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4 **GULF MARKETS CONSERVATION ANALYSIS AND COMPARATIVE: A CASE STUDY OF SOUQ AL-**  
5 **MUBARAKIYA IN KUWAIT CITY.**  
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7

8 **Abstract**

9 :

10  
11 Traditional markets & souks in the Arsbisn Gulf areas such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Traditional markets &  
12 souks in the Arsbisn Gulf areas such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates  
13 are very important landmarks and a significant part of the urban architecture and traditional heritage. The traditional  
14 markets of countries represent the historical development of social interaction with trade routes of land-based or  
15 maritime routes. This interaction not only influences the market typology but also the urban morphology of the  
16 whole urban fabric. However, in Kuwait, due to the oil discovery in the 50th urban transformation and  
17 modernization movement to develop the country, it has had a big impact on the market development to attract  
18 tourism and improve the image of the city. The change of the physical and social pattern in Kuwait unintentionally  
19 had a significant impact on the authenticity and originality of themarkets in the Gulf country, and specifically  
20 on "Souq Al Mubarakiya". The research investigates the conservation challenges and transformation processes of  
21 "Souq Al-Mubarakiya" in Kuwait City by preparing a comparative analysis of selected traditional markets from the  
22 Gulf area that are located on the maritime Silk trading route, including Souq Waqif in Doha, Manama Souq in  
23 Bahrain, Muttrah Souq in Oman, and Bushehr Bazaar in Iran. The research included a mixed-method approach  
24 integrating historical-documentary analysis, architectural field survey, comparative market analysis, visual  
25 documentation, in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, and SWOT analysis to collect the results from all the  
26 methods mentioned. As the research started with an overview of "Souq Al Mubarakiya", it got more specific on the  
27 north-east section of the Souq since it retains the most original part of the Souq in terms of architectural and spatial  
28 characteristics after the latest restoration of the Souq. The findings of the research have shown and proved that many  
29 parts of the market remain preserved and original. However, the souq has undergone significant physical and  
30 functional transformations till today, resulting in inappropriate restoration practices, façade deformation,  
31 inconsistent signage, and a change inthe shop's original function.The comparative study has shown that most of the  
32 restoration and conservation projects on the Gulf markets have a more balanced approach in terms of commercial,  
33 heritage protection, and tourism than the current situation of "Souq Al Mubarakiya".The study concludes by using  
34 an integrated conservation approach emphasizing architectural authenticity, social continuity, heritage-sensitive  
35 redevelopment, tenant regulation, and tourism management.This research contributes to the limitedliterature on  
36 traditional Kuwaiti architecture and provides a plan for preserving historic markets within rapidly modernizing Gulf  
37 cities.  
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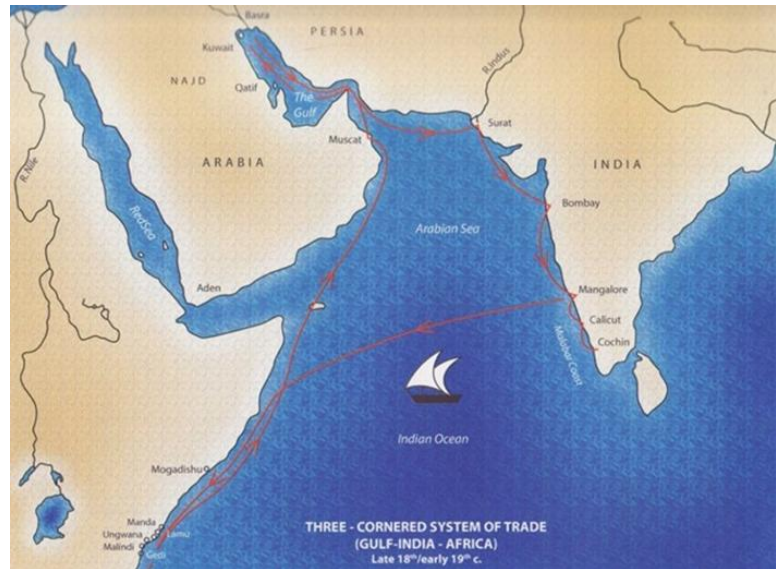
41 **Key words:-**Kuwait, Souq Al-Mubarakiya, heritage conservation, Gulf traditional markets, urban identity,traditional marketscomparative  
42 analysis  
43 .....

44 **Introduction:-**

45 Traditional markets, commonly referred to as "souqs," are a historical representation of the commercial, social, and  
46 cultural foundation of cities in the Arabian Gulf andMiddle East. Old cities' "souqs" not only function as centers of  
47 trading, but they alsoact as a significant social space and interaction, which present the collective identity,  
48 architectural traditions, and spatial organization of societies in the cities. One of the important markets in the Gulf  
49 region is Souq Al-Mubarakiya in Kuwait, Kuwait City which occupies an important historical position along the  
50 maritime Silk trade networks and vernacular architecture and urban development.

51 Souq Al-Mubarakiya was one of the earliest and most important commercial centers in Kuwait before the discovery  
52 of oil around the 50th. As the market reflected the traditional urban morphology of Kuwait City, it is characterized  
53 byorganic pedestrian pathswith narrow shaded alleys, mixed commercial shops, and socially integrated public  
54 spaces. Maritime silk trade routes linking Kuwait to Iraq, Iran, India, East Africa, and other regional trading points

55 had a major role in the formation of  
56 organization and shop distribution of the  
57 souq, as many countries located their  
58 trading in the souq. Until the discovery of  
59 oil in Kuwait around 1938, rapid urban  
60 transformation and extensive  
61 modernization processes had significantly  
62 altered the traditional urban fabric of  
63 Kuwait City and had a great impact on the  
64 conservation of the market's originality.  
65 Large sections of the historical city were  
66 demolished to accommodate modern  
67 infrastructure and road systems, and  
68 contemporary development projects.  
69 These transformations weakened the  
70 continuity of traditional architecture while  
71 disrupting the original spatial and social  
72 identity of many historic districts.



**Figure 1: Maritime Silk Trading**



**Figure 2: Old City of Kuwait Redevelopment After the Discovery of Oil**

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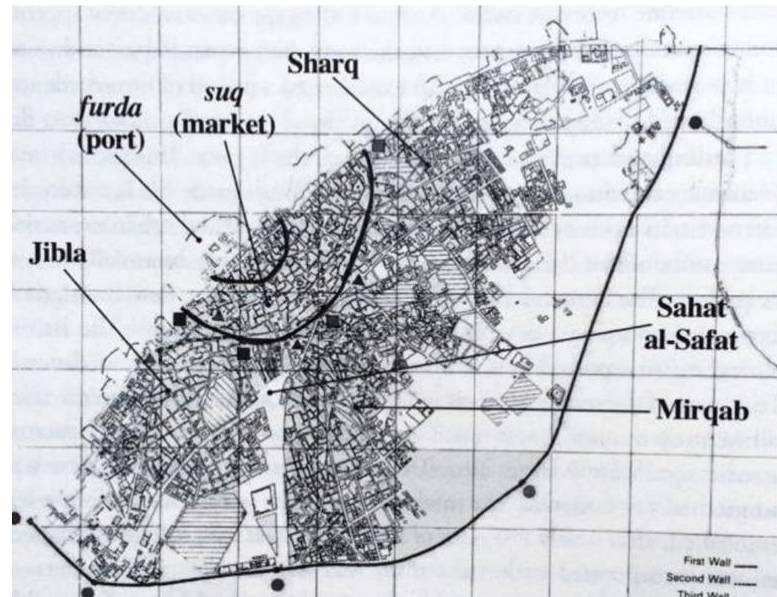
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75 After independence from Britain around  
76 1961, the urban transformation of Kuwait  
77 City accelerated, resulting in a wide-scale  
78 demolition of traditional urban areas (Old  
79 City of Kuwait) with extensive changes to  
80 the historic character of Souq Al-  
81 Mubarakiya. Besidesthat, the 2022 fire  
82 had significant physical destruction to  
83 many sections of the market, expanding  
84 the ongoing concerns and issues regarding  
85 restoration methods that are affecting the  
86 architectural authenticity and heritage  
87 protection of the souq.

88 Although several restoration and  
89 redevelopment projects were implemented  
90 within Souq Al-Mubarakiya, the issue  
91 of prioritizing commercial modernization  
92 and tourism-based redevelopment rather  
93 than focusing on architectural authenticity  
94 and historical continuity affected how the souq looks today. As a result, several sections of the souq now have  
95 façade distortion due to inappropriate material use and inconsistent signage systems added with subdivision of  
96 traditional commercial units and functional transformation that differs from the original identity of the market. The  
97 preservation of historic markets in the rapid modernization of Gulf cities is an increasingly important research area  
98 in architecture and urban heritage conservation studies. Historic markets such as Souq Waqif in Qatar, Muttrah Souq  
99 in Oman, and Manama Souq in Bahrain have implemented varying conservation and redevelopment techniques that  
100 will be important comparative case studies for this research to use in evaluating the transformation of Souq Al-  
101 Mubarakiya. This study aims to investigate the conservation challenges and transformation processes that affect  
102 Souq Al-Mubarakiya by using a comparative analysis of selected Gulf and other traditional markets. Another aim of  
103 the research is to evaluate the effectiveness of current conservation approaches to develop an integrated protection  
104 framework that is able to preserve both the physical authenticity & social continuity of the market. The primary  
105 objectives of the study are to investigate the historical and architectural transformation of Souq al-Mubarakiya,  
106 evaluate current conservation conditions of the market, compare Souq al-Mubarakiya with other Gulf and regional  
107 markets, and identify challenges in conservation affecting the authenticity of the Souq, formulate a proposal for an  
108 integrated conservation and management framework that's suitable for living historic markets within modernizing  
109 Gulf cities.

### 110 **Literature Review:-**

111 One of the challenges facing historic urban environments in rapidly developing cities is heritage conservation.  
112 Traditional markets are a combination of complex heritage systems where tangible architectural heritage is  
113 combined with intangible cultural, social, and economic practices. In order to conserve such markets, in-depth  
114 research should be done to understand the spatial organization, the historical continuity of commercial activity,  
115 collective memory, and social interaction. Within this research, the approaches to urban heritage preservation  
116 methods are based on the international heritage organizations and conservation charters such as the Venice Charter  
117 (1964), Burra Charter (1979), Washington Charter (1987), and Nara Document on Authenticity (1994). These  
118 charters emphasize the importance of preserving authenticity, integrity, and historical continuity. Unlike isolated  
119 monuments, these traditional markets are a representation of living heritage environments that are continuously  
120 shaped by commercial activity and social interactions in urban transformation. Research approaches of



**Figure 3: Pre-oil Kuwait City Urban Pattern and Enclosure Walls Constructed in 1760, 1804, and 1920**

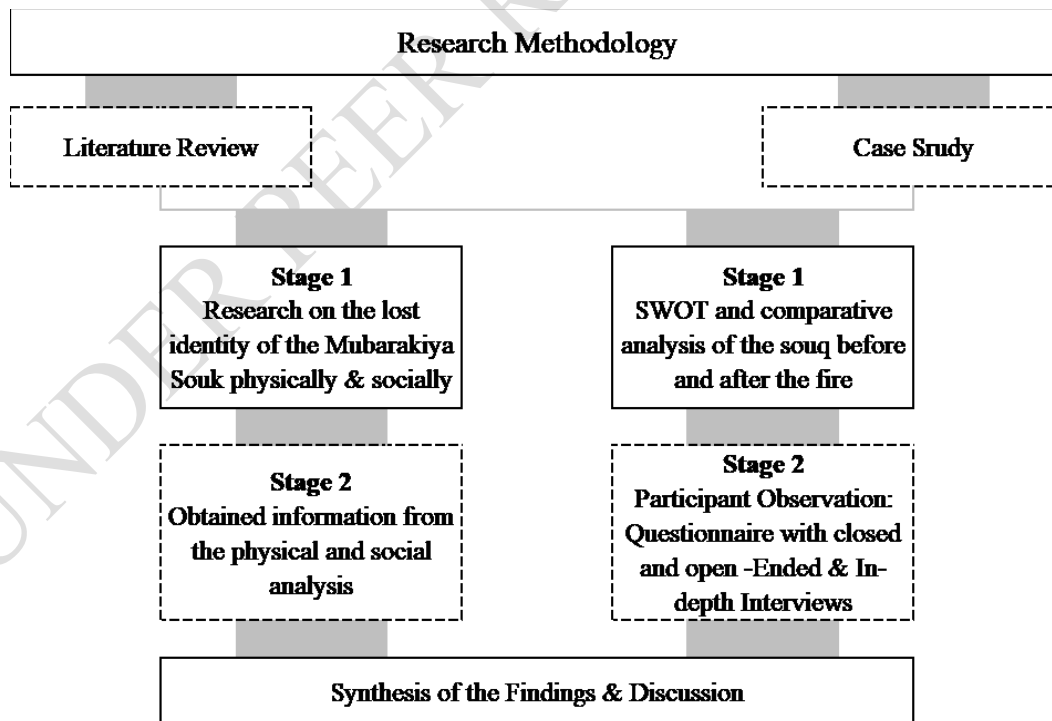
121 this research did not focus only on physical restoration, but it included social continuity and functional sustainability  
122 while not neglecting tourism management and community participation.

### 123 **Traditional Markets in Gulf Cities and Conservation Challenges**

124 Traditional Gulf markets (souq) urban morphology usually consists of narrow shaded alleys and organically  
125 developed circulation systems mixed with commercial functions and internal courtyards that are adapted to the harsh  
126 climate conditions in the Gulf. Following the discovery of oil, modern planning and infrastructure projects resulted in  
127 the demolition of a great part of the old cities, resulting in many losses to the original architectural character of their  
128 markets. Recently, there has been increasing interest from governmental and public parties in heritage preservation  
129 within Gulf countries to restore and redevelopment projects that seek to balance economic and tourism development  
130 with heritage conservation. This research spots the light on Souq Al Mubarakiya in comparison to other souqs in the  
131 Gulf region to extract what action that are useful or harmful to the conservation and restoration process.  
132 Generally, from what has been observed from the example studies, heritage markets face several common  
133 conservation challenges, listed as commercial pressure and tourism-oriented redevelopment, functional  
134 transformation and changing consumer behavior, inappropriate restoration methods, loss of architectural  
135 authenticity, replacement of traditional materials, façade alteration and signage inconsistency, subdivision of  
136 commercial units, weak conservation regulations, and conflicts between modernization and heritage preservation.  
137 The research conservation plan will mainly focus on understanding these challenges and their impacts. Therefore,  
138 several strategies that combine architectural guidelines, urban regulation, social continuity, commercial  
139 sustainability, and public participation will be considered.

### 140 **Research Methodology:-**

141 This study has adopted a mixed-method approach integrating historical-documentary analysis, architectural field  
142 survey, comparative market analysis, visual documentation, in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, and SWOT  
143 analysis. The research methodology will be broken down into two sections, as you can see below:



144

145

**Figure 4: Research Methodology Hierarchy**

146 The methodology was divided into two major components. The first component focused on historical and  
 147 architectural investigation through archival research, historical maps, aerial photographs, historical documents,  
 148 urban analysis, and literature review concerning traditional Kuwaiti architecture, Gulf markets, and conservation  
 149 theory. The second component focused on comparative and empirical analysis through architectural field surveys,  
 150 physical documentation, comparative urban analysis, questionnaire surveys, stakeholder interviews, SWOT analysis,  
 151 and comparative evaluation with regional traditional markets. As mentioned, this study will focus on the north-eastern  
 152 section of Souq Al-Mubarakiya, as that part still preserves the original spatial and architectural characteristics. Along  
 153 with the information gathered above, the study won't bring real value without a comparative study between Souq Al  
 154 Mubarakiya and other markets that bring attention to the historical relationship with maritime trade routes and their  
 155 relevance to the development of traditional architecture and heritage in the Gulf area. The markets include Souq  
 156 Waqif (Qatar), Manama Souq (Bahrain), Muttrah Souq (Oman), and Bushehr Bazaar (Iran). Last but not least, the  
 157 study shows that the change of the market's original function and the social impact have a major impact on the  
 158 market development over time. Questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews targeted multiple groups, including  
 159 visitors, shop owners, tenants, and local users. Lastly, the collected data have been analyzed using descriptive  
 160 interpretation, comparative evaluation, thematic analysis, and SWOT assessment to present the study findings and  
 161 how many criteria should be taken into consideration in the evaluation and conclusion sections.

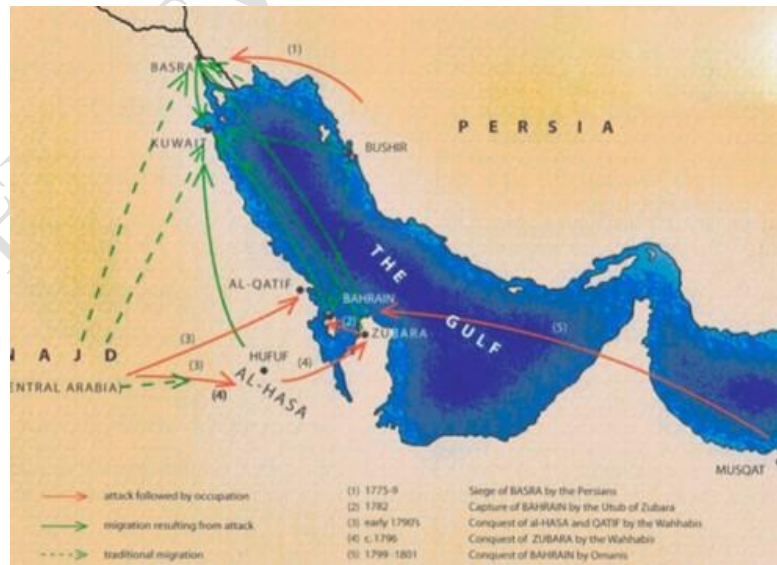
### 162 **HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF SOUQ AL-MUBARAKIYA:-**

163 Souq Al-Mubarakiya is considered to be one of the only lasting traditional and cultural symbols of Kuwait's  
 164 traditional heritage from the pre-oil period till now. As the market developed organically in relation to Kuwait's  
 165 maritime Silk trading route and regional trade networks (check Figure 5 connecting the city with Iraq, Iran, India, and  
 166 East Africa.

167 The maritime Silk trading was an important artery for the bulk transport of  
 168 spices, luxury goods, and raw materials, while also serving as a vital channel for  
 169 cultural and religious exchange. Through time, Kuwait gained a great position on  
 170 the route due to its connection to Basra, Iraq, as it is the closest coastal harbor to  
 171 Basra.  
 172  
 173  
 174  
 175

176 Under the influence of the spatial organization of the market on that route,  
 177 which reflected traditional Gulf commercial morphology that is characterized by compact and organic  
 178 circulation systems, consistent alleys,  
 179 integrated social spaces, and shaded pedestrian environments. The north-

182 eastern section of the souq represented one of the earliest constructed and developed parts of the souq, as it is an  
 183 extension of the Merchants' Market that we demolished during the city's urban regeneration. Several historical  
 184 pieces of evidence indicate that the first commercial activities in Kuwait emerged within that part of the souq.  
 185 The growth of the urban area happened in semi-concentric patterns starting from the main harbor near the Seif  
 186 Palace. Most of the photos and maps found within several research pieces are dated between 1940 and 1952. These  
 187 photos and maps were taken during the agreement with the British government and construction companies on the  
 188 new urban plan for Kuwait after the oil discovery. Referring to the old maps and illustration in Figure 6, it is clear how  
 189  
 190



**Figure 5: Kuwaiti Sea Trading Routes in 18th and 19th Centuries**

191 the linear structure of the souq was created, starting from the seacoast to the Merchants' Market and into our  
192 existing section.



193

194

**Figure 6: The Merchants' Market and Entrance of the Case Study**

195 As the market has been constructed in a linear way, the function of the shops and land use have been distributed  
196 accordingly as follows, government and religious buildings including the Great Mosque and early government  
197 offices near the souq, gold and perfume souqs, food and spices area, butcheries and fish market, textile and fabric  
198 market, open courtyards and coffee shop as the souq have the oldest coffee shop in Kuwait (Bonachie Café). As  
199 observed, the importance of the souq comes from the variety of functions and activities it includes. Preserving this  
200 function within the souq can not be less important than preserving and restoring the physical look of the souq. Many  
201 pictures, old maps, and shop owners' statements have been collected and analyzed in this study to review the  
202 traditional Kuwait architecture character of the market, and later on, they are presented as part of the comparison  
203 and conclusion.

### 204 **Comparative Analysis of Gulf Traditional Markets**

205 The development of Souq Al-Mubarakiyah cannot be understood in isolation from the broader regional and  
206 transregional trade systems that historically shaped the Arabian Gulf. While the Silk Road constituted a  
207 predominantly land-based network linking East Asia to the Mediterranean, the Gulf region functioned as a  
208 complementary maritime corridor that connected the Arabian Peninsula with India, Persia, and East Africa. The  
209 research comparative analysis investigates the transformation of the market, conservation strategies applied,  
210 architectural authenticity protection, spatial organization of shops, and socio-economic continuity of selected  
211 Gulf traditional markets in relation to Souq Al-Mubarakiya. Based on the applied analysis, the selected markets share  
212 common characteristics such as a historical relationship with maritime trade, as all markets act as a maritime  
213 port. Organic urban development, like all markets, has an intersection with a land-based trade route in the center of  
214 the city. Compact pedestrian morphology where the main artery of the market has branches that lead people to the  
215 residential part of the city. Mixed commercial functions based on what is being sold. Climatic adaptation, as all alleys  
216 are shaded to protect the shoppers from the summer heat. Lastly, heritage tourism potential as all markets now act as  
217 an attraction point for people, especially during public occasions. However, each market demonstrates different  
218 conservation approaches and redevelopment strategies.

219

## Comparative Analysis of Gulf Traditional Markets

### Manama Souq (Bahrain)

Manama Souq represents one of the oldest traditional markets in Bahrain and maintains significant continuity of commercial activity within the historic center of Manama. The market preserves several traditional urban characteristics, including narrow pedestrian alleys, compact commercial units, and mixed retail functions. However, modern commercial activities and tourism pressures have introduced visual inconsistency and varying levels of façade alteration. Compared to Souq Al-Mubarakiya, Manama Souq demonstrates stronger continuity of traditional commercial functions but weaker architectural regulation concerning signage and façade treatment.



### Souq Waqif (Qatar)

Souq Waqif in Doha represents one of the most prominent examples of heritage-oriented reconstruction in the Gulf region. The market underwent extensive restoration and redevelopment projects aimed at recreating the traditional architectural identity of the souq using vernacular architectural language, traditional materials, and controlled urban design guidelines. Compared to Souq Al-Mubarakiya, Souq Waqif demonstrates stronger visual consistency, more integrated tourism management, stricter architectural control, and more cohesive urban identity. However, some researchers argue that parts of Souq Waqif represent reconstructed heritage environments rather than entirely authentic historical fabric.



### Muttrah Souq (Oman)

Muttrah Souq in Oman retains strong continuity between traditional commercial activity and historic urban structure. The market preserves narrow shaded circulation systems and strong spatial continuity adapted to local climatic conditions. Conservation interventions within Muttrah Souq have generally emphasized preservation rather than extensive reconstruction. Compared to Souq Al-Mubarakiya, Muttrah Souq demonstrates more successful integration of tourism with heritage continuity while maintaining stronger preservation of traditional urban morphology.



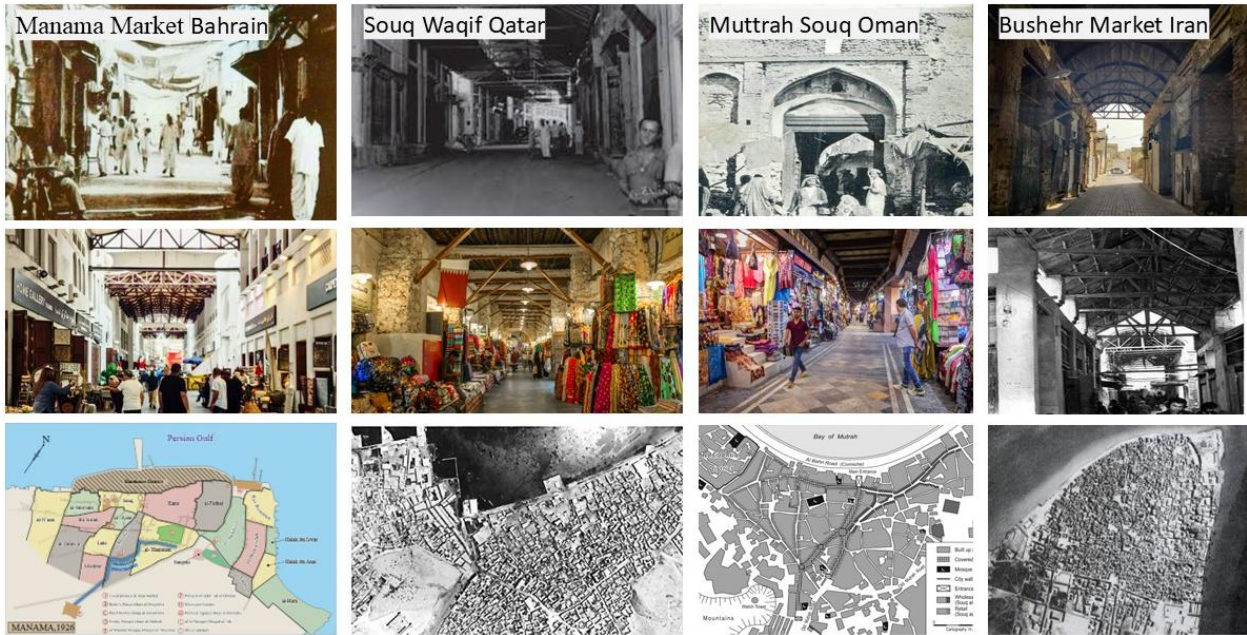
### Bushehr Bazaar (Iran)

Bushehr Bazaar demonstrates important examples of climatic adaptation and traditional commercial architecture within Gulf coastal cities. The market preserves narrow shaded passages and vernacular architectural features responding to environmental conditions. Compared to Souq Al-Mubarakiya, Bushehr Bazaar demonstrates stronger continuity of traditional climatic design strategies and more coherent preservation of urban texture.



220 **Comparative Interpretation**

221 The comparative analysis reveals significant differences in conservation philosophy, tourism integration,  
 222 architectural regulation, and heritage management among Gulf traditional markets.



223  
 224 **Figure 7: Characteristics of Similar Souqs to Al Mubarakiyah on the Maritime Trade Route**

225 Souq Waqif demonstrates the strongest example of integrated heritage reconstruction and tourism-oriented  
 226 conservation. However, Muttrah Souq represents a more preservation-oriented approach emphasizing continuity of  
 227 urban morphology. Manama Souq reflects stronger commercial continuity but weaker architectural control. Souq Al-  
 228 Mubarakiya currently occupies an intermediate position between preservation and redevelopment. While important  
 229 historical and architectural elements survive, the market lacks sufficiently integrated conservation management and  
 230 consistent architectural regulation.

231 **Table 1: Comparative Results with Souq Al-Mubarakiyah**

Market Name	Historical Role	Spatial Form	Comparative Results with Souq Al-Mubarakiyah
<b>Souq Al-Mubarakiyah</b>	Maritime redistribution market	Hybrid linear lanes & clustered alleys	Benchmark case. Combines Gulf maritime trade logic, social vitality, heritage continuity, and mixed commercial uses.
<b>Manama Souq</b>	Pearl trade and island mercantile center	Organic compact alleys with clustered retail zones	Similar merchant-led organic growth and continuity. More island-port oriented, while Al-Mubarakiyah had stronger inland caravan links.
<b>Souq Waqif</b>	Local exchange market	Reconstructed alley-based heritage fabric	Similar heritage identity today, but Souq Waqif depends more on curated reconstruction, while Al-Mubarakiyah preserves stronger authentic continuity.
<b>Bushehr Bazaar</b>	Persian Gulf port bazaar	Climatic shaded bazaar blocks & merchant houses	Strong parallels in maritime trade and environmental adaptation. Al-Mubarakiyah retained a stronger Arabian social-market character.
<b>Muttrah Souq</b>	Indian Ocean maritime souq	Dense, covered lanes and linear passages	Similar Arab maritime souq identity and walkability. Muttrah retained a stronger harbor identity; Al-Mubarakiyah became more integrated into the inland urban fabric.

Istanbul Grand Bazaar	Imperial commercial complex	Radial/checkered covered network	Similar importance as a symbolic market center, but architecturally far more monumental and enclosed than Al-Mubarakiyah.
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232

233 The comparative analysis demonstrates several key findings for the successful conservation of traditional Gulf  
234 markets:

- 235 1. Traditional Gulf souqs evolved through organic growth linked to maritime trade, unlike formally planned  
236 inland bazaars.
- 237 2. Kuwait’s location enabled Souq Al-Mubarakiyah to become a gateway between sea trade and inland  
238 caravan networks.
- 239 3. Al-Mubarakiyah retains stronger historical commercial continuity than many reconstructed Gulf markets.
- 240 4. The souq reflects a hybrid morphology combining Arabian, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean commercial  
241 influences.
- 242 5. Surviving historic fabric within the market remains significant for future restoration strategies.
- 243 6. Souq Al-Mubarakiyah should not solely be classified as a local market, but as one of the major surviving  
244 examples of Gulf commercial urban heritage.

245 **Findings and Discussion:-**

246 The data collection for the findings has been established through questionnaires, interviews, and on-site observations.  
247 The research findings were based on a social and physical study. The physical analysis has been done by drawing all  
248 the souq shops' plans and elevations, along with that material, and design elements analysis has been done by site  
249 observation. On the other hand, the social findings focused on users’ perceptions, commercial activities, cultural  
250 identity, visitor satisfaction, and the relationship between the community and the historic market. The results have  
251 been set based on questionnaires and interview responses from visitors, tenants, owners, and other users of the souq.  
252 The preservation of traditional design elements has been prepared by field surveys, visual documentation, and  
253 comparative analysis.

254 **Physical Transformation and Architectural Distortion**

255 Al-Mubarakiya Souq has been through a  
256 significant physical transformation. Many  
257 restorative projects have been applied to  
258 the souq's different sections; however, the  
259 overall restoration plan was divided into  
260 several phases without a master plan. The  
261 absence of the master plan causes the souq  
262 to have different restorative and  
263 conservation strategies and therefore  
264 different applications.

265 Field surveys indicate major issues include  
266 façade modification, inconsistent signage,  
267 replacement of traditional materials,  
268 subdivision of shops, visual distortion,  
269 and inappropriate restoration  
270 interventions. The physical condition of  
271 several commercial units demonstrates  
272 weak coordination between tenants,  
273 owners, and conservation authorities. The



Figure 8: Signage, Façade, and Protection Quality Distortion

274 study also identified substantial variation in architectural quality between different sections of the market. Some  
275 areas retain strong continuity of traditional architectural characteristics, while others have experienced substantial  
276 visual and functional transformation.

### 277 **Functional Transformation**

278 Most of the shops within Souq Al Mubarakiya are owned by different Kuwaiti families. As it is observed above,  
279 maintaining the original function of the shop is very important to preserve the traditional identity of the souq.  
280 However, the authority did not set a conservation plan with rules to maintain the original function of the shops. The  
281 transformation of shops' functions has significantly influenced the spatial identity of the souq. Many traditional  
282 shops have been replaced by retail and trading uses. The uncontrolled functional transformation is weakening the  
283 historical authenticity and social identity of the market.

### 284 **Social and Cultural Continuity**

285 Questionnaire surveys and interviews reveal strong public support for preserving the historical identity of Souq Al-  
286 Mubarakiya. Participants emphasized the importance of preserving traditional architecture to maintain social identity  
287 and to protect the historical memory and traditional activities. The findings demonstrate that Souq Al-Mubarakiya  
288 continues to act as an active social zone for Kuwaiti and foreign residents and a cultural environment rather than  
289 being oriented to tourism purposes. Many  
290 interviewees have emphasized the need  
291 for oriented social events that discuss and  
292 present the historical aspects of the souq.  
293 The event and exhibition that could be run  
294 in the souq can enhance the public  
295 awareness of the importance of preserving  
296 the souq and maintaining the traditional  
297 appearance of the souq. Besides that,  
298 workshops can be prepared for shop  
299 owners and tenants to teach them about  
300 the different restoration and conservation  
301 techniques that should be followed in  
302 maintaining the shops. Lastly, many  
303 interviews have shed light on Souq  
304 security as there are no security entrance  
305 points or security Measures to keep the  
306 Souq secure and protected.

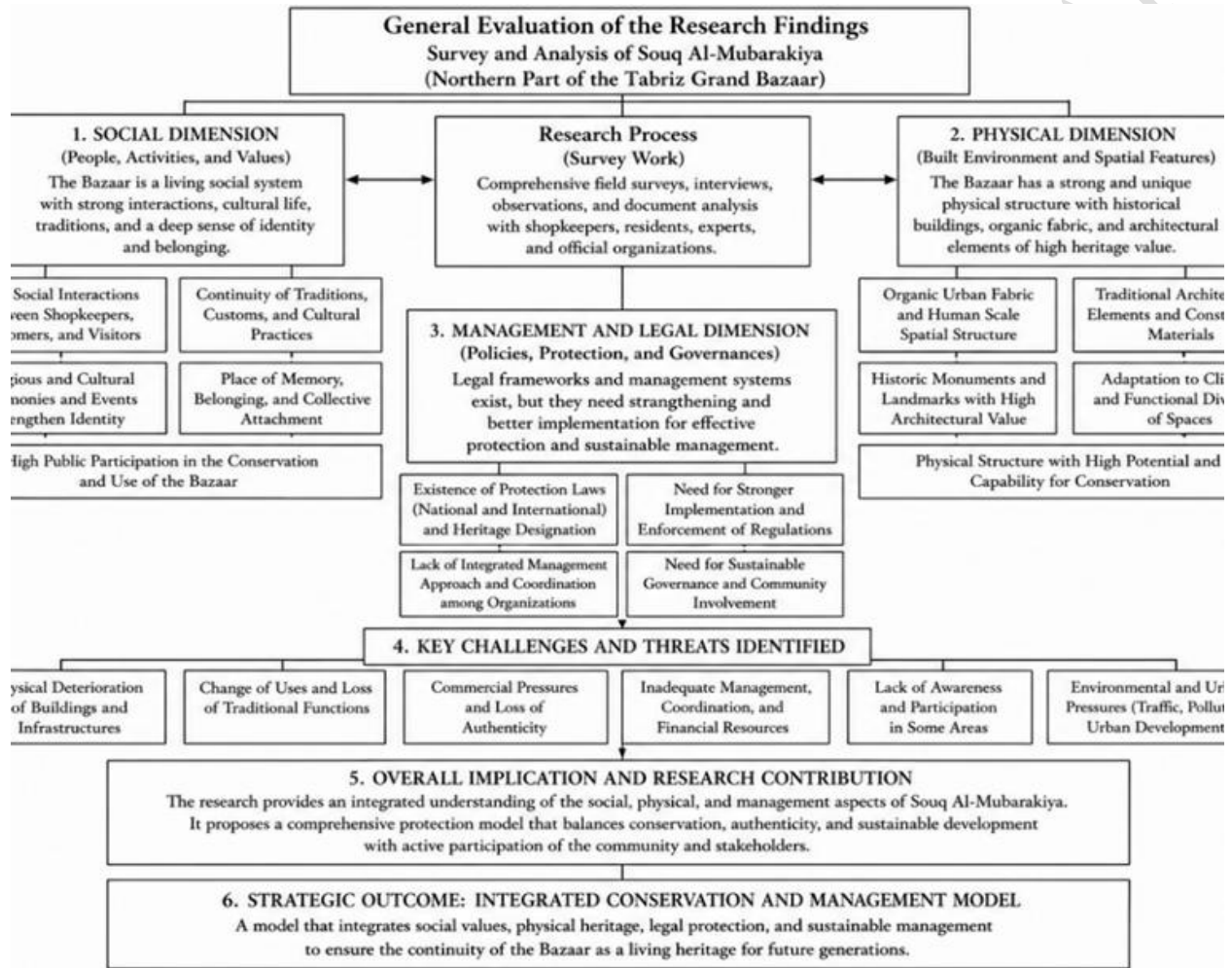


Figure 9: Cultural Activity in Souq Al-Mubarakiya

### 307 **SWOT Analysis**

308 As it has been observed, the traditional markets in the Arab-Islamic city are not only a historical and commercial  
309 spaces; they act as centers of exchange, social interaction, and cultural continuity. Much research has emphasized that  
310 the value of historic markets lies not only in their architectural design, but also in their impact on social life,  
311 including craft traditions, pedestrian vitality, and the continuity of commercial functions. The SWOT analysis of this  
312 study identified several important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the future conservation  
313 of the market. The analysis has been divided into several categories, inspired by the findings. The categories are  
314 divided into protection and restoration, development, structure, tourism, economy, society and culture, and  
315 environmental categories. The result of the analysis on one hand, demonstrates that the Al Mubarakiyah souq still  
316 presents an important heritage value even after the distortion of many of its elements. The souq still presents cultural  
317 symbolism for Kuwait in terms of commercial and social dimensions. On the other hand, there are many operational  
318 weaknesses, including fragmented conservation methods along the different sections of the souq. Many inconsistent  
319 architectural elements, such as signage design, inconsistent use of materials, and excessive modernism style effect.

320 The loss of traditional aspects of the souq has a big impact on how the souq is functioning since many shoppers are  
 321 losing interest in getting around a souq with offices and trading corporations. The analysis further highlights  
 322 important opportunities for the souq, particularly in the fields of heritage tourism, traditional craft, and educational  
 323 activities. Many interviews mentioned the importance of the souq not only for Kuwaitis but also for all Gulf  
 324 countries, as they visit the souq on public occasions. This can result in many conservation strategies opportunities  
 325 that could position the market as a leading heritage destination within the Gulf region. Lastly, the analysis mentioned  
 326 many threats related to the replacement of original craftsmen and superficial heritage branding. Connecting the  
 327 younger generations with the traditional markets and culture is a crucial point that the conservation plan should take  
 328 into consideration.



329

330 **Figure 10: Survey and Analysis of Social and Physical Structure**

331 In conclusion, the findings of this research have been collected based on site analysis and on-site surveys. The  
 332 findings of the study have been divided into physical and social dimensions to not only conserve the souq physically  
 333 but also to maintain a sustainable function within the souq for future generations.

334 **Proposed Conservation Framework:-**

335 The findings of this research demonstrate that the conservation of Souq Al-Mubarakia cannot be approached only  
 336 through isolated restoration projects without considering the other aspects. The market functions as a living urban  
 337 environment where physical space, commercial activity, and social interaction are interconnected. In summary, the

338 future protection of the souq requires an integrated conservation strategy capable of preserving both the physical  
339 architectural heritage and its socio-cultural value. The comparative analysis revealed that several traditional Gulf  
340 markets, particularly Souq Waqif and Muttrah Souq, achieved relatively successful conservation outcomes because  
341 their restoration processes are beyond façade rehabilitation and physical conservation, but focused on heritage-  
342 sensitive regulation. In contrast, many interventions implemented within Souq Al-Mubarakia focused primarily on  
343 commercial redevelopment and visual modernization, which impacted the historical authenticity. The proposed  
344 conservation framework developed in this study, therefore, aims to establish a balanced approach between  
345 preservation and contemporary urban functionality. The framework is structured around five interrelated  
346 dimensions: architectural conservation, urban continuity, socio-cultural sustainability, tourism management, and  
347 institutional regulation.

#### 348 **Architectural Conservation and Urban Authenticity**

349 One of the principal findings of the study is that the authenticity of Souq Al-Mubarakia has been increasingly  
350 weakened through uncontrolled façade alteration, inappropriate signage systems, subdivision of traditional shops,  
351 and the use of incompatible construction materials. The proposed conservation strategy, therefore, recommends the  
352 establishment of a unified architectural conservation guideline (Master plan) for all future restoration within the  
353 souq. These guidelines should regulate façade proportions and architectural composition, signage dimensions and  
354 materials, preservation of traditional alley widths, restoration materials and color palettes, roofing systems and  
355 shading elements, treatment of openings, shopfronts, and decorative details. The proposed conservation plan should  
356 also emphasize the preservation of the spatial continuity of the traditional circulation network, which represents one of  
357 the most important characteristics of Gulf market morphology. The narrow pedestrian alleys, compact commercial  
358 organization, and human-scale spatial hierarchy contribute significantly to the environmental comfort and cultural  
359 identity of the souq. Therefore, avoiding excessive widening of circulation routes, large-scale demolition, or  
360 insertion of architecturally incompatible commercial structures should be studied and proposed.



361

362

**Figure 11: Proposed Conservation and Management Plan**

363 **Preservation of Social and Commercial Continuity**

364 The research findings show that the relevance of Souq Al-Mubarakiya is not limited to its physical construction. The  
 365 questionnaire and interview answers demonstrated that the public commitment to the souq as a social and cultural  
 366 context was substantial and was linked with the traditional activities and urban life within the souq. Unlike general  
 367 heritage sites, the cultural value of traditional markets in the Gulf countries relates to daily use and social interaction.  
 368 Thus, conservation efforts should not only restore the structures and physical places, but also the historic roles and  
 369 social activities that used to take place in the market. Therefore, the study suggests the conservation of traditional  
 370 commercial activities, the promotion of locally owned enterprises, the encouragement of the continuation of  
 371 traditional crafts, the safeguarding of public meeting spaces, and the incorporation of cultural festivals and  
 372 traditional events into conservation planning.

373 **Tourism Management and Economic Sustainability**

374 A comparative investigation revealed that tourism exerts a growing influence on the change of traditional Gulf  
 375 markets. Although tourism creates significant economic opportunities and enhances cultural importance, unregulated  
 376 tourism-driven renovation could damage authenticity and promote commercialization. Souq Al-Mubarakiya is  
 377 currently facing increasing tourism demand due to eateries, attractions, and commercial branding. While these  
 378 activities enhance the market's economic vibrancy, excessive commercialization threatens to supplant the historic  
 379 urban identity with a homogenized entertainment-centric atmosphere. The proposed framework emphasizes the  
 380 integration of tourism through the preservation of traditional market activities, regulation of commercial branding,  
 381 restriction of visually intrusive advertisements, heritage-sensitive tourism programming, and interpretive systems

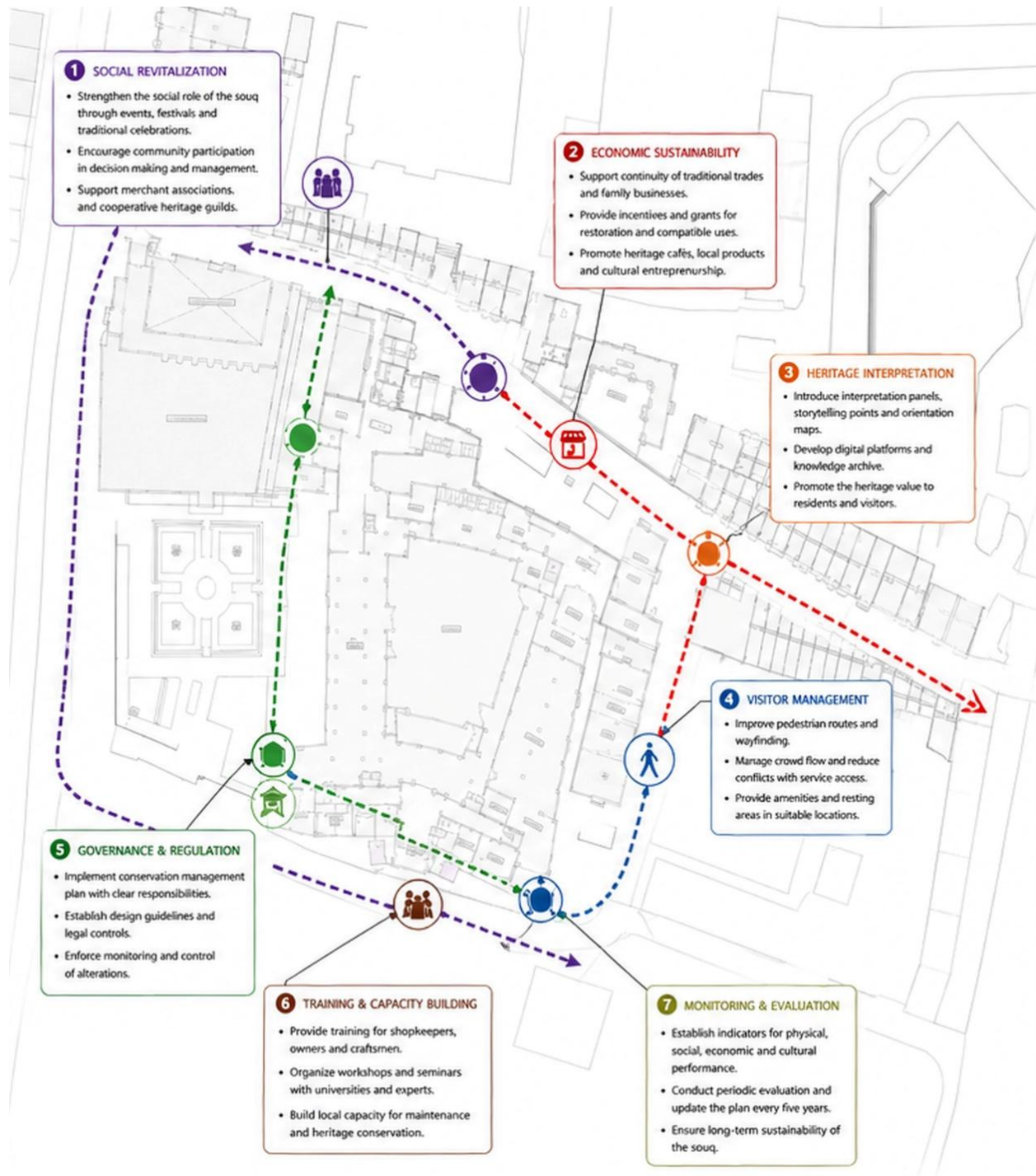
382 elucidating the historical significance of the souq. Tourism ought to preserve the historical integrity of the market  
383 instead of converting it into a fabricated commercial setting disconnected from its authentic cultural backdrop.

#### 384 **Institutional and Regulatory Framework**

385 One of the major challenges identified throughout the study is the lack of a holistic approach for conserving the  
386 whole market as one piece, including tenant regulations and urban control measures. The study therefore  
387 recommends the establishment of a specialized heritage authority or interdisciplinary conservation committee  
388 responsible for reviewing the current situation of the whole market, designing a conservation guideline for future  
389 projects, coordinating between different construction companies and heritage institutions, and lastly, monitoring  
390 maintenance standards and documenting all architectural changes within the market.

#### 391 **Integrated Conservation Model for Souq Al-Mubarakiya**

392 The aim of the proposed conservation plan is to develop a long-term integrated management model that will ensure  
393 heritage preservation, economic sustainability, and urban continuity. The conservation plan of traditional markets  
394 requires constant cooperation between the protection of architecture through the Kuwait Municipalities and social  
395 activity through the antiquities protection authority. The comparative findings of this study indicate that the long-  
396 term survival of traditional Gulf markets depends not only on the preservation of buildings but also on the urban  
397 environment in which these markets operate. Souq Al-Mubarakiya should thus be understood as a lively heritage  
398 environment, where its historical value is the result of the interplay between architecture, commerce, culture, and  
399 collective urban memory. Below is a proposal for the socio-economic conservation plan illustrated on the map of the  
400 souq. The map proposed to locate attraction points for the users next to the shops, mosque, and cafes that can host  
401 these events. Besides that, different security points have been placed on the map to start a closed secure zone for  
402 users. Different courtyards that revive projects should be placed at certain points where the souq has a combination  
403 of shops that share the same craftsmen. Educational events should also be introduced next to Al Mubarakiya school  
404 to enhance the use of the school and provide workshops for users, shop owners, and tenants that teach them more  
405 about the importance of conserving the traditional architecture of the souq, and to teach them the proper ways they  
406 should follow when they join the process of restoring the shops. Lastly, one of the big issues that impacts the market  
407 users is the insufficient parking spots and general facilities.



408

409

**Figure 12: Proposed Socio-Economic Conservation Map**

410 The implementation of this framework may contribute significantly to preserving the historical identity of Souq Al-  
 411 Mubarakiya while allowing the market to continue functioning as an active commercial and cultural center within  
 412 contemporary Kuwait City.

413 **Conclusion:-**

414 This study investigated the transformation and conservation challenges of Souq Al-Mubarakiya through a  
415 comparative analysis of selected Gulf and regional traditional markets. The research demonstrates that rapid  
416 modernization, commercial pressure, tourism-oriented redevelopment, and inconsistent restoration practices have  
417 significantly affected the architectural authenticity and spatial continuity of the market. Despite these transformations,  
418 important elements of traditional Kuwaiti market architecture and urban identity remain preserved, particularly  
419 within the north-eastern section of the souq. Comparative analysis with Souq Waqif, Manama Souq, Muttrah Souq,  
420 Basra Souq, and Bushehr Bazaar demonstrates that successful conservation of traditional markets requires integrated  
421 approaches balancing architectural authenticity, social continuity, tourism management, and economic  
422 sustainability. The findings reveal that conservation should not be limited to physical restoration alone. Living  
423 historic markets require integrated management systems capable of preserving social interaction, traditional  
424 commercial activities, cultural identity, and urban continuity alongside architectural heritage. The proposed  
425 conservation framework emphasizes architectural regulation, heritage-sensitive redevelopment, social continuity,  
426 tourism management, and institutional coordination. The framework may also provide a transferable model for  
427 conserving active traditional markets within rapidly modernizing Gulf cities. The study contributes to the limited  
428 academic literature concerning Kuwaiti traditional architecture and demonstrates the importance of comparative  
429 regional analysis in understanding conservation strategies for historic commercial environments in the Gulf  
430 region. This research contributes to the limited academic literature concerning traditional Kuwaiti architecture and  
431 historic market conservation by providing a comprehensive investigation of Souq Al-Mubarakiya and its  
432 transformation over time. The study provides detailed architectural documentation of the north-eastern section of  
433 Souq Al-Mubarakiya, including maps, plans, elevations, historical analysis, land-use investigation, and physical  
434 condition assessment. This documentation establishes an important preservation record for future conservation  
435 efforts.

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