanjan city—including hotels, inns, and guesthouses—can accommodate nearly 2,000 individuals. Additionally, auxiliary lodging facilities such as schools (serving as teachers' accommodations), government guesthouses, and the Hosseiniyeh Azam pilgrims' residence also provide lodging for travelers. The study population had an average age of 44 years and primarily traveled to Zanjan with their families. According to demographic data, tourists originated from a wide range of provinces including Alborz, Qazvin, Tehran, Gilan, West and East Azerbaijan, Shiraz, Ardabil, Yazd, Qom, Isfahan, Bushehr, Khuzestan, Razavi Khorasan, Fars, Hamedan, Kermanshah, and Kurdistan, with a higher representation from neighboring provinces such as Tehran, Alborz, and Qazvin. The average intended length of stay was approximately two days. Participants' educational levels predominantly ranged from diploma to master's degree, with a smaller portion holding higher academic qualifications. Approximately 75% of the participants were self-employed, while the remainder were government employees.

Findings reveal that the primary purpose of travel to Zanjan during the study period was attendance at the Yom al-Abbas and Yom al-Zainab ceremonies. In addition, participants engaged in other mourning events and visited venues such as the nighttime Fatimiyoun procession, Ahmadiyah procession, Seyyed Taghi Shariati Mosque, Imamzadeh Seyyedeh Ebrahim, the Grand Mosque, and Ta'zieh performances at Armaghan Khaneh.

Place attachment to the Yom al-Abbas religious ritual was assessed using descriptive statistics based on measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution. Results indicate that mean scores of the attachment construct indices tended toward favorable and highly favorable levels, surpassing moderate thresholds. The means of these indices were closely aligned, suggesting a relatively homogeneous consensus regarding the components of place attachment. Low variance and standard deviation values, trending toward zero, further indicate relative homogeneity in tourists' perceptions of attachment indices.

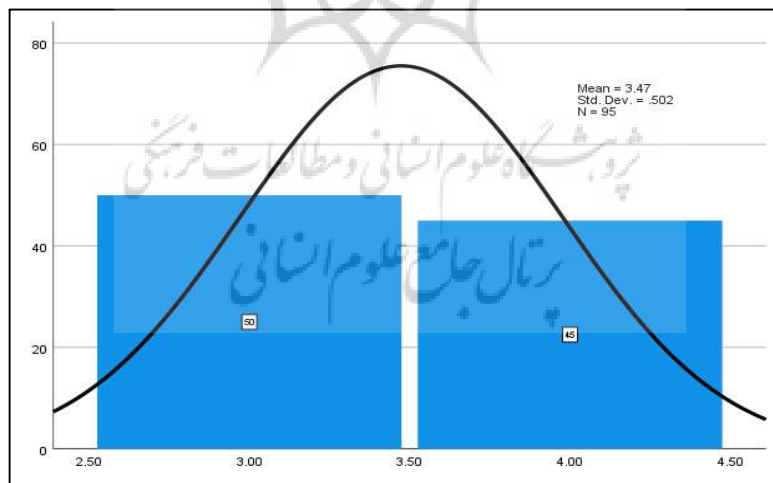
The data demonstrated an approximately normal distribution, with skewness indicating a shift toward positive values, reflecting increased favorability. Consequently, the mean values exceeded the median, which was higher than the mode. Regarding kurtosis, the emotional attachment and place identity indices exhibited negative (platykurtic) kurtosis, characterized by thinner tails and broader

peaks, whereas social bonding and place dependence indices showed positive (leptokurtic) kurtosis, marked by relatively wider tails and sharper peaks.

Based on the descriptive statistics, the place attachment construct indices associated with the Yom al-Abbas ritual in Zanjan exhibited a high level of favorability, with a mean score of 4.07. Considering the low variance (0.03), positive skewness, and negative kurtosis, tourists' perceptions of place attachment were relatively consistent, homogeneous, and closely aligned (Table 1 and Figure 2).

**Table 1. Indicators of Spatial Concentration and Dispersion in the Construction of Place Attachment during the Yom al-Abbas Ritual in Zanjan**

Statistic	Identity	Emotional Attachment	Place Dependence	Social Bonding	Place Attachment Construct
Frequency	95	95	95	95	95
Mean	4.03	3.85	4.19	4.20	4.07
Mean Deviation	0.030	0.014	0.028	0.022	0.017
Standard Deviation	0.291	0.140	0.272	0.223	0.170
Variance	0.084	0.020	0.074	0.050	0.028
Skewness	0.660	0.142	1.110	1.038	1.006
Skewness Std. Error	0.247	0.247	0.247	0.247	0.247
Kurtosis	-0.489	-0.560	0.472	0.525	-0.478
Kurtosis Std. Error	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490	0.490



**Figure 2. Concepts and Categories of initial intentionality to Zanjan's Tourism Attractions**

The impact of four key variables—identity, dependence, social bonding, and emotional attachment—on the constructed variable of place attachment was analyzed using a combined regression model. The

model fit indicates that both the correlation coefficient (R) and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) exceed 0.6 and approach +1. Therefore, based on the values of R and  $R^2$ , the model successfully explains a substantial portion of the variance in the dependent variable, demonstrating a strong and positive directional relationship (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Regression Model Fit for the Effect of Variables on the Construction of Spatial Attachment in the Yom al-Abbas Ritual**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.784a	0.615	0.611	0.10414
2	0.941b	0.886	0.883	0.05703
3	0.987c	0.974	0.973	0.02728
4	1.000d	1.000	1.000	0.00000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity

c. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond

d. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond, Attachment

e. Dependent Variable: Construction of Spatial Attachment

Based on the results of the regression analysis, the analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the comparison between observed and predicted values, with a significance level below 0.05 (Sig = 0.000), it can be confidently stated that the employed regression model is statistically significant and reliable. This confirms that the independent variables exert a significant impact on the dependent variable—namely, the construction of spatial attachment in the Yom al-Abbas ritual (refer to Table 3).

The multivariate linear regression model and the direct structural effects in the path analysis indicate that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for the combined indicators is 99%, which implies a near-complete explanation of the variance in the construction of spatial attachment (see Table 4). The findings reveal that despite the high impact values of the studied indicators on the construction of spatial attachment, their direct effects differ. Specifically, the spatial identity indicator exhibits the highest direct effect with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.435. Following this, the emotional attachment indicator holds a beta of 0.408, social bond a beta of 0.333, and another emotional attachment measure a beta of 0.341, ranking respectively.

The regression results explain less than 50% of the variables' effects on the construction of attachment; thus, despite differences in beta coefficients, no single variable exerts a dominant influence compared to others in the construction process. Ultimately, it can be stated that the relationships among the variables reflect a relatively uniform influence of all indicators on spatial attachment resulting from the ritual ceremony (Tables 4 and 5).

**Table 3. Confirmed Regression Model of the Effect of Indicators on the Construction of Spatial Attachment in the Yom al-Abbas Ritual**

Model	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.614	1	1.614	148.805	0.000b
	Residual	1.009	93	0.011		
	Total	2.622	94			
2	Regression	2.323	2	1.162	357.087	0.000c
	Residual	0.299	92	0.003		
	Total	2.622	94			
3	Regression	2.555	3	0.852	114.357	0.000d
	Residual	0.068	91	0.001		
	Total	2.622	94			
4	Regression	2.622	4	0.656	—	0.000e
	Residual	0.000	90	0.000		
	Total	2.622	94			

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment

c. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity

d. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond

e. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond, Attachment

**Table 4. Multivariate Regression Explaining the Dependent Variable: Spatial Attachment in the Yom al-Abbas Ritual, Zanjan**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.784a	0.615	0.611	0.10414	0.615	148.805	1	93	0.000
2	0.941b	0.886	0.883	0.05703	0.270	218.060	1	92	0.000
3	0.987c	0.974	0.973	0.027728	0.088	311.164	1	91	0.000
4	0.999d	1.000	1.000	0.0000	0.026	—	1	90	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity

c. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond

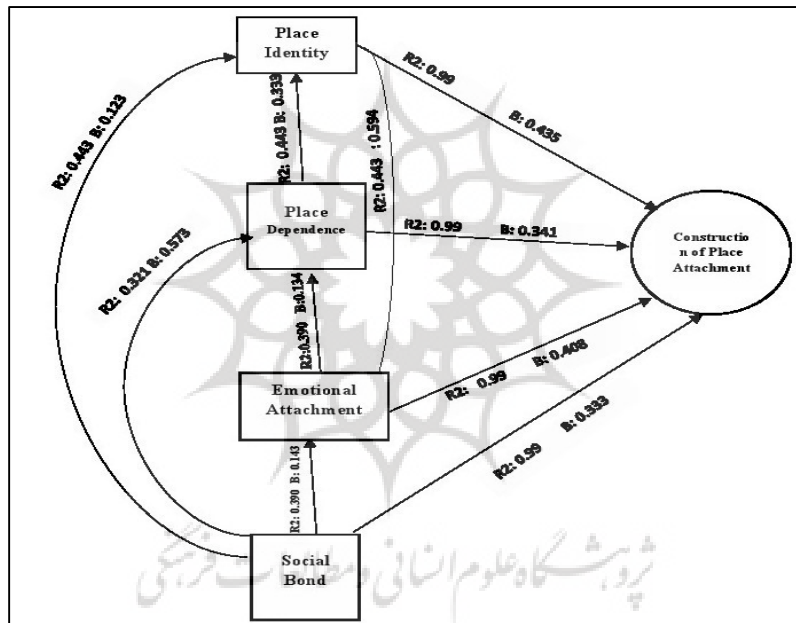
d. Predictors: (Constant), Attachment, Identity, Bond, Attachment (different dimension)

The analysis of endogenous relationships among the variables and the explanation of the complexity of their interrelations—and their effect on the dependent variable (construction of spatial attachment)—was conducted using path analysis. The findings indicate that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for the combined indicators is 0.99, meaning that 99% of the variance in the construction of spatial attachment is explained by the indicators of emotional attachment, dependence, identity, and social bond. The model results suggest that the variables involved in the construction of spatial attachment

exert relatively different degrees of influence on one another. Among these, the influence of emotional attachment on spatial identity and the effect of social bond on spatial dependence are the strongest, both approaching 60% (Figure 2).

**Table 5. Effect Sizes of Indicators on the Construction of Spatial Attachment in the Yom al-Abbas Ritual**

Indicator	Beta	t-value	Significance (Sig.)	R	R <sup>2</sup>
Spatial Identity	0.435	8.13	0.000	0.96	0.99
Emotional Attachment	0.408	4.09	0.000		
Spatial Attachment	0.341	8.00	0.000		
Social Bond	0.333	3.33	0.000		



**Figure 3. Path analysis model of the relationships and endogenous effects of variables in the construction of ritual tourism place attachment**

In response to the question of how the variables of the construction of place attachment are correlated, and considering the transformation of ordinal scales into relative interval scales, the method of linear correlation analysis between all pairs of variables in the Pearson correlation matrix was applied under both assumptions of difference and direction of difference. The results of the matrix indicate that the indicators of the construction of place attachment have a significant relationship with one another, characterized by a direct and positive correlation. In other words, the indicators overlap in their coverage, such that an increase in the value of one indicator leads directly to an increase in the value of

another. This finding holds true under both the one-tailed and two-tailed assumptions, with certain indicators showing higher correlation coefficients. The indicators demonstrate positive correlations with a direct orientation at the 99% and 95% confidence levels (Table 6).

**Table 6. Correlation of Indicators of the Construction of Place Attachment in the Yom al-Abbas Ritual, Zanjan**

Criteria	Statistic	Identity	Attachment	Dependence	Bond
<b>Two-tailed</b>					
Identity	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.627(**)	0.344(**)	0.320(**)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	–	0.000	0.001	0.002
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Attachment	Correlation Coefficient	0.627(**)	1	0.358(**)	0.370(**)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.000	–	0.001	0.001
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Dependence	Correlation Coefficient	0.344(**)	0.358(**)	1	0.573(**)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.001	0.001	–	0.000
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Bond	Correlation Coefficient	0.320(**)	0.370(**)	0.573(**)	1
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.002	0.001	0.000	–
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
<b>One-tailed</b>					
Identity	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.627(**)	0.344(**)	0.320(*)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	–	0.000	0.001	0.060
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Attachment	Correlation Coefficient	0.627(**)	1	0.358(**)	0.370(*)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.000	–	0.001	0.050
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Dependence	Correlation Coefficient	0.344(**)	0.358(**)	1	0.573(**)
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.001	0.001	–	0.000
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95
Bond	Correlation Coefficient	0.320(*)	0.370(*)	0.573(**)	1
	Significance Level (Sig.)	0.060	0.050	0.000	–
	Sample Size (N)	95	95	95	95

(\*\*) indicates significance at the **0.01 level**.  
 (\*) indicates significance at the **0.05 level**.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Ritual tourism, rooted in religion and belief, fulfills human spiritual and emotional needs in relation to God. The outcomes of such journeys show that travelers, through their presence at ritual sites, experience a sense of spirituality and, influenced by the style, form, and content of the ritual, develop place attachment. In this process, the traveler (pilgrim-tourist) develops a sense of belonging to the spiritual environment, becomes absorbed in the ritual space, and, through observing the collective fervor of the people, gradually establishes social bonds with them. At the same time, by accepting the identity of the place, the traveler assigns meaning and identity to it. The result of this mental orientation is the formation of spatial memory of the ritual environment, manifested through its ritual identity.

Findings from the present study on the Yom al-Abbas ritual in Zanzan indicate that individuals, through their presence in the mourning space and observation of ritual events, enter into a relational engagement with the place and derive identity from it. The study shows that the indicators of the construction of place attachment, through interaction and communicative synergy, reinforce one another in creating attachment and granting identity to place. This identity, embedded in the memory of tourists, generates a sense of belonging and forms place attachment, which in turn stimulates the renewal and development of ritual tourism. Despite the density of the crowds, the Yom al-Abbas ritual in Zanzan has been characterized by simplicity and inclusivity, welcoming individuals who, by participating, develop place attachment and a sense of satisfaction.

The results show that in the Yom al-Abbas ritual, the indicators of construction interactively shape place attachment. The effects of these indicators on the construction of attachment are relatively balanced, with place identity and emotional attachment having somewhat greater influence. Collectively, the indicators explain more than 99 percent of place attachment. Their distribution is relatively homogeneous and balanced, and their values tend toward desirability. The endogenous relational effects among the indicators vary, yet their overall contribution to place attachment exceeds 40 percent. Correlation analysis shows significant positive associations among the indicators of place attachment construction, both in one-tailed and two-tailed tests, at the 95% and 99% confidence levels. Ritual travelers participating in the Yom al-Abbas ceremony experience spirituality and enter into attachment with place. Emotional attachment to the setting, together with the integrative character of the ritual, fosters a sense of place belonging. The willingness to revisit and to invite others to attend is shaped by the influence of these indicators.

A comparative review of this study's findings with prior research (Mehrgan Sowmesaraei et al., 2022; Mohammadi Irloo & Heydar Netaj, 2023; Gharehbaglou, 2024; Nemati & Dezfoulian, 2025; Shmushko, 2023; Kapoor, 2024) confirms the shared conclusion that ritual ceremonies foster social interaction with the local community, generate a sense of place belonging, promote collective emotions,

strengthen social cohesion, express and develop cultural identity, and enhance the resilience of religious rituals as cultural identity symbols that attract tourists and create positive perceptions of ritual participation. The distinctive contribution of this research, however, lies in its emphasis on the interactive correlation of construction indicators, the alignment and convergence of participants' views, and the relatively equal influence of indicators on place attachment—leading to its continuous reconstruction.

Based on these findings, recommendations for the development and sustainability of ritual tourism, particularly religious tourism related to the Yom al-Abbas ceremony in Zanjan, include: enhancing mobile service and support infrastructure for better visitor reception; expanding city tours to highlight other dimensions of the ritual (such as Hosseinieh Azam neighborhood, other related ceremonies in the city, historical background, contextual factors and ritual content, associated religious elements, support services, and organizational arrangements); systematically documenting the feedback of the ritual to identify strengths and weaknesses for future planning; and maintaining ongoing communication with tourists even after the trip to sustain place attachment and encourage repeated visitation.

There were time constraints in accessing a larger sample, limitations in accessing accommodation facilities, and restrictions due to security concerns during photographing and surveying participants. Nevertheless, given the measures taken and the data collected from the accessible sample, the study was able to provide preliminary and valuable insights. Also, it is recommended that future research examine comparative studies of similar ceremonies in other cities, explore the perspectives and experiences of non-Iranian tourists, investigate the psychological and emotional impacts of the ceremonies on visitors, and analyze how the ceremonies are represented in the media and the influence of such representations on tourists' decisions to attend these rituals.

#### **Author Contribution**

The author conducted all aspects of the study, including literature review, experimental design, data collection and analysis, interpretation of results, manuscript writing, and editing.

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The author declares that this research was carried out entirely independently, without external funding or institutional support..

#### **Conflict of Interest**

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

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