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A Conceptual and Operational Framework for Justice-based Tourism Development: Evidence from Qeshm Island, Iran

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Abstract

Although tourism can reduce inequalities, it may contribute to injustice. Qeshm Island has experienced the consequences of unjust tourism, and this study aimed to develop a conceptual and operational framework for justice-based tourism on the island. The study adopted a qualitative approach based on deductive-inductive reasoning. Academic experts and local stakeholders were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data collection was concluded after 24 interviews, following increasing recurrence of previously raised issues in later interviews. The findings elaborated on manifestations of justice-based tourism across six aspects, the capacities required for its realization, the actions associated with five interrelated dimensions of the justice process, and the respective responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community. The proposed framework provides a practical basis for tourism planning, policymaking, and destination management.

***Keywords*:** justice-based tourism, conceptual and operational framework, destination management, Qeshm Island

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Introduction

Tourism can generate both positive and negative consequences. Dorjsuren and Palmer (2018) argue that the distribution of tourism benefits and costs is shaped by the power relations among stakeholders, leading to unequal outcomes and social tensions.

Research on justice-based tourism can be grouped into several streams. One has focused on conceptualizing justice aspects and dimensions. Rastegar et al. (2021) proposed a justice-based tourism framework comprising four sequential dimensions: recognition, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Another stream has examined participation as a means of promoting more equitable tourism (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Dangi & Petrick, 2021). The third stream has explored the consequences of injustice in tourism (Tops & Lamers, 2024). However, these issues have largely been examined separately. A comprehensive framework integrating manifestations of justice-based tourism in all aspects, its prerequisites, its development process, and stakeholder responsibilities is therefore required.

Qeshm Island has experienced rapid tourism growth, with visitor numbers increasing from about three million in 2019 to nearly five million in 2024. This growth has been accompanied by conflicts over access to land, coastal areas, natural resources, and economic opportunities, which highlight inequalities in the island's tourism.

Accordingly, this study adopts a qualitative approach to develop a framework for justice-based tourism on Qeshm Island and addresses four questions: what justice-based tourism is, what prerequisites are required for its realization, how it can be developed, and who should do what to advance it.

Literature Review

Justice is a multidimensional concept that is conceptualized differently across theoretical traditions. In tourism, a justice-based approach developed during the 1990s emphasizes reducing inequalities through recognition, human dignity, participation, locals' self-determination, and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Jamal, 2019).

A review of the literature suggests that valuable contributions have been made to understanding the aspects of justice-based tourism (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014), prerequisites for its realization (Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020; Dangi & Petrick, 2021), the process of its development (Rastegar et al., 2021; Rastegar, 2022; Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2023), and stakeholder responsibilities (Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020). These components have largely been examined in isolation. This study addresses this gap by integrating them into a comprehensive framework.

Methodology

This qualitative study is purposive and exploratory in nature. Using purposive and snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews were conducted with academic experts and local stakeholders. Data collection was concluded after 24 interviews, following the increasing recurrence of previously raised issues in later interviews, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interviews explored interviewees' experiences and perceptions of justice and injustice in Qeshm tourism, prerequisites for justice-based tourism, ways of identifying different groups' demands, stakeholder participation, the distribution of tourism benefits and costs, mechanisms for addressing negative impacts, and stakeholders' responsibilities in advancing justice-based tourism.

Data were analyzed using a hybrid deductive-inductive thematic analysis. Overarching and organizing themes were established from the theoretical foundations and literature, while initial codes and basic themes were derived from the interview data.

Results

The results are presented as a conceptual and operational framework that conceptualizes justice-based tourism development. The framework addresses four interconnected components: the aspects of justice-based tourism, its prerequisites, the process of justice realization, and stakeholder responsibilities.

The manifestations of justice-based tourism were identified across economic, political, social, spatial, cultural, and environmental

aspects. Its realization requires three types of capacity: institutional, social, and individual. The justice process encompasses five interrelated and non-linear dimensions: recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. The framework also specifies the respective responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community in advancing justice-based tourism.

Discussion

Justice-based tourism requires an integrated consideration of multiple justice aspects, its prerequisites, the process through which justice can be achieved, and the stakeholders' responsibilities.

Justice-based tourism requires simultaneous attention to different aspects. Discriminatory land allocation, restricted access of local fishers to beaches, infrastructure concentration in the eastern part of the island, pressure on residents in high season, declining interest among young people in local dress, and limited local participation in tourism decision-making illustrate interconnected forms of injustice on Qeshm Island. Considering these aspects together provides a broader basis for tourism planning.

The prerequisites were organized into institutional, social, and individual capacities. Given the multiple governance arrangements on Qeshm Island, centralized decision-making, the presence of non-local tourism actors, and the marginalization of the local community, strengthening these capacities is essential.

Rastegar et al. (2021) conceptualized justice-based tourism as a four-dimensional process comprising recognition, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Building on this framework and Greenberg's (1993) distinction between interactional and procedural justice, this study proposes a five-dimensional process: recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Interactional justice emphasizes the role of respectful and fair stakeholder interactions in fostering trust, particularly in Qeshm, where the presence of non-local managers highlights the importance of effective stakeholder relations.

By identifying practical actions for all five dimensions, this study extends the framework beyond conceptual description toward

practical application in tourism planning. The findings show that justice results from the interaction and cooperation among tourism stakeholders rather than from a single actor. A broader range of responsibilities for the public sector can be explained by Iran's centralized governance structure and the concentration of authority, financial resources, and tourism-related decision-making on Qeshm Island within the Qeshm Free Zone Organization.

Conclusion

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the development of a comprehensive framework for justice-based tourism on Qeshm Island. Whereas previous studies have largely examined individual components—such as particular justice aspects, prerequisites, its development process, or stakeholder responsibilities—separately, this study integrates them into a coherent framework. This process-oriented structure represents the conceptual and operational logic of the proposed framework rather than a fixed or strictly linear sequence derived from the interview data.

The framework can support tourism planning and policy-making on Qeshm Island. The identified criteria can help managers identify and monitor inequalities across different aspects. This is particularly relevant to Qeshm, where infrastructure is spatially concentrated, non-local investors are prominent, governance is fragmented across multiple arrangements, and local community participation remains limited.

A key limitation is that the framework was developed in the specific context of Qeshm Island. Applying it to other destinations requires considering their institutional, social, and cultural characteristics.

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Abstract

Although tourism can reduce inequalities and support vulnerable groups, it can also generate injustice through unequal distributions of power, resources, and opportunities. This study conceptualizes justice-based tourism as an approach to tourism development that reduces inequalities through participation, recognition, self-determination, and equitable benefit distribution. Qeshm Island, one of Iran's major tourism destinations, has experienced the consequences of unjust tourism. Despite growing research on tourism justice, the literature reviewed offers limited attention to an integrated conceptual and operational framework encompassing its manifestations, prerequisites, development process, and stakeholder responsibilities. Accordingly, this study aimed to develop such a framework for Qeshm Island. The study selected academic experts and local stakeholders through purposive and snowball sampling. Data collection concluded after 24 semi-structured interviews, as previously raised issues increasingly recurred. Data were analyzed using hybrid deductive-inductive thematic analysis. Findings identified manifestations of justice-based tourism across six aspects—economic, political, social, spatial, cultural, and environmental—as well as the institutional, social, and individual capacities for its realization. Furthermore, the study identified the actions associated with five interrelated dimensions of the justice process: recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Furthermore, it clarified the responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community. The proposed framework integrates the aspects of justice, its required capacities, its development process, and stakeholder responsibilities, providing a practical basis for tourism planning, policymaking, and destination management to promote justice in tourism.

***Keywords*:** justice-based tourism, conceptual and operational framework, tourism planning, destination management, Qeshm Island

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1. Introduction

Like other economic activities, tourism can lead to both positive and negative economic, social, cultural, and environmental consequences. Although tourism can create opportunities such as employment generation, income growth, and infrastructure development, its benefits and costs are distributed unevenly among stakeholders across destinations. Dorjsuren and Palmer (2018) argue that the distribution of tourism benefits and costs is shaped by power relations among stakeholders, leading to unequal outcomes and, in turn, political and social tensions. Similarly, Seyfi et al. (2023) contend that despite tourism's potential to advance social justice, many local communities, particularly in low-income countries, continue to experience injustice because of their limited participation in decision- making and limited control over the tourism development process.

Research on justice in tourism has expanded considerably in recent years and can be grouped into several main streams. One stream has focused on conceptualizing the aspects and dimensions of justice. For example, Rastegar et al. (2021) proposed a framework for justice-based tourism, conceptualizing the process through the sequential dimensions of recognition, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Similarly, Higgins-Desbiolles (2022) emphasized the need to rethink existing power relations and positioned the local community at the center of justice-based tourism. A second stream has examined the role of participation and governance in promoting more equitable tourism development. Jamal and Camargo (2014) and Dangi and Petrick (2021) argued that stakeholder participation and effective governance mechanisms play a pivotal role in justice realization. Likewise, Lazic and Della Lucia (2024) and Ambros and Buzinde (2021) demonstrated that empowering the local community, revitalizing indigenous livelihoods, and strengthening community agency contribute to more equitable tourism development. A third stream has explored the consequences of injustice in tourism. Examining the closure of Boracay Island, Tops and Lamers (2024) showed that although the policy improved environmental conditions,

the exclusion of the local community from decision- making produced unjust livelihood outcomes for residents. Rastegar (2026) argued that conventional sustainable tourism approaches have been largely unsuccessful in preventing the reproduction of structural inequalities, and emphasized that achieving justice requires rethinking tourism governance through more participatory and justice-based approaches. Collectively, existing studies have advanced important insights into specific aspects and dimensions of justice in tourism, governance, participation, quality of life, and community empowerment. Nevertheless, existing research has largely examined these issues in isolation. Therefore, a framework that integrates the manifestations of justice-based tourism, the prerequisites for its realization, its development process, and stakeholder responsibilities is needed.

Qeshm Island, the largest and most populous island in southern Iran and a UNESCO global geopark, has experienced substantial growth in tourist arrivals over recent years. Administrative data obtained directly from the Social, Cultural, and Tourism Department of the Qeshm Free Zone Organization indicate that recorded entries to the island increased from approximately three million in 2019 to nearly five million in 2024. These figures are based on entries through the island's main access points and do not distinguish tourists from other passenger movements, including trips made by residents. Therefore, they should not be interpreted as the number of unique tourists; nevertheless, they indicate the substantial and increasing volume of movement through the island's main entry points. The figures were derived from two administrative statistical records: An Excel file covering 2019 to 2021 and a printed statistical sheet for 2024 bearing the Qeshm Free Zone Organization's logo. The Excel spreadsheet was provided electronically following a telephone request, while the printed sheet was obtained through an in-person visit to the Department. These administrative records are not publicly available.

Alongside this growth, conflicts have emerged over access to land, coastal areas, natural resources, economic opportunities, and participation in tourism-related decision-making. Media reports have documented community protests against land and coastal transfers. For example, protests emerged in response to the allocation of land for shrimp farming near the Salt Cave geo-site (Mehr News Agency, 28 January 2020), or residents protested against the transfer of

management of the Naz Islands coastal tourism site to the private sector, expressing concerns about restricted access to the coast and its implications for local users (Mostaghel Online, 20 October 2019). Moreover, interviewees highlighted concerns about rising land prices, increasing migration, and unequal access to tourism-related economic opportunities for residents. Taken together, this evidence and local expressions of concern point to important challenges concerning the distribution of resources and opportunities, access to coastal and natural areas, and participation in tourism-related decision-making, highlighting the need for a justice-based approach to tourism development.

Accordingly, this study adopts a qualitative approach based on interviews with academic experts and local stakeholders to develop a conceptual and operational framework for justice-based tourism development on Qeshm Island. Specifically, the framework seeks to answer four questions: What are the manifestations of justice-based tourism in the context of Qeshm Island? What prerequisites are required to realize justice-based tourism on Qeshm Island? How can justice-based tourism be developed on Qeshm Island? What responsibilities should stakeholders assume to promote justice-based tourism on Qeshm Island?

2. Literature Review

Justice is a multifaceted and complex concept that has been conceptualized differently across theoretical traditions. Rawls (1971), through his theory of distributive justice, argues that fairness should guide the distribution of social goods and that inequalities are acceptable only if they improve the conditions of the least advantaged members of society. Harvey (1973) conceptualizes justice in terms of reducing spatial inequalities and allocating resources according to need, public interest, and entitlement. Sen (2009), through the capability approach, extends the concept of justice beyond the distribution of resources by emphasizing individuals' real opportunities to develop and exercise their capabilities. Other theoretical perspectives further argue that stakeholder participation in decision-making processes is an essential condition for achieving justice. Accordingly, justice extends beyond the equitable distribution

of resources to encompass procedural justice, spatial justice, and participatory, as well as the empowerment of individuals.

The concept of justice entered the tourism literature during the 1990s, primarily through discussions of tourism ethics. Although tourism has the potential to promote economic development, cultural exchange, and social well-being, scholars have increasingly argued that it often reproduces existing inequalities in practice. Higgins-Desbiolles (2018) contends that the dominance of neoliberalism and the commercialization of tourism have shifted the sector away from advancing social justice and the interests of local communities toward the pursuit of economic gain. She therefore proposes three questions for rethinking justice in tourism: Who benefits from tourism? How can tourism become more just? And how can tourism serve as a vehicle for achieving justice? Similarly, Rastegar (2022) argues that the prioritization of economic growth and the marginalization of vulnerable groups constitutes one of the primary drivers of injustice in tourism. Along the same lines, Dorjsuren and Palmer (2018) argue that injustice is rooted in the planning and decision-making process, as well as in the unequal distribution of power.

Accordingly, justice-based tourism can be understood as an ethical and participatory approach that seeks to reduce inequalities arising from tourism development by promoting respect, recognition, human dignity, stakeholder participation, local communities' self-determination, and the equitable distribution of benefits (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Isaac & Hodge, 2011; Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020; Jamal, 2019; Guia, 2020). From this perspective, justice extends beyond the equitable distribution of economic benefits to encompass the recognition of cultural identities, the fostering of equitable relationships among stakeholders, participation in decision-making, and the reform of institutional structures necessary for achieving justice-based tourism.

A review of the literature suggests that existing research has focused on only one or a few aspects of the concept. In terms of conceptualizing justice-based tourism, previous research has examined economic justice (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Farmaki & Stergiou, 2021; Tops & Lamers, 2024; Wang et al., 2022; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), political justice (Jamal & Camargo, 2014;

Farmaki & Stergiou, 2021; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), social justice (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), spatial justice (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014), environmental justice (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Tops & Lamers, 2024; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), and cultural justice (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024).

Previous studies have identified a range of prerequisites for the realization of justice-based tourism. In this paper, these prerequisites were categorized into three institutional, social, and individual capacities based on their conceptual similarities to provide a more coherent analytical framework. Within this classification, studies by Zapata and Bates (2017) and Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2019), primarily highlight elements associated with institutional capacity. Likewise, social capacity is reflected in the work of Giampiccoli and Mtapuri (2019), Fortenberry (2020), Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020), Dangi and Petrick (2021), Rastegar and Ruhanen (2021), Ambros and Buzinde (2021), Mika and Scheyvens (2021), and Rastegar (2022). Finally, individual capacity is emphasized in the studies of Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020), Dangi and Petrick (2021), Ambros and Buzinde (2021), and Rastegar (2022).

Regarding how justice-based tourism can be realized, Rastegar et al. (2021), Rastegar (2022), and Rastegar and Ruhanen (2022, 2023) proposed a four-dimensional framework: recognition, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Building on Greenberg's (1993) distinction between the structural and social dimensions of procedural justice, the present study conceptualizes interactional justice as a distinct dimension rather than a sub-dimension of procedural justice. Accordingly, it proposes five dimensions for justice-based tourism realization. Existing studies have largely examined these dimensions in isolation. For instance, Tops and Lamers (2024) have referred to recognition justice; Lee and Jamal (2008), Wang et al. (2022), Higgins-Desbiolles (2022), Tops and Lamers (2024), and Lazic and Della Lucia (2024) focus on procedural justice; Jamal and Camargo (2014), Lee and Jamal (2008), Wang et al. (2022), Tops and Lamers (2024), and Lazic and Della Lucia (2024) examine distributive justice; whereas restorative justice has received relatively limited attention and is explicitly addressed only by Lazic and Della Lucia (2024).

Finally, the responsibilities of stakeholders in advancing justice-based tourism have received relatively limited scholarly attention. Rastegar (2020) and Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020) discuss the responsibilities of the public sector; Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020) examine the role of the private sector, while Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020) and Lazic and Della Lucia (2024) highlight the responsibilities of local communities.

Overall, the literature has made valuable contributions to understanding justice-based tourism, its prerequisites, development process, and stakeholder responsibilities. However, these components have largely been examined separately, and existing research provides limited guidance on how the principles of justice-based tourism can be translated into concrete components and actions within a coherent framework. To address this gap, the present study develops a conceptual and operational framework for justice-based tourism development that integrates these components while further specifying how justice principles can be translated into concrete manifestations, capacities, actions, and stakeholder responsibilities.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study aimed to develop a conceptual and operational framework for justice-based tourism development on Qeshm Island. It is applied in purpose and exploratory in nature. This section introduces Qeshm Island as the case study and describes the data collection and analysis processes.

3.1. The case study: Qeshm Island

Qeshm Island in southern Iran comprises six cities and 51 villages, with a larger rural than urban population. Its economic significance, strategic location, diverse geo-sites, beaches, and natural landscapes make it one of Iran's major tourism destinations. The island has 35 geo-sites: 16 are currently open to the public, 15 are under development and being prepared for visitation, and four are protected and inaccessible to the public. Most geo-sites are located in the western half of the island. According to a report by the Cultural, Social, and Tourism Department of the Qeshm Free Zone

Organization (2025), the number of tourism facilities increased from 224 in 2020 to 324 in 2025, most of which are eco-lodges.

However, geo-sites and beaches are not the only attractions for visitors; shopping is another major tourism driver. The island's location and access to Persian Gulf countries, combined with incentives for commercial activities under Iran’s free-zone regulations, have stimulated commercial development. In recent years, numerous shopping centers have been established, particularly in Qeshm and Dargahan, with a substantial share of land allocated to commercial uses. Shrimp farming has also expanded, occupying parts of the coastline. Alongside tourism development, these economic activities have altered land-use patterns and resource use and transformed residents’ traditional livelihoods.

The island is accessible by air and through Shahid Zakeri and Laft piers, all located in its eastern half. Favorable climatic conditions from February to April concentrate most tourist arrivals in this period, and the resulting influx affects residents’ daily lives. These characteristics, combined with rapid tourism growth, diverse stakeholders, and competition over access to and benefits from the island's resources and opportunities, make Qeshm a suitable case for examining the dimensions and requirements of justice-based tourism development.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Using purposive and snowball sampling, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with academic experts and local stakeholders. Academic experts were selected based on research expertise relevant to the study, particularly in justice, sustainable development, environmental studies, geography, and planning, as well as familiarity with Qeshm Island. Local stakeholders were selected based on their active involvement in the development-related issues and challenges of Qeshm Island, rather than solely on their involvement in tourism. They included current and former tourism, environmental, and geopark managers at the Qeshm Free Zone Organization, as well as social, cultural, and tourism activists on Qeshm Island. Initial academic interviewees were identified based on their expertise and familiarity with the study area, while initial local interviewees were accessed through the researcher’s previous field contacts on Qeshm Island, including contacts established during a

scientific visit in 2019. Additional interviewees were identified through referrals from these initial contacts. Thus, the sample included diverse academic, managerial, professional, social, cultural, environmental, and local perspectives. The inclusion of participants from diverse groups provided a broader understanding of the issues under study by incorporating both academic expertise and practical experience of tourism development on Qeshm Island.

Following initial contact, the study purpose and interview procedures were explained to interviewees. Interview questions were sent in advance by email or WhatsApp, and interviews were conducted in Persian by telephone or Google Meet, given the geographical dispersion of interviewees across Qeshm Island and several cities in Iran. Three interviewees provided their responses through voice messages. With the interviewees' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded. Then the recordings were transcribed verbatim using TurboScribe, an online AI-assisted transcription service. Before using the service, its privacy policy was reviewed. According to this policy, uploaded data is stored on the service's servers; the company does not sell user data, and data transmitted between its servers and users' browsers is encrypted using SSL/TLS. The policy also states that the company discloses user data to government authorities only when legally compelled or in limited emergency circumstances. Following transcription, the audio recordings were deleted from the researcher's account. The transcripts were subsequently reviewed and prepared in Microsoft Word before being imported into MAXQDA2020 for analysis. Interviewees were informed that the recordings would be used solely for data analysis and that their identities would remain confidential. Interviews lasted 15–104 minutes, with an average duration of approximately 59 minutes, totaling 1,408 minutes.

During the interviews, the researcher made brief notes of the key points raised by participants. In the later interviews, particularly after approximately 20 interviews, an increasing repetition of issues previously raised by participants was observed. This led to the decision to conclude the phase of data collection after 24 interviews. All interviews were conducted before transcription and coding began. The interview IDs broadly reflect the chronological order of the interviews, although they do not correspond exactly to it. However,

the IDs reflect the order in which the transcripts were prepared and coded.

To accommodate the paper's word limit, while maintaining a concise and coherent presentation of the coding structure, the initial codes are not included in Tables 3-6. Nevertheless, relatively few new initial codes emerged after the 20th interview, and the final two interviews didn't raise any new initial codes. An examination of the interview IDs reported in Tables 3–6 further shows that all basic themes had appeared at least once among the first 14 coded transcripts; however, this was not considered, on its own, conclusive evidence of saturation. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the recurrence of issues in the later interviews, the limited emergence of new initial codes in the later transcripts, and the representation of all final basic themes among the first 14 coded transcripts informed the assessment of data adequacy. The interviews were conducted in January 2025, and participants' characteristics were presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Interview participants

Interview ID	Organizational Affiliation/ Field of Activity	Years of Experience
P1	Faculty member, Kharazmi University	11
P2	Faculty member, Allameh Tabataba'i University	28
P3	Faculty member, University of Tehran	28
P4	Faculty member, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad	9
P5	Faculty member, University of Tehran	20
P6	Faculty member, Payame Noor University, Tehran Province	24
P7	Faculty member, Research Institute of Forests and Rangelands	25
P8	Qeshm Free Zone Organization	6
P9	Qeshm Geopark	22
P10	Qeshm Free Zone Organization	1.5
P11	Qeshm Geopark	13
P12	Qeshm Free Zone Organization	22
P13	Qeshm Free Zone Organization	4
P14	Qeshm Geopark	14
P15	Tour guide and cultural activist on Qeshm Island	15
P16	Tourism facilitator and cultural activist on Qeshm Island	9

P17	Cultural activist on Qeshm Island	7
P18	Qeshm Island Municipality	2
P19	Qeshm Island Municipality	1
P20	Social facilitator on Qeshm Island	17
P21	Qeshm Geopark	14
P22	Tourism activist on Qeshm Island	19
P23	Cultural activists	5
P24	Faculty member, University of Isfahan	30

Based on the literature, four overarching themes guided the interview questions: the manifestations of justice-based tourism, prerequisites for its realization, the process of its development, and the stakeholders' responsibilities. The interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions of justice and injustice in Qeshm tourism, prerequisites for justice-based tourism, ways of identifying different groups' needs and demands, stakeholder participation in decision-making, the distribution of tourism benefits and costs, mechanisms for addressing negative impacts, and stakeholders' responsibilities in advancing justice-based tourism.

Interview data were analyzed using a hybrid deductive-inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis proceeded iteratively through several stages. The four overarching themes were established deductively based on the theoretical foundations and relevant literature and also guided the formulation of the research and interview questions. The organizing themes were derived from the theoretical foundations and relevant literature. Initial codes were then generated inductively from the interview data. Related initial codes were compared, merged, and refined to develop basic themes, which were subsequently organized under the relevant organizing themes. An example illustrating the coding from an interview statement to the initial code, basic theme, organizing theme, and overarching theme is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Example of the Coding and Theme Development Process

Overarching Theme	Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Initial Code	Interview Statement
Justice-based Tourism Aspects	Economic Justice	Local economic development based on local advantages	Development planning based on the economic advantages of each area	"*In some villages, most people are fishermen and don't need a tourism-based economy. We should not assume that everyone must engage in tourism simply because most parts of the island have turned to tourism*".

To strengthen the credibility and dependability of the analysis, the researcher reviewed and refined the coding structure over several rounds, with additional review by two academic researchers. The two academic researchers did not independently code the interview transcripts; rather, they reviewed the researcher's existing coding structure. They received a structured table with one or two representative interview excerpts for each initial code, along with the corresponding initial codes, basic themes, organizing themes, and overarching themes. They were asked to assess the relevance and clarity of the coding and thematic categorization and to identify codes or themes that appeared irrelevant, ambiguous, or overlapping. The researcher reviewed each suggestion against the relevant interview excerpts and the overall conceptual structure, and made revisions when the proposed changes were methodologically and conceptually appropriate. The research supervisor also reviewed the coding structure over several rounds, focusing on the clarity and formulation of basic themes and identifying and reducing conceptual overlap. These reviews helped finalize a coherent, data-grounded thematic structure.

4. Results

Previous studies have examined selected facets of justice in tourism, but the broad scope of the concept calls for an integrated framework that addresses the manifestations of justice, the prerequisites for its realization, its development process, and

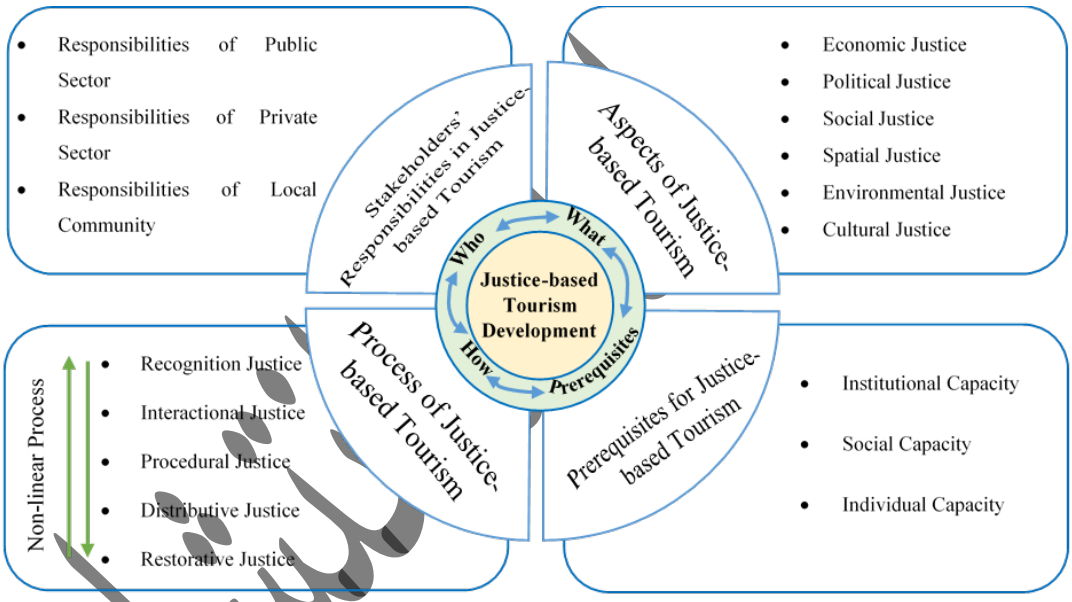
stakeholder responsibilities. Accordingly, data from semi-structured interviews with academic experts and local stakeholders were analysed and coded to further elaborate the content of these four components and identify context-specific criteria and actions associated with each.

The framework is presented in Figure 1 as a conceptual and operational framework for justice-based tourism development. It comprises four interconnected components: the manifestations of justice-based tourism, the prerequisites for its realization, the justice process, and the responsibilities of key stakeholders. Their ordering reflects the conceptual and operational logic adopted in this study; it was neither derived as a sequence from the interview data nor intended to represent a theoretically prescribed sequence.

The first component defines the manifestations of justice-based tourism by showing how justice manifests across economic, political, social, cultural, spatial, and environmental aspects. The second identifies the institutional, social, and individual capacities required for its realization. The third specifies the process, including a literature-informed sequence of justice dimensions and actions associated with their realization. This process comprises five dimensions: recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. The four-dimensional sequence of recognition, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice follows the process presented by Rastegar et al. (2021). Building on this process and drawing on Greenberg's (1993) distinction between interactional and procedural justice, the present study incorporates interactional justice into this process. Its positioning before procedural justice reflects the conceptual reasoning adopted in this study, rather than a sequence established by Greenberg or derived from the interview data. The interviews, in turn, provided more specific and concrete actions associated with each justice dimension, thereby empirically elaborating how these dimensions can be pursued in the context of justice-based tourism. The proposed ordering reflects the conceptual rationale that recognition of affected groups and their needs and interests can be followed by attention to interaction and participation in decision-making, the fair distribution of tourism-related outcomes, and, where injustices have occurred, their restoration. This ordering is intended as a conceptual and operational guide, not as a necessary or

strictly linear sequence; the dimensions may overlap and operate concurrently. Finally, the framework identifies the responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community.

Figure 1
Conceptual and Operational Framework for Justice- based Tourism Development



Note. The arrangement of the four interconnected components and the proposed ordering of the five justice dimensions reflect the conceptual approach adopted in this study, rather than a fixed or necessary sequence. The components and dimensions may interact, overlap, and operate concurrently or iteratively.

4.1. Aspects of Justice-based Tourism Development

The aspects of justice-based tourism development define the concept and outline the criteria needed to achieve justice across economic, political, social, cultural, spatial, and environmental aspects. Findings for each aspect are presented below, with the basic themes and supporting evidence summarized in Table 3.

4.1.1. Economic Justice

Economic justice in tourism refers to the fair distribution of tourism-related opportunities, resources, and economic benefits

among different groups. The findings indicate that it requires economic activities aligned with local advantages, support for local businesses, equitable access to investment resources and opportunities, balanced infrastructure provision, equal employment opportunities, and cooperation among tourism businesses. Interviewee 15 emphasizes developing the local economy according to the local advantages: "I*n some villages, most people are fishermen and don't need a tourism-based economy. We should not assume that everyone must engage in tourism simply because most parts of the island have turned to tourism.*" Interviewee 19 highlighted the need to support locals in starting tourism businesses: "*Since locals don't have the financial and marketing capabilities of migrant investors, holding empowerment courses for local businesses will help them to compete with migrants.*" Interviewee 14 emphasized fair allocation of national lands, prioritizing the local community: "*Much of the island consists of national land, but some influential people take over these lands by exerting pressure and establish their own businesses.*" Regarding the optimal allocation of financial resources, Interviewee 15 noted: "*Shopping centers have a capacity limit. There is no need to establish so many on the island, because saturation will reduce the prosperity of commercial units and waste financial resources.*" Interviewee 11 suggested a more balanced distribution of infrastructure to support local businesses across the island: "*Nakhl-Gol is one of the most underserved villages on the island. To support the village and promote tourism, we are building a bridge to a nearby geo-site.*" Interviewee 3 stressed gender equity in access to tourism employment: "*We should involve women and young people in tourism development and provide them with employment opportunities.*" Finally, Interviewee 16 emphasized cooperation and synergy among tourism businesses: "*There should not be unhealthy competition between tourism businesses, such as stealing each other's tourists or damaging each other's signs."*

4.1.2. Political Justice

Political justice in tourism refers to creating conditions for all stakeholders to participate in planning and decision-making. The findings indicate that it requires support for forming NGOs, greater participation by community and professional organizations, and transparency and accountability in public institutions. Interviewee 7

emphasized facilitating the formation and operation of local NGOs: *"We need to expand local NGOs and minimize restrictive regulations governing their registration and activities."* Greater participation also requires delegating some authority and decision-making power to local communities. As Interviewee 1 stated: *"Government-affiliated organizations on Qeshm Island should delegate some of their responsibilities to the local community and local NGOs."* Transparency and accountability also require a safe space for criticizing and evaluating government performance. Interviewee 21 noted: *"There is no transparency. Land is allocated unfairly, the investor is not identified, and it is unclear why they acquired the land. These allocations must be transparent."*

4.1.3. Social Justice

Social justice in tourism emphasizes the fair distribution of tourism benefits and costs and the well-being of local communities. The findings highlight three requirements: equitable benefit distribution, improved quality of life, and stronger social cohesion. Interviewee 2 stated: *"Tourism development should not leave local communities bearing only its negative impacts while tourism actors receive benefits. Everyone should share in both the benefits and costs of tourism."* Interviewee 9 emphasized controlling tourist arrivals during high season to protect residents' daily lives: *"Tourist numbers should be controlled so arrivals do not exceed the island's capacity and disrupt residents' daily lives."* Regarding social cohesion, Interviewee 1 noted: *"A divide may emerge between the indigenous population and those who have come to the island as investors, entrepreneurs, or workers, and this should be prevented from widening."*

4.1.4. Spatial Justice

Spatial justice concerns the balanced distribution of spaces and infrastructure. The findings identify three requirements: equitable access to tourism spaces and facilities, balanced spatial management, and balanced distribution of infrastructure and land uses. Interviewee 9 described efforts to promote equitable access to tourism spaces: *"At the geopark, we have tried to introduce geo-sites across different parts of the island. Even its most remote areas have geo-sites that tourists can visit."* Balanced spatial management involves distributing activities according to the capacity of different parts of the island and

locating land uses appropriately. Interviewee 14 explained: *"The eastern part of the island is suitable for commercial and industrial activities, while the western part is more suitable for tourism investment.*" Interviewee 15 also emphasized balanced infrastructure provision: *"The island has three entry points, all in the eastern half. If the western half also had an entry point, that area could develop as well."*

4.1.5. Environmental Justice

The findings indicate that environmental justice requires compliance with environmental standards in tourism, responsible tourist behavior, and public participation in protecting natural resources. This includes managing tourist numbers according to geo-sites' capacity, developing tourism activities within ecological limits, and respecting marine boundaries. Interviewee 9 argued: *"We need to consider the island's carrying capacity for the to avoid excessive environmental pressure during high season."* Responsible behavior includes avoiding littering and damage to geo-sites. Interviewee 24 explained: *"People who are unaware of the value of natural monuments damage Qeshm's attractions by leaving litter on beaches or damaging geo-sites."* Interviewee 21 highlighted the importance of training in encouraging public participation: *"When a shrimp farm began operating near the Namakdan Cave Geo-site, island residents spontaneously protested and stopped the activity. This was the result of training."*

4.1.6. Cultural Justice

Cultural justice emphasizes preserving and revitalizing local culture. The findings highlight the protection of local cultural identity, cultural attachment and belonging, and cultural tolerance between hosts and visitors. Regarding the protection of local cultural identity, Interviewee 10 stated: *"We documented cultural assets of the island's villages in a book, including customs, local games, food, traditions, native architecture, traditional occupations, natural and animal habitats, and local legends."* Interviewee 23 emphasized the importance of local attachment to culture: *"Local community on Qeshm Island does not have a positive view of its own capabilities and culture, while non-locals do not spend time promoting the richness and potential of local culture and instead seek quick profits."* Finally, Interviewee 6 highlighted the need for cultural tolerance and

interaction: "*On Qeshm Island, the local community does not want tourists who behave inappropriately because the rural youth may be influenced by such behavior*."

Table 3
Themes related to the overarching theme of Justice-based Tourism Aspects

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Interviewees ID
Economic Justice	Local economic development based on local advantages	P3, P6, P14, P15, P16, P18
	Support for local investment and businesses	P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P11, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P21, P24
	Equitable allocation of natural resources for economic use	P14, P15, P16, P19, P21, P23, P24
	Equitable allocation of financial and infrastructure resources for business opportunities	P3, P11, P14, P15, P16
	Equitable distribution of employment opportunities	P1, P3, P17
	Enhanced competitiveness	P14, P15, P16, P20, P21
Political Justice	Enabling NGOs to form and operate	P7, P12, P13, P15, P20, P23
	Reduced government intervention and greater participation of professional associations and NGOs	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P11, P14, P15, P20, P21, P23, P24
	Transparency and accountability in public institutions	P11, P12, P15, P21, P22
Social Justice	Equitable distribution of tourism benefits	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P15, P17, P20, P22, P23
	Improved locals' quality of life through tourism development	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P21, P24
	Strengthened social cohesion	P1, P17, P18, P20, P21, P22, P23
Spatial Justice	Equitable access to tourism facilities and spaces	P9, P11, P14, P15, P17, P20
	Balanced spatial management	P5, P14
	Balanced distribution of infrastructure and land uses	P3, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P20, P21
Environmental Justice	Environmental protection requirements in tourism activities	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P9, P10, P11, P14, P15, P21
	Responsible tourist behavior toward natural resources	P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P15, P16, P17, P21, P24
	Public participation in natural resources	P3, P11, P12, P21, P23

	conservation	
Cultural Justice	Protection of local cultural identity from tourism-related distortion	P5, P10, P11, P13, P15, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22
	Cultural attachment and belonging	P1, P12, P15, P16, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23
	Cultural tolerance and interaction between tourists and local community	P6, P10, P12, P23

4.2. Prerequisites for Justice-based Tourism Development

Findings indicate that justice-based tourism development requires institutional, social, and individual capacities. These capacities were explained below based on the interviewees' views. Table 4 summarizes the related themes.

4.2.1. Institutional Capacity

Institutional capacity refers to institutions' and organizations' ability to support justice-based tourism development. Findings indicate that this capacity requires local development leadership, a responsible and transformative management approach to justice, transparency, effective laws, and institutional integration. Interviewees identified adequate financial resources, specialized and committed human resources, and managerial stability as requirements for local development leadership. Interviewee 9 emphasizes the need for specialized human resources: *"There is no fairness in recruiting human resources in the island's government institutions. People are mostly recruited based on family ties and friendships, while their expertise and knowledge are completely disregarded."* Interviewee 1 points out managers' commitment to equitable development: "*There has been no real commitment to involving locals in tourism development at any level and scale*." Interviewee 10 identifies ambiguity in development policies and plans as an obstacle to justice: "*Upstream documents are ambiguous, and it is unclear whether tourism is important to us. Do we want to interact with the world through tourism or not?*" Findings also highlight the need for institutional cooperation and coordinated action to manage conflicts and avoid resource waste. Interviewee 1 states: "*There are several stakeholders on the island, each with their own concerns. We need an integrated system of organizations for development on Qeshm Island,*

because equitable development requires organizations to work together."

4.2.2. Social Capacity

Findings indicate that the social capacity for justice-based tourism rests on four components: self-confidence, sense of belonging, awareness, and participatory spirit within the local community. Interviewee 2 states: "*When there is a sense of belonging, the local community is motivated to protect natural resources, reduce damage, prevent destruction, and act against injustice*". Self-confidence enables active participation of locals in tourism and decision-making. Interviewee 5 emphasizes: "*Lack of self-confidence creates injustice because the community does not consider itself worthy of claiming its rights*". Awareness of natural and cultural heritage transforms the local community from passive recipients into active participants in tourism development. Interviewee 10 explains: "*Qeshm residents should know that where they live has played a historical role in the Persian Gulf. They should know that they are part of a civilization. Those who enter the island with their own culture should understand the island's culture and respect its behavioral and cultural norms, rather than leaving locals in a passive position.*" According to the interviewees, willingness and motivation to participate in decision-making, familiarity with formatting NGOs, and cohesion among different groups are essential to social capacity. Interviewee 21 notes: "*In some villages, the local community itself is unwilling to cooperate and does not attend tourism decision-making and planning meetings*."

4.2.3. Individual Capacity

Findings indicate that individuals can increase their share in tourism development through advocacy, entrepreneurship, and willingness to engage in tourism activities. Interviewee 17 claims: "*Qeshm's people have not learned to protest. They do not demand even the smallest rights that belong to them.*" Interviewee 14 points to the limited tourism development in the western part of the island despite its potential: "*A village like Chahu Gharbi has great potential, but local people are unwilling to allow tourists to visit their village.*" Interviewee 16 highlights individual entrepreneurship: "S*ome people recognized tourism opportunities early and earned income from tourism, while others have not taken advantage of it.*"

Table 4
Themes related to the overarching theme of Prerequisites for Justice-based Tourism Development

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Interviewees ID
Institutional Capacity	Local development leadership	P1, P4, P5, P9, P11, P12, P13, P17, P21, P22
	Responsible and transformative management approach to justice in tourism	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P14, P20, P22, P23, P24
	Transparency and effective laws	P4, P6, P10, P12, P13, P15, P19, P24
	Institutional integration	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12, P13, P15, P16, P17, P21
Social Capacity	Local community's sense of belonging	P2, P3, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12
	Local community self-confidence	P1, P3, P5, P10, P11, P15, P18, P20, P23
	Participatory spirit	P1, P4, P7, P11, P12, P15, P16, P20, P21, P23
	Cultural and environmental awareness	P10, P11, P12, P15, P18, P20, P22, P23
Individual Capacity	Individual advocacy	P1, P5, P7, P17, P21
	Willingness and motivation to engage in tourism activities	P9, P10, P11,P14, P18, P22
	Individual entrepreneurial spirit	P6, P9, P16, P21

4.3. Process of Justice-based Tourism Development

The justice process in the proposed framework encompasses five interrelated dimensions: recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. Their ordering reflects the conceptual rationale adopted in this study, informed by previous literature and the researcher's conceptual reasoning, rather than a linear progression established through the interview findings. Accordingly, these dimensions should not be understood as a set of necessary or strictly sequential processes, as they may overlap, interact, and operate concurrently or iteratively. The interviews contributed to identifying and elaborating context-specific actions associated with each dimension in the context of Qeshm Island. The findings related to each dimension and its associated actions are presented below and summarized in Table 5.

4.3.1. Recognition Justice

Recognition justice involves identifying groups affected by tourism and recognizing their needs. The findings indicate that affected groups can be identified through participation in local events, NGOs, personal relationships, and direct communication. Interviewee 20 explains: "*When the Qeshm Free Zone Organization wanted to implement a rural women's empowerment project, they needed someone familiar with the local community. They introduced me, as an NGO activist, to the workshop organizers so that the workshops could be organized based on the needs of different groups.*" The interviewees suggested mechanisms such as establishing systems for submitting suggestions and public reports, holding periodic meetings, and inquiring through NGOs and local contacts. Interviewee 7 states: "*We need to establish strong local media so that they can be the voice of the people.*" The findings also show that identifying locals' needs is not enough; decision-making must prioritize them. Interviewee 4 notes: "*The local community may tell you hundreds of things. But what matters is determining which needs are priorities*."

4.3.2. Interactional Justice

Interactional justice concerns the quality of interpersonal interactions during service delivery and decision-making, and requires respectful, responsive, and fair treatment. The findings identify respectful treatment of service users, timely and effective response to service users' needs, and Consistent and non-discretionary application of laws in administrative interactions as key requirements. Interviewee 12, an official of Qeshm Free Zone Organization, describes an instance of respectful and responsible interaction: "*When I heard that a group of schools in Qeshm were cleaning the beach at Zeytoun Park, I felt it was my duty to go with some of the staff, help them and thank them*." Interviewee 20 describes delays in administrative services: "*I have been trying to renew my NGO license for about six months and still have not been able to renew it, even though the administrative process should take no more than a week.*" Interviewee 5 emphasizes consistent application of the law: "*There should be consistency in dealing with service users, and different people should not be treated differently.*" This requirement concerns the consistent and fair application of administrative rules to all service users, without discretionary treatment by officials.

4.3.3. Procedural Justice

Procedural justice requires fair, transparent, and participatory planning and decision-making. Four major requirements emerged: transparent and consistent laws, institutional mechanisms for stakeholder participation, informed and effective local participation, and meaningful and sustained participation. Interviewees emphasized eliminating cumbersome regulations and clarifying laws. Interviewee 4 states: "*There are many conflicts, parallel procedures, and overlaps among laws. Cumbersome regulations should be eliminated.*" This concern relates to the clarity and coherence of laws and regulations themselves, rather than their consistent application in administrative interactions with service users, which is addressed under interactional justice. Participation can be strengthened through a tourism steering council, periodic meetings among tourism actors, and local community networks. Interviewee 4 states: "*A Qeshm tourism steering council should be established, with all stakeholders, so that they can participate in decision-making.*" The findings also highlight indigenous knowledge as a basis for effective participation. Interviewee 12 explains: "*We must recognize indigenous knowledge. If we use indigenous knowledge, the local community will feel that what is being done is based on their views, and in this way, they will develop a sense of ownership over the plan and program.*"

4.3.4. Distributive Justice

Distributive justice concerns the fair distribution of tourism's economic, sociocultural, and environmental benefits and burdens. The findings include three requirements: equitable distribution of tourism revenues, equitable allocation of government support resources, and fair access to natural resources. Interviewee 15, who lives in a village located along a geo-site route, highlights the unequal distribution of tourism revenues: "*A major share of the revenue from entrance fees to the geo-sites goes to the government agencies, while only a portion goes to the village next to the geo-site. This is not fair, because tourists leave waste in our village, which the village council must collect, yet the village receives no share of the tourism revenue.*" Interviewee 6 emphasizes the importance of equitable allocation of government support resources: "S*ometimes the government provides subsidies and support for an activity, even though allocating that support to another sector could generate much greater benefits. This*

results from a lack of understanding of local capacities and priorities". The findings also emphasize equitable distribution and equal access to natural resources, including drinking water, beaches, and land. Interviewee 5 states: "*If one investor is close to those in power while another is not, the more powerful person should not receive a larger share or easily obtain natural resources. The allocation for economic use should be fair.*"

4.3.5. Restorative Justice

Restorative justice focuses on addressing and repairing the negative consequences of tourism. The findings identify addressing harms, supporting affected groups, and revitalizing tourism capacities as key requirements. Interviewee 20 emphasizes awareness-raising: "*We need to raise awareness about the negative impacts of tourism through social media and provide training to reduce its impacts.*" The findings also indicate that diversifying tourism and using local capacities can mitigate negative consequences of tourism. Interviewee 14 states: "E*ach part of the island should be developed according to its potential. Tourism is currently mainly based on marine recreation and natural geo-sites, while other forms remain underdeveloped, although the island has potential for cultural and adventure tourism.*" Interviewee 5 considers reviving forgotten cultural assets to be another part of the restoration process: "*The local community should be empowered concerning its indigenous and local values and revive what it had in the past but has since forgotten.*"

Table 5

Themes related to the overarching theme of the Process of Justice-based Tourism Development

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Interviewees ID
Recognition Justice	Identifying individuals and groups affected by tourism	P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12, P14, P15, P18, P20, P23
	Addressing needs based on residents' priorities	P1, P3, P4
	Strengthening communication channels to identify the needs of tourism-affected groups	P3, P4, P7, P10, P11, P12,P14, P15, P18, P20, P21,P23, P24
Interactional Justice	Respectful and responsible treatment of service users	P9, P12, P13, P16

Procedural Justice	Timely and effective response to service users' needs	P12, P13, P16, P17, P19, P20
	Consistent and non-discretionary application of laws in administrative interactions	P2, P5, P7, P12, P14, P15, P16, P19
	Transparency and consistency of laws	P4, P12, P19
	Institutional mechanisms for stakeholders' participation	P4, P9, P11, P14, P15, P16, P20, P21, P23
	Facilitating informed and effective local participation	P2, P3, P5, P12, P15
	Meaningful and sustained local participation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16
Distributive Justice	Equitable distribution of tourism economic benefits	P4, P6, P8, P9, P11, P15, P16, P21
	Equitable distribution of government support resources	P5, P6
	Equitable distribution of natural resources	P4, P5, P7
Restorative Justice	Addressing and compensating for tourism-related harms	P5, P8, P20, P24
	Revitalizing tourism capacities	P6, P10, P14, P15, P16, P18
	Reviving underutilized tourism capacities	P5, P10, P11, P17, P23

4.4. Stakeholders' Responsibilities in Justice-based Tourism Development

Achieving justice-based tourism requires clear responsibilities for key stakeholders. The findings identify the responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community as the three main stakeholder groups. Their responsibilities are described below, with related themes presented in Table 6.

4.4.1. Public Sector Responsibilities

The findings identify seven main public-sector responsibilities: developing plans aligned with the island's capacities, empowering and supporting vulnerable local groups, building trust, recognizing the local community, strengthening institutional coordination, facilitating local community participation, and raising awareness and providing training. Interviewee 5 emphasizes the need for development planning based on the island's coastal and marine capacities: "*The plans developed for Qeshm Island have paid insufficient attention to its coastal and marine capacities. Qeshm needs an integrated coastal zone management plan that considers its coasts and lands in*

planning". Regarding local community empowerment and support, Interviewee 18 describes supporting a local household to start an eco-lodge: "*I told a person whose wife was sick and had financial problems to sell the cows and sheep and start an eco-lodge like his neighbor who came from another city. He said he could not do it, so I guided him to start his own eco-lodge.*" Interviewee 17 highlights the limited employment opportunities available to the locals: "*Many young people on the island remain unemployed despite holding university degrees. When a non-local manager is appointed, they tend to prioritize employing their own relatives and acquaintances*." Interviewee 1 also stresses empowering disadvantaged and vulnerable groups: "*Through workshops, people who are marginalized can gain the knowledge and skills needed to benefit from tourism opportunities.*" Trust-building is another key responsibility of the public sector and requires recognizing local rights, reducing discrimination, and ensuring transparency and accountability. Interviewee 2 states: "*For the local community to be willing to participate, its trust must be gained. They must believe that the public sector recognizes their rights and their share and position are clearly defined.*" Recognizing the local community requires respecting local rights, using indigenous knowledge, and considering local needs and preferences in planning. Interviewee 15 notes: "*It is very important to know the needs of the local community because you cannot define another project for a community struggling with its basic needs.*" The findings further highlight the need for institutional coordination to create an integrated system among organizations. Interviewee 1 explains: "*Qeshm Island has multiple stakeholders, and just development requires an integrated system of cooperating organizations*". The public sector also needs local participation, particularly in small destinations. Interviewee 3 claims: "*The government can delegate authority and involve local people and institutions.*" Interviewee 1 highlights the importance of engaging the local community in the tourism development process through raising awareness of their role and influence: "*The public sector should raise the local community's awareness of their position and the role they can play in tourism development so that they can participate effectively.*" Finally, the interviewees argue that the government should educate the local community about their natural resources and cultural assets, tourists about host community norms, and tourism

actors about cultural and environmental considerations. Interviewee 11 states: "*People from the local community who received training became aware enough to take care of the geo-sites themselves.*" Interviewee 20 similarly notes: "*Tourism actors have not been taught the dos and don'ts of tourism, and they are influenced by tourists' culture and neglect local culture in providing services.*"

4.4.2. Private Sector Responsibilities

The private sector can advance justice-based tourism through social responsibility, attention to local interests, and institutional networking. Social responsibility requires tourism businesses to respect local culture and the island's environment. Interviewee 20 states: "*Every tourism business should strive to preserve the island's indigenous culture.*" Tourism businesses can also promote justice by considering local interests and employing local workers. Interviewee 15 explains: "*Tourism businesses should consider local views in their activities, and when disagreements arise, seek cooperation through dialogue.*" The interviewees also emphasized forming tourism associations to increase synergy and bargaining power with the government. Interviewees emphasized the formation of tourism syndicates. Interviewee 6 notes: "*Tourism associations should be formed to negotiate with the government and advocate for their own interests and those of local people to achieve justice.*"

4.4.3. Local Community Responsibilities

The local community is a key stakeholder in advancing justice-based tourism through community organizing, activism and advocacy, awareness-raising, and responsible behaviors. Interviewee 1 states: "*If the local community wants to achieve its demands, it must learn to establish institutions that emerge from the community.*" Social media can also support advocacy and amplify local voices. Interviewee 22 notes: "*The presence of activists on social media can help achieve justice and make the voice of the local community heard.*" The findings also indicate that local people should know their rights and responsibilities and act responsibly toward natural resources and cultural assets. Interviewee 1 states: "*If local people are not aware of their rights, this itself can contribute to increasing injustice.*"

Table 6

Themes related to the overarching theme of Stakeholders' Responsibilities in Justice-based tourism Development

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Interviewees ID
Public Sector Responsibilities	Developing plans aligned with the island's advantages and capacities	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P15, P16, P18, P23
	Empowering and supporting local vulnerable groups	P1, P3, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23
	Building trust	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P16, P17, P18, P20, P21, P23
	Recognition of the local community	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P18, P20, P21, P24
	Strengthening institutional coordination and coherence	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P10, P15, P16, P21
	Facilitate and strengthen local community participation	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12, P14, P15, P18, P20, P23, P24
	Raising community awareness and providing training	P5, P6, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21, P23
Private Sector Responsibilities	Social responsibility of tourism businesses	P3, P5, P20
	Addressing local interests and needs	P3, P5, P6, P15
	Institutional networking	P6, P11
Local Community Responsibilities	Community organizing	P1, P6, P12, P14, P20
	Activism and advocacy	P1, P3, P5, P7, P8, P14, P21, P24
	Raising awareness and promoting responsible behavior through NGOs	P1, P5, P9, P11, P12, P17, P18, P20, P21, P23

5. Discussion

The study proposes a framework for justice-based tourism that brings together different aspects of justice, the prerequisites of its realization, the justice process, and the responsibilities of key stakeholders within an integrated conceptual and operational framework. This process-oriented structure is consistent with Dorjsuren and Palmer (2018), who argue that the roots of injustice lie primarily in planning and decision-making processes rather than

outcomes. The framework's overall structure reflects the conceptual and operational logic adopted in this study rather than a sequence derived from the interview data. The interviews, in turn, helped translate broad justice concepts into more specific, context-relevant elements and actions.

Justice-based tourism is a multifaceted concept requiring simultaneous attention to social, economic, political, spatial, environmental, and cultural aspects. Previous studies have examined one or more of these aspects, including political justice (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Farmaki & Stergiou, 2021), economic justice (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Tops & Lamers, 2024; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), social justice (Dangi & Petrick, 2021), cultural justice (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024), environmental justice (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Tops & Lamers, 2024), and spatial justice (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014). Because neglecting one aspect of justice may reproduce injustice in others, this study examined six aspects and identified specific manifestations for each. Among these aspects, the distinction between environmental justice and general environmental sustainability is particularly important. While environmental sustainability focuses primarily on protecting and responsibly managing natural resources, environmental justice also emphasizes the involvement and responsibilities of different actors in environmental protection and decision-making. In the present study, this distinction is reflected in the emphasis on environmental protection requirements in tourism activities, responsible tourist behavior toward natural resources, and public participation in natural resource conservation.

Discriminatory land allocation for business development, restricted access of local fishers to beaches, infrastructure concentration in the eastern part of the island, pressure on residents in high season, declining interest among young people in local dress, and limited local participation in tourism decision-making illustrate interconnected economic, spatial, social, cultural, and political injustices. Considering these aspects together provides a broader basis for tourism planning and policy-making on Qeshm Island by moving beyond a narrow focus on economic benefits.

After explaining the manifestation of justice-based tourism, it is necessary to identify the prerequisites for the realization of justice-based tourism. Previous studies have addressed some of these prerequisites separately, including institutional integration (Zapata & Bates, 2017; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2019), local community self-confidence and self-control (Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020; Rastegar & Ruhanen, 2021; Ambros & Buzinde, 2021; Mika & Scheyvens, 2021) and entrepreneurial spirit (Camargo & Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020; Dangi & Petrick, 2021). This study organizes these prerequisites into three capacity levels: institutional, social, and individual. Given the multiple governance arrangements on Qeshm Island, centralized decision-making, the presence of non-local tourism actors, and the marginalization of the local community, strengthening these capacities is essential. Thus, justice-based tourism requires not only policy and legal reform but also stronger institutions, social cohesion and participation, and the empowerment of local groups. This categorization also provides a basis for designing interventions at different levels. The empirical findings further specify what strengthening these capacities entails in the Qeshm context.

Regarding the justice development process, this study draws on the four-dimensional process presented by Rastegar et al. (2021) and Greenberg's (1993) distinction between interactional and procedural justice to develop a five-dimensional conceptualization comprising recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice. The inclusion of interactional justice as a distinct dimension reflects both its conceptual distinction from procedural justice and its relevance to the empirical context of Qeshm Island. Interactional justice concerns the quality of interactions among stakeholders, including respectful treatment, appropriate communication, access to information, and consistent, non-discriminatory treatment of individuals by those responsible for implementing rules and regulations. Procedural justice, by contrast, concerns the fairness of the processes through which decisions are made and implemented. It encompasses the extent to which decision-making procedures are transparent, impartial, consistent, and inclusive, allowing affected stakeholders to participate in decisions that concern them and to have their views considered. Although these dimensions are related and may overlap in practice, distinguishing them analytically makes it

possible to examine both the quality of stakeholder interactions and the fairness of decision-making procedures.

In the proposed process, interactional justice precedes procedural justice conceptually because constructive communication, respectful treatment, access to information, and recognition of stakeholders' views can create relational conditions that facilitate meaningful participation in decision-making. This ordering is a conceptual proposition of the present study; it was neither established by Greenberg (1993) nor derived from the interview data, and it should not be interpreted as a necessary sequence in every context. Constructive interaction may facilitate meaningful participation, but it does not in itself guarantee procedural justice. This distinction is particularly relevant to Qeshm Island, where interviewees raised concerns regarding communication among managers, investors, and residents, access to information, respect for community views, and opportunities to participate in decision-making. Some interviewees also expressed concerns about the appointment of non-local individuals to senior managerial positions in the Qeshm Free Zone Organization, perceiving this as contributing to the distance between the organization and the local community. In line with this concern, one interviewee suggested that appointing local managers and staff could improve interactions and organizational efficiency and help prevent misunderstandings. These observations do not imply that non-local managers necessarily produce injustice; rather, they highlight the relevance of communication, mutual understanding, and responsiveness to local perspectives when examining interactional justice in Qeshm Island.

Beyond incorporating interactional justice, this study contributes by identifying specific actions for pursuing multiple dimensions of justice in tourism development. While Rastegar et al. (2021) examined four dimensions, other studies have focused on one or two, particularly distributive and procedural justice (Lee & Jamal, 2008; Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Wang et al., 2022; Tops & Lamers, 2024; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024). Recognition, interactional, and restorative justice have received comparatively less attention. By identifying practical actions for all five dimensions, this study extends the framework beyond conceptual description toward practical application in tourism development planning.

Beyond the justice dimensions discussed above, the framework also distinguishes political justice from procedural justice, two concepts that may overlap in relation to participation and transparency. In this study, however, they operate at different levels of the framework. Political justice concerns the distribution of opportunities for different groups and organizations to participate in and influence tourism governance, including the role and autonomy of civic and professional organizations. Procedural justice, by contrast, concerns the fairness of decision-making processes, including transparent and consistent rules and institutional arrangements that enable informed, meaningful, effective, and sustained participation.

Finally, justice-based tourism realization requires clearly defined stakeholder responsibilities. Previous research has also paid limited attention to this issue. Camargo and Vázquez-Maguirre (2020), examined the roles of the public and private sectors, while Lazic and Della Lucia (2024) emphasized local community agency and participation. The findings highlight that advancing justice requires interaction and cooperation among tourism stakeholders rather than action by a single actor. A broader range of responsibilities was identified for the public sector, which can be explained by Iran's centralized governance structure and the concentration of authority, financial resources, and tourism-related decision-making on Qeshm Island within the Qeshm Free Zone Organization. In this context, local communities may expect greater government leadership and support, explaining the public sector's more prominent role in the proposed framework.

Taken together, the framework's components make it operational by linking the identification of justice manifestations and capacity requirements to concrete actions and clearly defined stakeholder responsibilities. This enables managers and policymakers to use the framework to assess existing inequalities, identify capacity gaps, prioritize appropriate actions, and clarify responsibilities in tourism planning and management. The main contribution of this study lies not only in integrating these components into a conceptual, operational, and process-based framework, but also in empirically specifying how they can be understood and pursued in a particular destination context. The Qeshm case highlights the importance of interactional justice as a distinct relational dimension, the particularly

prominent role of the public sector under a centralized governance structure, and the value of translating broad justice concepts into specific criteria and concrete actions. In this way, the study connects the conceptual discussion of justice in tourism with the contextual needs of tourism planning and management, while recognizing that the proposed pathway should not be interpreted as a universally fixed or strictly linear sequence.

6. Conclusion

Tourism can generate benefits for destinations while also leading to social, political, cultural, spatial, environmental, and economic inequalities. Qeshm Island, one of Iran's major tourism destinations, has experienced such inequalities alongside tourism growth.

This study develops a process-oriented framework for justice-based tourism development on Qeshm Island, integrating justice aspects, the prerequisites for their realization, the proposed justice process, and stakeholder responsibilities. This process-oriented structure represents the conceptual and operational logic of the proposed framework rather than a fixed or strictly linear sequence derived from the interview data. Accordingly, the study identified six aspects of justice-based tourism—social, economic, political, environmental, spatial, and cultural— and organized the capacities required for justice-based tourism realization into three levels: institutional, social, and individual. It also conceptualized the realization of justice-based tourism as a five-dimensional process comprising recognition, interactional, procedural, distributive, and restorative justice, and identified specific actions for each dimension. Although interactional justice is positioned conceptually before procedural justice in the proposed framework, this ordering does not imply a necessary sequence or establish a causal relationship between them. Finally, the framework identifies the responsibilities of the public sector, private sector, and local community as key components.

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the development of a conceptual, operational, and process-based framework for justice-based tourism development on Qeshm Island. Whereas previous studies have largely examined individual components—such as

particular justice aspects, prerequisites, its development process, or stakeholder responsibilities—separately, this study integrates them into a coherent framework. More specifically, the study distinguishes interactional justice from procedural justice, identifies practical actions associated with all five dimensions of the justice process, and demonstrates how the proposed framework can be specified in a particular destination context. The Qeshm case also highlights the relevance of examining interactional justice as a distinct relational dimension and understanding stakeholder responsibilities in light of the destination's governance arrangements. It therefore helps bridge the gap between theoretical discussions of justice and the practical requirements of tourism destination management.

From a practical perspective, the proposed framework can support tourism planning and policy-making on Qeshm Island. The identified manifestations can help managers identify and monitor inequalities across different aspects and prioritize justice-oriented actions. This is particularly relevant to Qeshm, where infrastructure is spatially concentrated, non-local investors are prominent, governance is fragmented across multiple arrangements, and local community participation remains limited. Clarifying stakeholder responsibilities can also strengthen coordination among the Qeshm Free Zone Organization, other public institutions, private tourism actors, and the local community, supporting the island’s gradual transition toward more equitable development.

This study has several limitations. First, consistent statistical data were unavailable for some tourism justice indicators, including employment, ownership of tourism businesses, benefit distribution, and certain spatial indicators. Such data could have provided a more comprehensive and realistic picture of tourism conditions on Qeshm Island and helped contextualize the manifestations of inequality identified in this study.

Second, the use of purposive and snowball sampling may have limited the range of perspectives represented in the study. Although the sample included academic experts, managers, local stakeholders, and individuals with experience of living and working on Qeshm Island, the perspectives of tourists were not directly examined, as the study focused primarily on the conditions and experiences of local

communities in relation to justice-based tourism. In addition, some categories of private-sector tourism actors were less represented in the sample.

Third, all interviews were conducted remotely, which may have limited opportunities to observe non-verbal cues and develop the type of interpersonal interaction possible in face-to-face interviews. Moreover, as with qualitative research more broadly, the interpretation of the interview data involved the researchers' analytical judgments and positionality.

Finally, the framework was developed in the specific context of Qeshm Island; therefore, its application to other destinations requires consideration of their institutional, social, and cultural characteristics.

Future research should test and compare the proposed framework in other tourism destinations in Iran and other countries. Since this study placed particular emphasis on the justice-related issues, needs, and interests of the local community, future research should examine justice from the perspectives of other key stakeholders, particularly tourists and tourism actors and businesses. Such studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of justice in tourism. Future research could also examine relationships among the framework's components using quantitative methods.

7. References

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