

Article

The Comparative Analysis for the New Approach to Three Tourism-Oriented Heritage Districts in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: This study investigates the tourism-oriented heritage districts in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and explores a new approach to fostering heritage tourism. This is envisaged through conducting a post-occupancy evaluation (POE) to detect the characteristics of the tourism-oriented heritage districts from the residents and tourists. The systematic evaluation of opinions is based on indicators developed by UNESCO and ICOMOS international principles. According to the survey results, it is found that Dubai's approach was successful at reuniting people with their history via modern materials in the restoration works. This has preserved the heritage value and increased their culture and national identity. The social goal to reconnect residents to their cultural history has been realized despite the inconsistencies compared to the specification of the World Heritage Convention, which requires technical authenticity and integrity. People perceived the identities of tourism-oriented heritage districts in Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman differently. Based on the POE survey, the Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai were perceived as traditional destinations for tourist attractions. The Heart of Sharjah area was perceived as cultural and educational tourism, and the Ajman Heritage District area was perceived as community tourism.

Keywords: heritage district; tourism; conservation; post-occupancy evaluation (POE); United Arab Emirates (UAE)



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1. Introduction

Many European cities symbolize architectural heritage and aesthetics, such as Venice, Rome, and Paris [1,2]. Throughout history, these cities have succeeded in maintaining their value represented in the harmonious integration of historic districts with the contemporary urban context [3]. However, before the Industrial Revolution, these cities did not recognize the architectural heritage as an object for preservation. It became common to demolish the monuments of ancient Rome and build Gothic or Renaissance cathedrals from the ruins of ancient Rome [4]. There was not a solid act of preservation until the modern era, but the existing architectural heritage has suffered as much social fluctuation today [5,6]. From the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, various European countries tried to confirm their identity through the historical remains [7,8]. Since then, historic buildings have become significant, admired, and protected by nations and governments [9,10]. During the 20th century, national and international institutions were established to protect the architectural heritage from the threat of destruction [11]. Likewise, historical districts were highly considered for preservation when their heritage value was threatened by negligence, misuse, and destruction [12].

In the case of the United States, there has been less attachment to history as the Puritan ancestors rejected the European colonial traditions and had their independence from Britain in 1776 [13,14]. However, since the country has a comparatively short history, it has shown great interest in its ancestors' achievements and historical relics [15]. At the

Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II) in Istanbul in 1996, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized several international research projects on historical districts worldwide [16]. In 2008, at UN-HABITAT in Seville, UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Sector identified significant indicators and parameters to emphasize social capital and cohesion in historic districts [17].

The United Arab Emirates was founded as a federation in 1971, including seven united Emirates [18]. Due to the unprecedented urbanization processes and rapid economic growth, most of the significant architectural legacy in some historic districts along the coast was swept away [19,20]. After the disappearance of most of the UAE's fragile urban heritage, the UAE began to search for its past and cultural heritage. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, all governments of the seven Emirates started to protect and develop the irretrievable historical districts towards achieving the shared national goal of boosting heritage tourism [21]. At least one historical district is present in each Emirate, usually a complex of original heritage buildings and a replica of traditional houses, markets, and public spaces [22].

The general strategy for the historic district in the UAE was an adaptive reuse of the restored structures from the start. Several municipalities believed that a harmonious mixture of different uses such as heritage, tourism, culture, and residential could be successful for urban revitalization [23]. As a result, this approach attracts many visitors and revitalizes the historic districts. The restoration of the building's original appearance via local building materials and basic construction techniques mixes adobe and coral stones. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that the proper materials and mixing methods are currently used. No studies have examined these issues in more detail to date.

Even though the heritage districts require the relevant consumers for survival, a balance should be maintained among cultural, social, and economic purposes. Without various support from the visitors, it could be neglected again.

Currently, there is no legislation guiding the conservation and protection of the architectural and urban heritage in the UAE. Some feedback was obtained from visiting experts, but no reference was made to international charters, which could have been a solid foundation for further actions. Moreover, foreign experts contributed to confusion among fast-growing but less experienced Emirates professionals regarding the best restoration methodologies.

This paper aims to examine the historic districts in the UAE and explore a new approach to fostering heritage tourism and reviving the culture and community. Additionally, the paper aims to highlight the significance of boosting heritage tourism in the UAE to support the plan of the government to increase the percentage of tourism from AED 68.5 billion (5.2%) to AED 116.1 billion (5.4%) by 2027 [24].

2. Materials and Methods

Initiatives for historic preservation took place in the UAE as part of the sustainable tourism plans to boost the hospitality sector [25]. These initiatives were considered after the success of the Al Bastakiya area, which includes the oldest building in Dubai that dates back to 1780, the Al Fahidi Fort, the Dubai Museum, and the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding [26,27]. The development of historic districts requires careful decision making since the resources are irreplaceable and affect the cultural and physical aspects of the future [28]. In 1999, during the 12th General Assembly of ICOMOS (The World Congress of the Conservation of Cultural Heritage), it was discussed to extend the definition of historical conservation to include cultural and physical properties [29]. Additionally, it was emphasized that cultural tourism and historic cities should be given careful attention to implement sustainable development since landmark resources are irreplaceable and belong to the nations [30]. Even though the rapid urbanization of Dubai and other Emirates has challenged the traditional city fabric, the government managed to

harmonize the historical urban fabric with the contemporary city through a series of iconic building projects [31].

The city is a cultural phenomenon in its own right and tells its past and transfers its memory. Historic areas are the physical manifestation of memory that makes places significant. These areas contain visions of previous generations alongside urban and cultural life in a state of constant change, and urban development must be combined with the protection of cultural heritage. Preserving cultural and natural heritage, bringing it within reach of all, making cultures and civilizations better known, improving daily living conditions, and reducing poverty give meaning to tourism development's sustainability.

Historic areas in the UAE have been through metamorphoses [32]. This transformation usually involves updating the infrastructure and accommodating the historic buildings in commercial activities. Near them, the insertion of contemporary architecture is entirely different in terms of typology of buildings and materials of construction. This process has been noticed in most of the Gulf cities and particularly in Al Bastakiya (Dubai) and Al Kasbah (Sharjah), and there is nothing wrong with that; problems begin when this global change harms historic areas. Through some observations and surveys on three cases (Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman), we will examine questions dealing with the perception and behaviors of the tourists towards the introduction of some commercial activities, signage control, and their repercussions on the preservation of historical heritage in terms of the built environment, and user preference and satisfaction with historic areas. The objective is to inform those factors that need to be considered in tourism development as a source for revitalizing historical sites. The historical regions use the same strategy and preservation objective for the selected cities (Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman). Still, their implementations vary in many ways: tourist functions and a range of services as well as historical values and elements of the Conservatory Program. With attention to this differentiation, it seems possible to divide the historical areas into the following three groups:

- The first group consists of areas where the preserved buildings present an excellent technical state, considered invariable elements of the urban fabric and important touristic centers, used for nostalgic/prestigious and public programs, with rich cultural-educative programs (museums, exhibitions, souqs). They constitute a magnet for tourist attraction, contributing to the cultural life of the tourist and the local community (the case of Fahidi District and Shindaghah in Dubai [33], the souqs: Shinasiya, Saqr, and Mohammed along the Khor in Sharjah) [34].
- Traditional buildings included in the second group are those whose technical state or location does not permit the development of so many functions. Still, with the initiative of the local authorities, it is possible to organize occasionally varied open-air events: concerts, theatrical and traditional parade performances, knights' tournaments and feasts, and arrangements of the "light and sound" type. These programs are attracting both the local community and tourists; we may say that these buildings are acting as crucial centers of cultural life (the case of a Kasbah in Sharjah) [35].
- The third group (fortunately comparatively small) is constituted by some buildings in a poor technical state, and most are located in small touristic itinerary areas. Compared to the other facilities, their owners or managers might look passive in that their attitude towards the use of buildings is restrained to keep them open for sightseers, but they do not make an effort to overcome the stereotype programs and to create a valuable touristic attraction. It seems that in some of the historic buildings, particularly in the case of Souq Salah in Ajman, there is a chance to create an exciting and vital center influencing the cultural life of the historic area. In addition, there is an opportunity to implement some educational programs on the subject of tradition and history of the city (focusing on the local identity). The liveliness of the cultural life and the proposal of engaging activities would simultaneously promote tourism development, an opportunity to develop sustainable, ecological, and cultural tourism.

The methodology adopted for assessing the selected sites was based on several questionnaire surveys composed of four main sections: personal information; city his-

tory/culture; heritage resources; and the environment. These sections emphasize perceptual and social attributes. This paper explores the significance of the selected historical areas as heritage areas for cultural tourism and their impacts on revitalizing the historical sites. A systematic multi-level assessment method determines the tangible and intangible elements that highlight the area's characteristics.

In the case of the UAE and mainly the selected topics, the traditional buildings and historical and archeological sites as part of heritage are listed by the municipality or its representative (Department of the Historical Buildings and Archeology for the case of Dubai, the Museum of Art & Traditions for Ajman); we have to highlight that the Architectural Heritage Society is very dynamic and involved in all the actions taken at the level of the municipality or the property. The degrees, types, and priorities of intervention are identified by the Heritage Architectural Association in collaboration with the representative of the city. The Emiratis' traditional buildings, by their picturesqueness, secular history, and connection with the country's events and heroes, create an exciting magnet for tourism development [36]. Their values and preservation lead to the development of cultural tourism as a sustainable form of tourism [37]. According to Arch. Rashad Bukhash (Chairman of the Architectural Heritage Society and Chairman of ICOM-UAE), the strategy of the preservation of the historical area is based on the following:

- stop all demolitions of the properties (buildings) in the area delimited as historical or archeological sites;
- diversity of the users to encourage the involvement and participation of the community in the process of the preservation of the tangible and intangible objects reflecting the character and the identity of the area;
- one of the ways to avoid the proliferation of incompatible typologies will be achieved through the revitalization of the historical area;
- development of heritage tourism as one of the main activities for the revitalization of the area and as a source of income for the population and at the same time as an opportunity to sustain the know-how of the traditional art craft;
- promoting the awareness of the importance of preserving the urban heritage, mainly for the young people, in a way to let them be proud of what their predecessors had done and to highlight it as a part of the identity;
- use social media as a means for the promotion of the information and the awareness of the general public;
- the buildings of great value (architectural or symbolic) are to be listed as a heritage properties and open to the public.

2.1. Tourism-Oriented Heritage Districts in Dubai

Dubai Historic District is an ongoing project to preserve the UAE's traditional culture and heritage. Additionally, 60 other separate projects in a 1.5 km² area are being developed, serving the same goal [38]. This includes the Shindagha area, Al Fahidi Historical Area, and Saruq Al-Hadid Museum area, consisting of museums, exhibition centers, trading boats, restored trade stores, forts, restaurants, and performance centers [39] (Figure 1).

Shindagha Heritage District for tourism, known as Al Shindagha, is located on the shores of Dubai Creek and bordered by Bur Dubai in the south and Port Rashid in the west [40]. It was fully renovated to show the national heritage that is rich and significant. Dubai Municipality plans to qualify its historic districts for UNESCO World Heritage [41]. A museographic project is being used to implement restoration, rehabilitation, and creation of buildings to display the historical and archeological details of Dubai's traditional architecture and history [42]. The former ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum, lived in Al Shindagha from 1912 to 1958, and his house was restored as a public museum (Figure 2). Next to the house of Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum, another 150 traditional houses were restored. Four were converted into museums, Craft Weaving and Textile House, Traditional Healthcare House, Jewelry House, and Traditional Fashion House [43]. Dubai Municipality will restore more historic houses and 23 secondary museums to create the largest open-

air museum in the world that accommodates 12 million annual visitors [44]. Shindagha Heritage District is said to be well-crafted storytelling of the inhabitants with its buildings converted into museums [45]. Visitors navigate Shindagha Heritage District with narrow streets, “sikkah”, that lead to the six-house complex, which displays the old sailors’ sea navigation techniques, instruments, and skills (Figure 3). The exhibition areas show the various living environments in the UAE, such as living by the sea, desert, and oasis, which are all linked with a courtyard garden with vernacular plants, educational centers, cafés, and restaurants [46].



Figure 1. Map of Shindagha Heritage District.



Figure 2. The house of Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum in Shindagha Heritage District (photo by authors).

Al Fahidi Historic District, also known as Al Bastakiya, is one of Dubai’s oldest heritage districts for tourism in Bur Dubai along the Dubai Creek [47] (Figure 4). It holds the memory of pearl trading routes, connecting Persia, Rome, Portugal, Africa, Britain, India, and China with the Silk Road [48]. Historical markets for pearl and textile trading are preserved in Al Bastakiya, as it still has the old urban fabric with narrow traditional

winding alleyways (sikkah) and wind catchers (barjeels) [49] (Figure 5). Al Bastakiya is nominated to be the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Dubai Municipality.



Figure 3. Historical Pictures exhibition in Sheikh Saeed Al Maktoum House (photo by authors).



Figure 4. Map of Al Fahidi Heritage District.

Al Bastakiya was initially built with sixty houses in the 1690s by wealthy Persian immigrants from the Bastak who escaped religious suppression. Most of the original inhabitants had emigrated to the new part of Dubai called Al Satwa after discovering oil in 1969 [50]. Unfortunately, more than 50% of Al Bastakiya was demolished in the 1970s due to new office complex development. At the same time, old houses were used as storage and labor camps for foreign workers [51]. Dubai Municipality had intended to deconstruct the remaining parts of Al Bastakiya in 1989 [52]. A British architect, Rayner Otter, had initiated the preservation campaign and written a letter to Prince Charles in the UK to visit the UAE. After his arrival, he explored the Al Bastakiya Heritage District for tourism with Rayner Otter. He proposed that this area be preserved, and Dubai Municipality canceled the demolition plan, and the restoration project for Al Fahidi Historical District started in 2005 [53].

Al Fahidi Historic District is composed mainly of 50 houses converted into museums, galleries, and cafés such as Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding, Alserkal Cultural Foundation, Mawaheb Gallery, Majilis Gallery, Arabian Tea House Café, XVA Gallery, Coffee Museum, and Make Art Café [54]. Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU) has a program to promote heritage awareness so visitors can learn more about UAE's heritage and tradition. Additionally, local homemade meals are offered to the visitors to experience the Bedouin hospitality (Figure 6).



Figure 5. Al Fahidi Heritage District (Al Bastakiya) in Dubai (photo by authors).



Figure 6. Courtyard of Al Bstakiya (photo by authors).

2.2. Tourism-Oriented Heritage District in Sharjah

The Heart of Sharjah is the largest heritage project in the UAE and the Gulf region, initiated to restore and revitalize the traditional souq area of Sharjah. The project covers 35,000 m² and is planned to be completed in 2025 in five phases [55] (Figure 7). Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (SHUROOQ) is leading this project along with the Sharjah Department of Culture. The Heart of Sharjah includes various cultural, commercial, and residential functions to attract tourists [56] (Figure 8). The traditional old houses within the site were converted into several museums such as Sharjah Heritage Museum, Sharjah Al Hisn Museum, and Sharjah Calligraphy Museum, an art gallery (Sharjah Art Foundation), boutique hotel (Al Bait Hotel) (Figure 9), traditional souq with retail shops (Souq Sager, Souq Al Shinasiyah, and Souq Al Arsah), cafés, restaurants, and offices. The land-use ratio is as follows: hospitality and entertainment (37.9%), mixed-use enterprises (19.5%), cultural (18.4%), residential (9.3%), commercial (7.6%), and community (7.3%) [57]. SHUROOQ plans to nominate the project for UNESCO World Heritage under “Sharjah, Gateway to the Trucial States” [58]. The project’s first phase included the restoration of Al Hisn Fort, constructed in 1820 by the Ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi, and was almost destroyed during the 1970s. Additionally, the Al Naboodah house, Al Midfa house, and Al Tawaweesh house were restored after being checked for structural augmentation [59,60]. The restoration of Bank Street, the first modern commercial street in Sharjah in 1978, was initiated with a non-intrusive radar survey of the ground to avoid conflict with the archeological excavation that T. Sasaki led at the Department of Archaeology at the University of Kanazawa, Japan [61,62].

A significant part of Bank Street, Souq Al Shinasiyah, has been renovated as it was a central area for trading in the 1950s. In addition, it has significant value as a cultural and heritage place as it connects the urban and social fabric of Souq Sager in Al Shuwaiheen with Souq Al Arsah in Al Marijah. SHUROOQ would consider revitalizing this area as a heritage landmark to attract tourists and increase business activities and the overall economy [63].



Figure 7. Map of the Heart of Sharjah Heritage District.

Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF)’s galleries are also placed in the Heart of Sharjah to display the cultural identity (Figure 10). These art spaces are aimed to reactivate the Heart of Sharjah through contemporary art that enriches the socio-cultural context of Sharjah. SAF provides five galleries of restored buildings with minimal interior exhibition spaces and various exterior exhibition spaces such as courtyards, sikkahs, pocket parks, and an

inter-connected roofscape [64]. It was a suitable reinterpretation of balance between the historical context and contemporary art to showcase the Bedouin style of living within the courtyard house typology [65]. This subtle design approach enables sustaining the past by reusing old houses and creating functional spaces for social and spatial functions while enjoying contemporary art [66].



Figure 8. The Heart of Sharjah heritage district in Sharjah (Source: Aga Khan Trust for Culture: <https://archnet.org/collections/1662/sites/19005>, accessed on 9 August 2020).



Figure 9. Courtyard of Al Bait Hotel in Sharjah.



Figure 10. Sharjah Art Museums (Al Mureijah Art Spaces) in Sharjah (photo by authors).

2.3. Tourism-Oriented Ajman Heritage District

In 2016, the Chairman of Ajman Municipality and Planning Department, Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi, approved the budget of AED 25 million for the renovation of Ajman Heritage District for tourism that is located adjacent to one of the oldest places in the Gulf, Ajman Museum [67] (Figure 11). Compared to Shindagha and Al Fahidi Heritage Districts in Dubai and the Heart of Sharjah, Ajman Heritage District (5300 m²) is comparatively small. However, it is distinguished by a 1200 m long pedestrian walkway integrated with a children's playground, cafés, and restaurants, all of which exist within the traditional old buildings. Moreover, vernacular plants, such as sidra and ghaf, are planted to represent the rich heritage and environment of the UAE [68]. Ajman Municipality aims to boost the tourism and economy in Ajman through this project while serving the primary goal of preserving the cultural heritage of Ajman [69].



Figure 11. Ajman Heritage District (source: Ajman Municipality 2020).

The green canopies of trees distinguish Ajman Heritage District from the other heritage districts of Dubai and Sharjah [70]. The greenery results in a unique cultural experience within the valuable relics of the past. Ajman Heritage District (Figure 12) is a venue for preserved heritage and local and international events. While showcasing the history of Ajman, the project also aims to offer opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs to run businesses since there are 37 shops (40–100 m²) [71].



Figure 12. Ajman Museum in Ajman Heritage District (photo by authors).

Three sites are selected for investigation based on their common characteristics subject to restoration and renovation: the Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai, the Heart of Sharjah in Sharjah, and Ajman Heritage District in Ajman. The old houses within these heritage districts for tourism will be converted into museums to preserve and rejuvenate the historical site and support the economy [72].

The World Travel and Tourism Council report shows that the UAE ranked fourth in tourism investment among 181 countries in 2019 [73]. The UAE government emphasized the hospitality industry, which is why many heritage districts were developed to attract tourists and international investors. However, preserving place identity is not prioritized, leading to redundant investment and wasting many resources.

This research aims to find and preserve the identity of each heritage district in the three selected sites via a structured questionnaire survey. The survey is developed based on the categories extracted from several international principles such as the International Cultural Tourism Charter at the 12th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Mexico in 1999, UNESCO Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture in Vienna in 2005, UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in Nanjing in 2011, and UNESCO Criteria for inscription on the lists established by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Paris in 2005 (Table 1).

Table 1. Extracted categories for the investigation of heritage districts based on the international principles.

International Principles	Contents	Extracted Categories
1 12th General Assembly of International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Mexico, October 1999	Major tourism attractions: the natural and cultural heritage as diversities and living cultures	(01) Diversity of heritage resources
		(02) Attractive heritage resources
		(03) Social, cultural, and economic vitality
2 UNESCO Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture in Vienna in 2005	8: The historic urban landscape is embedded with current and past social expressions and place-based developments	(04) Character-defining elements of the urban structure
	16: Consideration of the emotional connection between human beings and their environment. Contributing to a city's economic success and social and cultural vitality is fundamental	(05) Urban environmental quality (06) Social, cultural, and economic vitality
	23: Spatial structures around historic sites are to be enhanced via urban design and art	(07) Distinctive urban planning and art design
3 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in Nanjing in 2011	9: This broader context includes the site's topography, geomorphology, hydrology, and natural features. (1) Built environment, both historic and contemporary, (2) open spaces and gardens, (3) land-use patterns and spatial organization, (4) perceptions and visual relationships, (5) social and cultural practices and values as related to diversity and identity	(08) Natural characteristics of ruins
		(09) Existing urban environment
		(10) Infrastructures
		(11) Land-use patterns and spatial organization
		(12) Perceptions and visual relationships
		(13) Character-defining elements of the urban structure
4 UNESCO Criteria for inscription on the lists established by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Paris in 2005	Represents a masterpiece of creative genius	(14) Social, cultural, and economic vitality (15) Diversity of heritage resources (16) Unique artistry or aesthetics
	Exhibits an important interchange of human values, over some time, or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning, or landscape design	(17) Influence of heritage resources
	To bear exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition	(18) Preciousness of heritage resources
	An outstanding example of a type of building, architectural, technological ensemble, or landscape	(19) An outstanding example of a type
	An outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea use which is representative of a culture, or human interaction with the environment	(20) Traditional human settlement or human interaction
Is directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance	(21) Associated with events or living tradition	

The selected sites depict valuable aspects such as urban history and culture, heritage resources, and environmental values. Sub-attributes for the investigation were chosen to include 21 elements used by the international principles as indicators for evaluation.

Based on the questionnaire survey, the expert survey was conducted on 100 experts via e-mail from 4 April to 4 May 2019, in which 82 respondents participated (82% response rate). The questionnaire was composed of four main sections: personal information such as academic background, specialization, occupation, and work experience in related fields; five questions about city history/culture; eight questions about heritage resources; and nine questions about the environment. The degree of respondents' agreement with the evaluation index was obtained using the five-step Likert scale, with 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high, and 5 = very high [74].

2.4. Validity Verification

The collected data in the first and second expert surveys were validated through content validity ratio (CVR), a method that C. H. Lawshe suggested in 1975 [75]. CVR proposes a minimum value based on the number of panels, and it is judged that the item has content validity when it exceeds the minimum value. The equation of CVR is as follows: $CVR = (ne \times -N/2)/(N/2)$, and it corresponds to the number of experts (in this paper, the frequency of respondents with 4 or 5 points on the Likert 5-point scale for the questionnaire), and N corresponds to the total number of experts who have responded.

The validity of the expert research techniques can be presented by analyzing the degree of expert opinion collection and consensus. The degree of convergence is 0 when opinions are all converged at one point, and the value increases when the deviation of the views is significant [76]. The degree of consensus is 1 when Q1 and Q3 coincide and are ultimately agreed upon and decreases when the difference of opinion is substantial. The closer the degree of convergence is to 0, and the closer the degree of agreement to 1, the more correct the item is. The equation follows degree of agreement = $1 - (Q3 - Q1/Mdn)$, degree of convergence = $(Q3 - Q1)/2$. (Q: quartile, Mdn: median). Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 program. This research study judged that a CVR value of 0.40 or more could be a valid indicator. In addition, the criteria for accommodating the response result due to the expert panel's consensus were set to be 3.50 or more, consensus level 0.75 or more, and convergence level between 0 and 0.5.

2.5. Selection of Candidates for Evaluation Indicators

The significance of the heritage district for tourism lies in its influential characteristics or attributes as an attractive place for tourists [77]. The selected characteristics of the heritage districts for tourism are education from an open-air museum, history, culture, art of the Bedouin lifestyle, and diversity and uniqueness of the heritage resources. In this research study, the indicators were selected by identifying the characteristics of the heritage district and reviewing the international principles such as those of UNESCO and ICOMOS. The evaluation criteria are divided into three categories: history/culture of the city, heritage resources, and environment. According to the 12th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Mexico, tourism mainly comprises natural and cultural heritage, diversity, and culture. Based on that, the evaluation indexes are selected: (1) Diversity of heritage resources, (2) Attractiveness of heritage resources, and (3) Vitality of society, culture, and economy. Since Articles 8, 16, and 23 of the UNESCO Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture in Vienna in 2005 satisfy the environmental domain of the city, the evaluation index is selected to include: (1) Distinct urban components, (2) The environment of a historic city, (3) The vitality of society, culture, and economy, and (4) Characteristic urban planning and art. In addition, the selected evaluation indicators from Article 9 of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in Nanjing in 2011 are: (1) Natural characteristics of the historic site, (2) Urban environment, (3) Basic facilities, (4) Land and space use, (5) Visual perception, (6) Distinct urban components, (7) Social, cultural, and economic vitality, and (8) Diversity of heritage resources. Lastly, the selected evaluation indicators from the UNESCO Criteria for inscription on the lists established for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Paris in 2005 are: (1) Unique artistry or aesthetics, (2) Influence of heritage

resources, (3) Preciousness of heritage resources, (4) An outstanding example of a type, (5) Traditional human settlement or human interaction, (6) Associated with events or living tradition (Table 1).

2.6. Derivation of Evaluation Indicators via Expert Survey

The expert survey was conducted to validate the indicators for the derived evaluation criteria. Table 2 shows the expert survey results in the heritage districts for tourism in the UAE. The importance of the three evaluation areas was generally high in the expert survey.

Table 2. The result of the expert perception survey.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Indicators	Expert Perception Survey				
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Content Validity Ratio	Agreement	Convergence
Urban History and Culture	Historic	4.79	0.38	1.00	1.00	0.04
	Traditional	4.51	0.49	1.00	0.82	0.52
	Community	4.39	0.48	0.99	0.77	0.54
	Educational	4.67	0.46	1.00	0.82	0.54
	Cultural	4.42	0.50	1.00	0.77	0.52
Heritage Resources	Diversity of heritage resources	4.23	0.42	1.00	0.96	0.16
	The attractiveness of heritage resources	4.61	0.47	1.00	0.82	0.52
	Influence of heritage resources	4.14	0.43	0.92	0.98	0.10
	The uniqueness of heritage resources	4.29	0.45	1.00	0.77	0.52
	The preciousness of heritage resources	4.32	0.53	0.92	0.77	0.54
	Magic of heritage resources	4.04	0.42	0.90	0.99	0.02
	Natural characteristics of ruins	4.19	0.64	0.78	0.77	0.50
	Unique artistry or aesthetics	4.26	0.62	0.82	0.78	0.50
Urban Environment	Social, cultural, and economic vitality	4.56	0.49	1.00	0.77	0.54
	Characteristics of the urban structure	4.17	0.62	0.76	0.78	0.54
	Urban existing environmental quality	4.39	0.70	0.75	0.82	0.54
	Natural and historical environment	4.42	0.48	1.00	0.77	0.52
	Distinctive urban planning and art design	4.17	0.52	0.89	0.96	0.23
	Infrastructures	4.36	0.47	0.98	0.77	0.50
	Perceptions and visual relationships	4.56	0.48	0.99	0.82	0.52
	Interesting sites	4.48	0.50	0.98	0.81	0.52
Regional characteristics	4.23	0.70	0.72	0.77	0.54	

In the Urban History and Culture criterion, all indicators showed higher average values, indicating that history and culture are essential compared to the other standards. In the requirements of Heritage Resources, the average Attractiveness of heritage resources was the highest (4.61). In the Urban Environment conditions, Social, cultural, and economic vitality and Perceptions and visual relationships were the highest (4.56 on average). The expert survey results were distributed around an average of 4.04~4.79 in each index; the standard deviation was 0.38~0.70; the degree of convergence was 0.04~0.54; the content validity was 0.72 or more, and the agreement was 0.77 or more. Based on experts' opinions, the results of the suitability analysis of the two indicators in the three criteria were all above the reference value, so it was concluded as a valid evaluation index.

According to the expert perception survey, candidate indicators 5, 8, and 9 were selected for Urban History and Culture, Heritage Resources, and Urban Environment (Table 3).

Table 3. Evaluation criteria and indicators of heritage district.

Evaluation Criteria	#	Evaluation Indicators
Urban History and Culture	5	(1) Historical, (2) Traditional, (3) Community, (4) Educational, (5) Cultural
Heritage Resources	8	(1) Diversity of heritage resources, (2) Attractiveness of heritage resources, (3) Influence of heritage resources, (4) Uniqueness of heritage resources, (5) Preciousness of heritage resources, (6) Magic of heritage resources, (7) Natural characteristics of ruins, (8) Unique artistry or aesthetics
Urban Environment	9	(1) Social, cultural, and economic vitality, (2) Characteristic elements of the urban structure, (3) Urban existing environmental quality, (4) Natural and historical environment, (5) Distinctive urban planning and art design, (6) Infrastructures, (7) Perceptions and visual relationships, (8) Interesting sites, (9) Regional characteristics

3. Results

Based on the extracted evaluation indicators from the expert perception survey, a general survey was conducted on tourists and residents in the UAE to explore the reason behind their visit to the heritage districts (Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai, the Heart of Sharjah in Sharjah, and Ajman Heritage District in Ajman). Based on the post-occupancy evaluation (POE) survey, the identities of each heritage district could be derived and compared with the original objectives of the municipalities of Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman.

3.1. The Characteristics of Surveyors

The total number of participating respondents was 195 males (48.6%) and 206 females (51.4%). The participants were in their 40s (20.4%), 30s (19.3%), 50s (18.7%), and the rest in their 20s. The percentage of participating tourists was 57.6%, and 42.4% residents. Regarding the touristic value, the Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Site in Dubai have gained 77.2% and 81.4%. This was higher than the Heart of Sharjah in Sharjah (36.7%) and Ajman Heritage District (34.0%). The occupation of the survey respondents was students (23.2%), self-employed (16.9%), housewives (16.5%), and governmental jobs (14.5%). As for the gender, there were no significant differences. As for the age group, the Shindagha area (23.8%) and Al Fahidi Historical Area (23.5%) in Dubai had the highest ratio of participants in their 40s, the Heart of Sharjah in Sharjah (22.4%) had the highest percentage of participants in their 20s, and Ajman Heritage District in Ajman (20.0%) had the highest ratio of participants in their 30s and 40s (Table 4).

Table 4. The characteristics of the respondents.

Classification	Dubai				Sharjah		Ajman		Total		
	Shindagha Area		Al Fahidi Historical Area		Heart of Sharjah		Ajman Heritage District		#	%	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%			
# of Respondents	101	100	102	100	98	100	100	100	401	100	
Gender	Male	48	47.5	49	48.1	48	48.9	50	50	195	48.6
	Female	53	52.5	53	51.9	50	51.1	50	50	206	51.4
Type	Tourist	78	77.2	83	81.4	36	36.7	34	34	231	57.6
	Resident	23	22.8	19	18.6	62	63.3	66	66	170	42.4
Age Range	10s	12	11.8	15	14.7	20	20.4	12	12	59	14.7
	20s	14	13.8	12	11.8	22	22.4	19	19	67	16.7
	30s	19	18.9	18	17.7	20	20.4	20	20	77	19.3
	40s	24	23.8	24	23.5	14	14.3	20	20	82	20.4
	50s	21	20.8	23	22.5	13	13.3	18	18	75	18.7
	60s	11	10.9	10	9.8	9	9.2	11	11	41	10.2
Occupation	Office Worker	20	19.8	17	16.7	9	9.2	8	8	54	13.5
	Student	26	25.7	27	26.5	21	21.4	19	19	93	23.2
	Housewife	14	13.9	17	16.7	18	18.4	17	17	66	16.5
	Professional	19	18.9	16	15.7	9	9.2	12	12	56	13.9
	Government	9	8.9	11	10.7	18	18.4	20	20	58	14.5
	Unemployed	1	0.9	2	1.9	1	1	2	2	6	1.5
	Self-Employed	12	11.9	12	11.8	22	22.4	22	22	68	16.9
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

3.2. Transportation

Considering the means of transportation of respondents to each destination, the total walking activity is 13.4%, and the highest walking percent was for the Shindagha area (15.6%) and Al Fahidi Historical Area (12.2%) due to a large number of nearby hotels. Most respondents went to the heritage district by car (46.3%) and taxi/Careem (34.1%). In the Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai, cars (38.6%) and taxis/Careem (39.4%) were the most common means of transportation. In Ajman Heritage District, a car was used by 54.1% of respondents, and a taxi/Careem was used by 31.7% of them. The Heart of Sharjah had more car dependence as a car was used by 54.8% of respondents compared to the other heritage districts. It is implied that Sharjah and Ajman have less public transportation infrastructure than Dubai for the heritage districts (Table 5).

3.3. Time Spent in Heritage Districts for Tourism

The overall duration of the time spent by respondents within the heritage districts was reasonably even. In the Shindagha area, 70.0% of respondents have spent time there and stayed between 1.5 and 2.5 h. In Al Fahidi Historical Area, 73.2% of respondents spent between 1.5 and 2.5 h there. In the Heart of Sharjah, 71.1% of respondents have spent time and stayed between 1.5 and 2.5 h. Finally, in Ajman Heritage District, 23.4% of respondents spent their time which lasted more than 2.5 h. It was concluded that people had spent more extended time in Ajman Heritage District (Table 5).

Table 5. The characteristics of user behavior of three heritage districts.

Categorization		Shindagha Area	Al Fahidi Historical Area	Heart of Sharjah	Ajman Heritage District	Total (401)
Transportation (%)	Walk	15.6	12.2	10.2	10.1	12.1
	Car	37.8	38.6	54.8	54.1	46.3
	Taxi/Careem	38.4	36.1	30.5	31.7	34.1
	Bus/Metro	8.2	13.1	4.5	4.1	7.5
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
The time spent in the project (%)	1.0–1.5 h	13.4	12.6	17.2	11.2	13.6
	1.5–2.0 h	34.8	33.4	32.7	24.6	31.3
	2.0–2.5 h	35.2	39.8	38.4	40.8	38.6
	Above 2.5 h	16.6	14.2	11.7	23.4	16.5
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
Companion Type (%)	Family	30.5	29.9	24.2	48.8	33.1
	Friends	12.6	13.2	42.4	23.2	22.9
	Colleagues	4.8	3.7	10.2	6.4	6.2
	Group Tourists	52.1	53.2	23.2	21.6	37.8
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

3.4. Companion Types

The most frequent type of companion was group tourists (37.8%), followed by family (33.1%). On average, it was found that the Shindagha area (52.1%) and Al Fahidi Historical Area (53.2%) had double the number of tourists as compared to the Heart of Sharjah and Ajman Heritage District. It was found that the percentage of visitors with friends (42.4%) in the Heart of Sharjah was much higher than in other heritage districts. This is due to the initiatives of the Sharjah Municipality to implement art programs and galleries to attract the younger generation [78]. However, in Ajman Heritage District, the percentage of families (48.8%) was higher than in the other heritage districts. Ajman visitors are assumed to approach the heritage district as a family during weekends (Table 5).

3.5. Evaluation Criteria Survey

To analyze and verify the survey results, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to ensure that the survey results of the four heritage districts were significantly meaningful [79]. Concerning the Urban History and Culture criteria, the indicators of Historic character (3.92) and Traditional character (3.83) were above 3.5, which means that these two indicators are relatively impressive to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai. For Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai, the Traditional character (3.91) and Historic character (3.82) were above 3.5, reflecting their significance to the visitors. Since the survey included tourists, most considered this area a unique area of Bedouin history and tradition. In the Heart of Sharjah district, visitors replied that Cultural (3.93) and Educational (3.84) were the most critical indicators even though buildings were properly restored to remind them of the Bedouin history and tradition. It was found that Sharjah Art Foundation was well integrated with this area and has operated many art and culture-related programs in the Heart of Sharjah [80]. For Ajman Heritage District, Community character and Traditional character were above 3.5, which means these two indicators are essential to the visitors. It was comprehended that visitors used this heritage district as a family gathering place on weekends in Ajman. Compared to Dubai and Sharjah, Ajman Municipality put more effort into integrating the heritage district with more commercial programs (Table 6).

Table 6. The result of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test for the selected heritage districts.

Survey Criteria	Indicators		Dubai		Sharjah	Ajman	
	Heritage District		Shindagha	Al Fahidi	HOS	AHD	
	Number		101	102	98	100	
Urban History and Culture	Historic	M	3.92	3.82	3.31	3.28	
		SD	0.76	0.71	0.71	0.64	
	Traditional	M	3.83	3.91	3.42	3.41	
		SD	0.72	0.78	0.68	0.69	
	Community	M	2.86	2.92	2.82	3.98	
		SD	0.69	0.69	0.73	0.75	
	Educational	M	3.34	3.28	3.84	2.87	
		SD	0.57	0.61	0.71	0.68	
	Cultural	M	3.45	3.46	3.93	2.99	
		SD	0.76	0.74	0.78	0.71	
	Heritage Resources	Diversity of heritage resources	M	3.64	3.74	3.93	2.91
			SD	0.69	0.73	0.75	0.68
The attractiveness of heritage resources		M	3.91	3.93	3.81	3.80	
		SD	0.76	0.71	0.74	0.72	
Influence of heritage resources		M	3.79	3.74	3.71	3.92	
		SD	0.72	0.75	0.62	0.76	
The uniqueness of heritage resources		M	3.84	3.82	3.79	3.42	
		SD	0.71	0.75	0.72	0.63	
The preciousness of heritage resources		M	3.33	3.32	3.28	3.36	
		SD	0.72	0.71	0.69	0.75	
Magic of heritage resources		M	2.44	2.51	2.62	2.71	
		SD	0.72	0.69	0.75	0.69	
Natural characteristics of ruins		M	2.21	2.31	2.26	3.08	
		SD	0.68	0.65	0.67	0.71	
Unique artistry or aesthetics		M	3.62	3.71	3.63	3.53	
		SD	0.77	0.74	0.74	0.71	
Social, cultural, and economic vitality		M	3.66	3.82	3.68	3.92	
		SD	0.75	0.72	0.72	0.72	
Character elements of urban structure		M	2.53	3.02	3.12	2.64	
		SD	0.71	0.69	0.72	0.72	
Urban existing environmental quality	M	3.87	3.92	3.81	3.69		
	SD	0.72	0.76	0.73	0.72		
Natural and historical environment	M	3.34	3.28	3.21	3.22		
	SD	0.74	0.69	0.72	0.64		
Distinctive urban planning and art design	M	2.84	3.03	3.91	2.97		
	SD	0.72	0.68	0.72	0.71		
Infrastructures	M	3.44	3.52	3.02	2.78		
	SD	0.63	0.71	0.63	0.64		
Perceptions and visual relationships	M	3.02	2.89	3.35	2.81		
	SD	0.68	0.71	0.73	0.69		
Interesting sites	M	3.61	3.62	3.42	3.83		
	SD	0.76	0.69	0.72	0.73		
Regional characteristics	M	3.93	3.78	3.59	3.71		
	SD	0.77	0.71	0.73	0.65		

In the Heritage Resources criteria, the Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.91) and Uniqueness of heritage resources (3.84) were relatively essential indicators to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai. The Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.93) and Diversity of heritage resources (3.74) were above 3.5, which means that these two indicators are

essential to the visitors to Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai. It was shown that Dubai Municipality's strategy has succeeded in attracting tourists based on the survey result of the high importance of attractiveness, uniqueness, and diversity [81]. In the Heart of Sharjah, the most critical indicators were Diversity of heritage resources (3.93) and Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.81). Due to many programs related to the community and young generation, Sharjah Art Foundation seems well integrated with the built environment. Sharjah Art Foundation is committed to renovating the existing environment; a good example is the Flying Saucer project [82]. For Ajman Heritage District, the Influence of heritage resources (3.92) and the Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.80) were essential indicators to the visitors. Based on our interview with the executive director of Ajman Municipality, Mohammed bin Omair Al Muhairi, the Ajman Heritage District was planned and developed from the masterplan phase as a hub for local and international events (Table 6).

In the criteria of Urban Environment, Regional characteristics (3.93) and Urban existing environmental quality (3.87) were relatively essential indicators to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai. The values of Urban existing environmental quality (3.92) and Social, cultural, and economic vitality (3.82) were above 3.5. These two indicators are essential to the visitors to Al Fahidi Historical Area in Dubai. Based on this result, it can be explained that the strategy of Dubai Municipality concerning replica heritage is interwoven with the existing urban fabric of old markets such as the gold souqs in Bur Dubai and Deira [83]. In the Heart of Sharjah, Distinctive urban planning and art design (3.91) and Urban existing environmental quality (3.81) were the most critical indicators. Thanks to the Sharjah Art Foundation, this heritage area's museums and galleries were well integrated with the existing urban fabric [84]. For Ajman Heritage District, the indicators of Social, cultural, and economic vitality (3.92) and Interesting sites (3.83) were essential to the visitors (Table 6).

4. Discussion

In the twentieth century, urban restoration is usually initiated in cities due to the large-scale damages from civil revolutions, wars, or global vandalism. In the case of the UAE, many architects and scholars enquire about heritage restoration methods. The recurring question is: "Can subsequent restoration with modern materials disturb continuity and heritage value?" The Dubai Municipality explored the answer: "as a device to reunite people with their history and tradition."

The innovative approach of Dubai to reinterpret its heritage districts for tourism for historical authenticity can be represented in the cultural solidity. The cultural tool is believed to reconnect people with their history and traditions since Dubai is experiencing unprecedented modernization and globalization in history. Additionally, there is a social goal to reconnect the local people with their own Bedouin history, which is a simple approach compared to the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, which require technical criteria of authenticity and integrity. Based on this research, the satisfaction level of the local people was very high, and many tourists have been visiting the Shindagha area and Al Fahidi Historical Area. This successful restoration approach was spread to other Emirates such as Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman, and Umm Al Quwain. The practice of historic restoration is required in a city with diverse cultures. The heritage preservation and continuity approaches are significant in supporting the city's urban identity.

5. Conclusions

This research study has examined three tourism-oriented heritage districts in the United Arab Emirates and explored a new approach to foster heritage tourism and revive the culture and community. This was envisaged through conducting a post-occupancy evaluation (POE) to detect the characteristics of the heritage districts as conceived by the residents and tourists. The systematic evaluation of opinions about the buildings in use was based on indicators developed by UNESCO and ICOMOS international principles

and then evaluated by an expert survey to identify the characteristics of the UAE heritage districts. Urban History and Culture criteria included five indicators: Historical, Traditional, Community, Educational, and Cultural. The requirements of Heritage Resources included eight indicators: Diversity of heritage resources, Attractiveness of heritage resources, Influence of heritage resources, Uniqueness of heritage resources, Preciousness of heritage resources, Magic of heritage resources, Natural characteristics of ruins, and Unique artistry or aesthetics. The criteria of Urban Environment included nine indicators: Social, cultural, and economic vitality, Characteristic elements of the urban structure, Urban existing environmental quality, Natural and historical environment, Distinctive urban planning and art design, Infrastructure, Perceptions and visual relationships, Interesting sites, and regional characteristics.

Firstly, in the Urban History and Culture criteria, Historical (3.92) and Traditional (3.83) were essential indicators to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai, and Traditional character (3.91) and Historic character (3.82) were crucial to the visitors of Al Fahidi Historical Area. On the other hand, the indicators of Cultural (3.93) and Educational (3.84) were essential to the visitors of the Heart of Sharjah district; and Community character (3.98) and Traditional character (3.41) were important in Ajman Heritage District.

Secondly, in the Heritage Resources criteria, Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.91) and Uniqueness of heritage resources (3.84) were essential indicators to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai. The Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.93) and the Diversity of heritage resources (3.74) were critical to the Al Fahidi Historic Area visitors in Dubai. Furthermore, the Diversity of heritage resources (3.93) and Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.81) were essential indicators to the visitors of the Heart of Sharjah district, and the Influence of heritage resources (3.92) and Attractiveness of heritage resources (3.80) were important indicators in Ajman Heritage District.

Thirdly, in the Urban Environment criteria, Regional characteristics (3.93) and Urban existing environmental quality (3.87) were essential indicators to the visitors of the Shindagha area in Dubai. On the other hand, Urban existing environmental quality (3.92) and Social, cultural, and economic vitality (3.82) were essential indicators for Dubai's Al Fahidi Historical Area visitors. Distinctive urban planning and art design (3.91) and Urban existing environmental quality (3.81) were indicators critical to the visitors of the Heart of Sharjah district; and Social, cultural, and economic vitality (3.92) and Interesting sites (3.83) were important indicators in Ajman Heritage District.

Table 7 summarizes the evaluations of the questionnaire surveys. The attraction is the primary indicator for any action leading to the success of cultural heritage tourism.

Table 7. Summary of three selected heritage districts.

Criteria	Dubai	Sharjah	Ajman
Urban History and Culture	History and Tradition	Culture and Education	Community and Tradition
Heritage Resources	Attraction uniqueness	Attraction and Diversity	Attraction
Urban Environment	Social, Cultural, and Economic vitalities	Urban planning	Social, Cultural, and Economic Vitalities

In similar sites, keeping the area as residential only is not recommended since such sites constitute the city's center. It can support the development of one or a combination of the four following dimensions:

- **Social Dimension:** Diversity of the users to encourage the involvement and participation of the community in the process of the preservation of the tangible and intangible objects reflecting the character and the identity of the area.
- **Economic Dimension:** Tourism is one way of re-using heritage sites and buildings. On the one hand, it allows visitors to experience a living heritage; on the other, it generates income for the local community with which heritage resources can be conserved

and maintained and sustain the traditions and the know-how from one generation to another.

- Environmental Dimension: One of the ways to avoid sprawl development and the proliferation of incompatible typologies will be achieved through the revitalization of the historical area.
- Cultural Dimension: The sense of the place will be appreciated through the architectural language that will give character to the area and will be a source of attraction while simultaneously emphasizing the identity.

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