

Original Research Article

An Analysis of the Dimensions and Characteristics of Popular Architecture in the Contemporary Era*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Social and demographic evolutions, as well as the escalating growth of collective technologies, have led to the formation of urban mass culture, the tendency toward standardization, and the widespread sharing of beliefs, values, and tastes. This standardization of tastes generates popular art and architecture to come up with an answer that is understandable for everyone and is accepted by the majority. By emphasizing the nature of popular architecture, this study seeks to answer these questions: What is popular architecture? What dimensions and features can be defined for popular architecture?

Research objective: The aim of the research is to define popular architecture in the contemporary period and the recognition of the characteristics, dimensions, and components of popular architecture on an international and domestic level.

Research method: The research method is a systematic review. Therefore, 103 researches related to this topic were searched and identified in seven foreign databases and two Persian databases. Based on the relevance of the titles, abstracts, and content, two experts evaluated the searched research and ultimately, 33 articles related to the research were selected.

Conclusion: The results of the research indicate that the characteristics of popular architecture can be expressed in ten sub-categories, which include popular approval, social demonstration, stylistic imitation, lack of expression of a specific identity, comprehensible modernist expression, visual appeal, semantic, emotional, consumerism, and fashionism. These categories are also defined in the form of five main categories which are cultural-social, historical-identity, aesthetic-physical, semantic-emotional, and economic. The main characteristics of this architectural flow are directly or indirectly affected by the aesthetic-physical aspect. In this regard, the expression of popular architecture is mainly in modern appearance has a visual appeal for the general audience, and is expressed with the help of characteristics such as nostalgic expression and historicism.

Keywords: *Popular architecture, the mass, consumerism, POP architecture, Kitsch architecture.*

Introduction

The contemporary developments have led to the emergence of a new classification, which in the

positioning between people and intellectualism is more distinct and clearer than in the past (Novitz, 1989). As a result of this classification, the distinction between high culture and popular culture has become more important. The result of this trend in architecture is the formation of a new type of architecture that takes into account the

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tastes of the urban masses. This type of architecture is different from traditional or folk architecture which accepts and reinforces the values of the past (Barber, 1987). What this means is that architects, critics, and those who emerged from populist culture and the masses generated by the Industrial Revolution have defined this type of architecture as "pop" or "Kitsch" or, in other words, commercial architecture (Winston, 1995). In positive to this type of architecture, postmodernist perspectives emphasize the importance of common people and underline paying attention to principles such as individual status and relationships, social structures, diminishing the role of intellect as a single narrative, and highlighting features such as architecture that is understandable to the masses and rejecting hierarchies and abstractness. The outcome of this perspective is the emergence of a type of architecture known as "popular architecture," and while most people in society look for popular works and enjoy them, on the opposite side, some critics and thinkers consider these works as "low value" and "useless" (Novitz, 1989).

In the present era, considering the importance of popular groups and mass culture¹, and since mass culture is a product of the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, the formation of global literacy, and the destruction of many traditional forms of daily culture from the pre-industrial era (Nurnazar & Atabek, 2021), it is necessary to understand the dimensions and features of architecture related to these groups and cultures. Therefore, popular architecture is important due to such circumstances and perspectives, as well as its effects on contemporary architecture, including aesthetic, economic, identity, social, and psychological aspects. This article aims to explore the nature of popular architecture in the contemporary era. Therefore, the questions are as follows: What is popular architecture? What dimensions and features can be defined for this type of architecture? contemporary era. Therefore, the questions are as follows: What is popular architecture? What dimensions and features can be defined for this type of architecture?

• Pop and Kitsch

Popular architecture is concerned with two types of architecture, Kitsch and Pop, which both share many common features and their aim is to satisfy the aesthetic tastes of the masses and stimulate their emotions. Pop architects claim that they use images with meaning and recognition in their works, which can be easily understood by the audience. For example, the shape of a large bottle of milk is more attractive to most customers than abstract forms with intricate geometry. Therefore, Pop architects try to understand and incorporate symbols, logos, and images (related to the project) and ultimately provide clear and impactful visuals that can be easily understood and claim that they create a clear connection with the experiences of the audience through paths that by styles such as international modernism, are difficult to understand (Wexman, 1971). While, Modern architecture assumes that "truth" only arises from the architect's control over all aspects of the architectural environment; Pop architecture, on the other hand, assumes that any truth that exists is already present in the environment and the architect has the freedom to emphasize, connect and distort any element they want for any purpose they have. This flexibility is a departure from the authoritarian approach of previous modern architects like Gropius or Mies van der Rohe, who sought universal ideal, and Le Corbusier who imposed their idealized global ideals on a project. As a result, one of the features that Pop architects can provide is the search for excitement that comes from fresh and new approaches, unexpected combinations, and playing with forms (elements, scales, etc.). This approach is demonstrated by Cedric Price, who named his theater project "Palace of Entertainment" and Venturi's fascination with Las Vegas due to its extravagant stimulations (Glass, 1971).

Another term used to describe popular architecture is Kitsch, which originated in the Industrial Revolution era. According to the English language dictionary "Webster", Kitsch refers to a phenomenon that is a worthless imitation or a bad taste (Irazabal, 2007). Kitsch is used to describe a

structure or phenomenon that appeals to the general public and has characteristics such as cheapness, ease of purchase, popularity, ease of production and consumption, superficial understanding, lack of identity, and anonymity (not paying attention to individual identity) and attractiveness (for selection) for all individuals (Duzenli et al., 2018). While Kitsch aesthetics was once attractive to subcultures and middle-class culture, in the current era which is considered a continuation of consumerism, it has also become a priority among the upper class and its influence has increased. "Kulka" believes that both Pop architecture and art used Kitsch, but (mainly) did not produce Kitsch, and the main reason for this is that Pop architecture used consumerist aspects less than Kitsch (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023). Therefore, popular architecture is recognized as Pop architecture and has expanded with Kitsch, which emphasizes imitation and consumerist aspects, and these two common terms of popular architecture share many common goals and characteristics. In this study, both terms are defined within the scope of popular architecture.

Research Background

There has not been a comprehensive study that conducted the dimensions of popular architecture, and most research approaches have been focused on introducing and analyzing buildings influenced by popular tastes, in another case, the difference between the preferences of the general public and architects has been discussed. In the background of this research, two pieces of research on the differences between the preferences of architects and the public at the international level and the results of two researches on the subject of popular architecture in Iran have been stated. Fawcett et al. (2008) conducted a study on the preferences of the general public and architects. Their research found that there was a predictable difference between the preferences of architects and ordinary people and showed that a type of architecture that received the highest rating from users, was actually rated negatively by architects. On the other hand, users paid less attention to design and architectural

concepts and while architects emphasized the importance of the features and personality of each building, people paid attention to the form. Gifford et al. (2002) also examined the differences between architects and ordinary people in experiencing buildings. The most important results of their study showed that architects consider buildings that are clear and meaningful to be authentic buildings. In contrast, people tend to emphasize the solidity of a building to express its authenticity and focus on its form (such as roundness, decoration, etc.).

Regarding popular architecture in Iran and its effects, there have been limited studies on the topic. One example is the study by Akram Hosseini, which divides Tehran's architecture into six trends, each with its subcategories: 1- Adaptation from historical architecture, 2- Modern tendency, 3- Post-modern tendency, 4- Technological tendency, 5- Destructuring tendency and 6- Popular tendency. Hosseini describes the sixth tendency as follows: "This tendency, which uses the simplest and most conventional tastes and mental images of people to create architecture, is formed based on characteristics such as pretentiousness, luxury, and consumption. This trend is not bound to a specific model or form and is simply copying of styles and combining them with each other without any specific rules or order. These copies lack any creativity and are arranged in the form of dead and living styles of past eras, especially those that evoke a sense of nostalgia in consumers" (Hosseini, 2011). Taghaboni & Saremi (2020) also conducted a study titled "Analyzing the Typology of Kitsch in Contemporary Iranian Buildings" which refers to the types of Kitsch. In this study, the researchers examined samples of buildings in three neighborhoods of Tehran, including Sadeghiyeh, Saadat Abad, and Elahieh, and expressed and categorized the facade as the outermost aspect of the building, using the characteristics of Kitsch, in the form of three types of Kitsch: style, pattern, materials, and details. According to the results of the study, some of the most important subcategories

of Kitsch in Iranian architecture include traditional Kitsch (identity-based), modern Kitsch, postmodern Kitsch, avant-garde Kitsch, and neoclassical Kitsch (Rome-style).

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. The nature of this type of research requires systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of data, and also the researcher's emphasis on interpreting and explaining the details of the issues. Therefore, the method of this research method, according to the nature and objectives of the research, is a systematic review. "A systematic review is a comprehensive review of publications that address a specific research question, and it is a systematic, transparent method for identifying, selecting, and critically evaluating all relevant studies, as well as analyzing their data (Shannon, 2002)." A systematic review of this study can be described in three main steps. 1- Search strategy: The initial search was conducted in the databases of Scopus, Science Direct, Sage, Wiley Online Library, Jstor, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and SID and Noormags from June 2023 to January 2024 and also the two search engines, "Google Scholar" and "Google" to complete researcher's work. The search was conducted in sources based on the pre-determined keywords. The keywords are Popular architecture, Pop architecture, Kitsch architecture, Postmodern architecture, Luxury architecture, Ordinary architecture, Aesthetic of Kitsch and pop, and Architectural preferences. 2- Inclusion criteria: Considering the purpose of the research, it was necessary to exclude non-relevant articles. The inclusion criteria were defined based on the topic, content, type, and research method of the articles. Articles that lacked the necessary conditions, such as a low correlation with the research topic, lack of methodological details (e.g., unclear participants, sample size, etc.), or ambiguity in reporting results (insufficient information for analysis), were excluded from the review process." 3- Search output and quality assessment: Finally, 103 sources were extracted from

the database under review. The searched articles were evaluated based on the relevance of the title, abstract, and content to the research topic. Ultimately, 33 articles were identified as suitable for review and analysis by experts (two evaluators) which 23 articles were published between 2000 and 2023 (five of which were selected from Iranian researchers), and 10 articles were selected to obtain the primary (main) sources and also to ensure comprehensive research, from 1964 to 2000 (the period when popular architecture began to spread), which mainly expresses the discussions of prominent theorists about popular architecture who discussed and analyzed the nature of this type of architecture in the early period of popular architecture. 10 articles were selected to reach primary sources (original) and to ensure comprehensive research, covering the period from 1964 to 2000, which is the period of the beginning of the popularity of people-centered architecture. These articles mainly express the discussions of prominent theorists about popular architecture who discussed and analyzed the nature of this type of architecture in the early period of popular architecture.

In this study, a thematic analysis method was employed to analyze the data, and Braun and Clarke's six-stage thematic analysis framework was followed. These stages include 1- Familiarization with the data (reviewing and studying the relevant research in the study), 2- Initial coding (extracting initial codes from the research), 3- Searching for themes (grouping similar and repetitive codes into a single category and forming sub-themes), 4- Reviewing the themes (grouping sub-themes with common characteristics into a single category), 5- Describing and defining the themes (naming the main five themes of popular architecture) and finally, 6- Preparing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In total, 26 architectural codes were categorized into 10 sub-themes and 5 main themes. To examine the reliability and validity of the findings in this study and also the proper analysis of the data obtained from 33 selected studies, the opinions of three experts familiar with the field of research were used to ensure the accuracy of the coding and the results were then compiled.

Findings

Dimensions of Popular Architecture: Based on the systematic review of the studied research (examining and analyzing the extracted codes), 26 features can be identified as characteristics of popular architecture. These features are categorized into 10 categories and 5 dimensions, which will be described and analyzed in the following sections.

Popular architecture has four important features in the cultural and social dimension, that can be described in two sub-themes: “public acceptance” and “social pretense”. The first cultural-social feature of this type of architecture is “being acceptable to people” (Safdarian, 2020; Maraini, 2020; Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014; Winston & Cupchik, 1992). Modern society tends to standardize, share widespread beliefs, values, and preferences, groups, and temporary categorizations (Wilensky, 1964). This standardization of tastes results in popular architecture seeking a response that is easily understandable and acceptable to the majority. Therefore, it is different from the goals of avant-garde architecture, which is the creativity of the artist and architect as an important principle in the artistic and architectural response. To create a positive atmosphere, popular architecture must recreate forms that are recognized by the masses (Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014). Psychologists like “Kundera” believe that the popularization’s goal is to satisfy the majority’s approval. Therefore, the audience of popular architecture is more satisfied with the subject matter when is widely accepted and chosen by the general public, and aligns with public acceptance (Winston & Cupchik, 1992).

The second feature and criterion of the cultural-social dimension of popular architecture are “paying attention to ordinary and common values”, which is mentioned in the research results of Wexman (1971), Lebensztejn & Cooper (1981), and Safdarian (2020). Popular architects believe that each element is shaped by its relationship with people, and all elements are meaningful and reflective of the

culture and environment of the people. Therefore, these architects intend to examine the society’s environment (in which they live), patterns, and usable things and discover the reason for their effectiveness in complex situations (Wexman, 1971). The third feature of popular architecture that can be described in the cultural-social dimension is “Strengthening and promoting social status“, which is emphasized by theorists such as Klaufus (2015) and Islami et al. (2012). This feature is representative of the “demonstration effect” in architecture, which has been discussed in the context of residential architecture as a “housing ladder”. Therefore, individuals strive to present themselves more powerfully to achieve a higher social status. Klaufus considers “visibility”, “luxury”, and “the need for change” as three key factors in imitation and demonstration effect. He explains that the use of bright and shiny materials, as well as contrasting color schemes and relatively large houses compared to others, are indicators of the need to be seen (visibility). Regarding the criterion of “luxury”, he emphasizes the importance of displaying unnecessary elements. Klaufus notes that in the city of “Cuenca” (the third largest city in Ecuador), continuous changes (the third criterion of dramatic effect) have created a colorful atmosphere in the buildings of this region: “In the place where I conducted long-term research, the merchants’ houses were constantly repainted in new color schemes that matched the latest trends” (Klaufus, 2015).

“Personalize the environment” is the fourth feature of the cultural-social dimension of popular architecture, which is closely related to the third feature of this dimension. This feature is emphasized by Attfield (2016) and Wexman (1971). Considering the individualism and pluralism of the contemporary period, the public wants to have a share of design. Therefore, personalization and the application of personal taste are displayed in this architectural trend, especially with the advancement of mass technology (Table 1).

Table 1. Features and themes of popular architecture from the cultural-social dimension. Source: Authors.

Main theme	Sub-theme	Feature	Description
Cultural and Social	Public acceptance	Being acceptable to people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Popular architecture re-creates the forms widely accepted by the public (Maraini, 2020; Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014; Safdarian, 2020). - The satisfaction of the audience for popular architectural works is that the works are in line with the majority's approval (Winston & Cupchik, 1992).
		Paying attention to ordinary and common values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Popular architects understand the efficiency of things and patterns by examining the community's environment, and how they use them. All elements are meaningful for the people and reflect their culture and environment (Wexman, 1971). - Venturi architecture(pop) was a combination of ordinary values with a mixture of elegance and courage (Lebensztejn & Cooper, 1981). - If architects want to create public satisfaction, it is necessary to know their culture, values and design preferences (Brown & Gifford, 2001). - In popular works, the superficial issues of the consumer society are mainly displayed in its works (Safdarian, 2020).
		Strengthening and promoting social status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Popular architecture is used as a concept of a housing ladder for its audience, and it is a representation of symbolic and symbolic capital and a powerful presentation in the direction of changing one's social class (Klaufus, 2015). - The Kitsch is a symbol of aesthetic and social progress and a proof of prestige for its audience (Islami et al., 2012). - People copy and imitate the patterns of consumption and life of higher classes with the aim of improving their social status (Fisher, 2004).
	Social pretense	Personalize the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally, people use objects or materials with Kitsch qualities without being aware of their Kitsch nature, incorporating them into their homes to create a personalized world within their own space (Attfield, 2016). - Pop architects utilize technology to express the qualities of personalized buildings and uniqueness (Wexman, 1971).

From a historical and identity-based perspective, four features of “Lack of emphasis on specific identity”, “lack of connection to the context,” “use of familiar and historical elements” and “ Style eclecticism “ can be analyzed as two categories: lack of identity (substantive concepts) and style referencing. The feature “ Lack of emphasis on specific identity “ is also discussed by researchers such as Mudde (2004) in the context of popular culture, who consider it a shallow ideology that can easily combine with other ideologies (Mudde, 2004). In the field of architecture, Wang et al. (2020), Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska (2014), Safdarian (2020), and Irazabal (2007) have referred to this topic. Wang et al. (2020) argue that: “Popular architects do not express specific structures and fundamental concepts, and are mainly focused on copying and reusing identity and heritage, therefore, popular architecture is not a pure and cohesive style, but a collection of different styles that are accepted by people.”

On the other hand, from the historical identity perspective, the feature “use of familiar and historical elements” is mentioned in the research

conducted by Safdarian (2020), Shayganfar (2007), Attfield (2016), and Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska (2014). Safdarian argues that popular artworks attract attention not through complexity but by using or showing familiar and historical elements (Safdarian, 2020). By emphasizing the specific aesthetic experience created by popular artworks, Attfield also considers it as a style of pleasure that is created through the direct experience of a familiar form (Attfield, 2016). In most cases, formal imitation and stylistic borrowings from past architecture are performed (Figs. 1 & 2). A typical example of this type of reference can be seen in Las Vegas, with historical references to Italy, Egypt, and ..., with all their symbols and signs executed primarily superficially (Table 2).

Most researchers have emphasized the aesthetic features of popular architecture. The majority of characteristics of popular architecture are directly or indirectly related to aesthetic recognition. The aesthetically-physically features of popular architecture can be categorized into two categories: “Comprehensible innovative expression” and “



Fig. 1. The Forum Shopping Center at Caesars Palace. Source:https://www.thelasvegatravelguide.com/shopping/the-forum-shops-at-caesars-palace



Fig. 2. Popular architecture along the entrance axis of Dariush Hotel. Source: Kalantar Motamedi, 2014.

visual appeal“. In the category of comprehensible innovative expression, the popular architect seeks to create a new type of architecture that is understandable to the general public. Kaplan states: “Popular works are like a popular star who, appearing in a new role, seeks to express that this, is the first performance” (Kaplan, 1966). Since the urban masses are the determinants of the aesthetic principles of popular architecture, two aspects of easy understanding and visual appeal become important. Researchers such as Berber, Kaplan Maraini, and Carroll, emphasizing the need for easy understanding and recognition, evaluate popular architecture as standardized (i.e., stereotyped) and simplified in terms of aesthetic recognition. Kaplan states: “To some extent, Popular artwork replaces complexity with ambiguity and what it offers may arouse curiosity, but does not create ambiguity” (ibid.). On the other hand, creating visual appeal and aesthetic recognition in popular architecture is directly related to approaches such as unnecessary complexity, Form polishing, extremism, and exaggeration in the use of elements and ornaments, and indirectly related to other approaches such as nostalgic expressions. The visual appeal of this

Table 2. Features and themes of popular architecture from the historical-identity dimension. Source: Authors.

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Feature	Description
Historical-identity	Style referencing	Use of familiar and historical elements	-Popular works of pop and Kitsch attract the audience due to the use of familiar elements (Safdarian,2020; Shayganfar, 2007). -The aesthetic of Kitsch is created through the direct experience of a familiar form (Attfield, 2016). -Kitsch’s popular architecture seeks to use and transform historical elements or details without thinking into simple and easy-to-understand compositions (Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014).
		Style Eclecticism	-Pop style is not a pure and unified style, but a collection of different styles (Wang et al., 2020). -Pop and Kitsch architecture collects various features from different historical periods, which is similar to the characteristics of eclecticism (Wang et al., 2020; Barber, 1987; Irazabal,2007).
	Lack of Identity (Substantive Concepts)	Lack of Emphasis On Specific Identity	-Pop style is not a pure and unified style, but a collection of different styles (Wang et al., 2020). -Kitsch architecture creates an architecture away from identity and culture (Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014; Greenberg, 2004).
		Lack of Connection To The Context	-In popular architecture (Kitsch), the weak connection between building form and content with the context is evident (Taghaboni & Saremi, 2020). -The representation of popular architecture (Kitsch) is a separate image and elements from the real context and time (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023).

type of architecture is primarily due to its novelty and newness (Figs. 3 & 4). The research of Ozler & Kizilelma (2023) and Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, (2014) point to the redundant elements of popular architecture and consider the complexity resulting from this type of architecture to be unnecessary. Kaplan (1966) and Islami et al. (2012) also express the splendor of this type of architecture as one of the characteristic features of this type of architecture. Aligned with this feature, many researchers, including Wexman (1971) and Wang et al. (2020), mention the creation of colorful and varied combinations in this type of architecture (Wang et al., 2020) (Table 3).

From a semantic-emotional perspective, public architecture also has importance. Popularity is a part of contemporary culture that does not want to be influenced by the values of elitist aesthetics



Fig. 3. Paying attention to the creation of visual attractions such as simulating the fantasy sky. Source: <https://fullsuitcase.com/las-vegas-one-day-itinerary/>



Fig. 4. Popular architecture in Safavieh Bazaar, Tehran. Source: <https://anyja.ir/magazineDetail/1639>

and instead responds to the emotional needs of the people (Attfield, 2016). In the reviewed studies, five features that can be mentioned in the semantic-emotional dimension are multiplicity of meanings, use of symbolism, attention to sensory taste, evoking nostalgia, and neglect of deep meanings. These five features are defined in two categories: “semantic” and “emotional-sensory”. The creation of “multiplicity of meanings” which is one of the ideas proposed by postmodern architects and Venturi, has been mentioned by Glass (1971) and Wexman (1971). One of the methods for creating different meanings in this architectural trend is the use of symbolism and the results of research by Wexman (1971), Maraini (2020), and also Wang et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of this. Wexman believes that “architects of this type of architecture try to use symbols and images (Fig. 5) and ultimately present clear and impactful images that can be understood” (Wexman, 1971). Therefore, architects aim to create meaningful architecture for the audience by using recognizable symbols that do not require specialized knowledge to comprehend. Attention to the feature “sensory taste and evoking emotions” in popular architecture has been mentioned by Anderson (1990), Shayganfar (2007), and Ozler & Kizilelma (2023). Ozler and Kizilelma believe that the result of popular architecture (Kitsch) is promoting rapid consumption of products that evoke strong emotions and sensations. On the other hand, Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska (2014) consider one of the most important features of popular architecture (Kitsch) to be attention to “nostalgic feeling” and mention building wooden structures, which evoke memories of childhood, based on traditional wooden structures. Considering the prevalence of emotions in popular architecture, the nostalgic feeling is mainly formed by creating familiar forms for the audience and the use of materials and false representation (stereotype) plays an essential role in its manifestation. The emotions generated by popular architecture are often referred to as “surface-level” and “transient” emotions in

Table 3. Features and themes of popular architecture from the Aesthetically-physically dimension. Source: Authors.

Main theme	Sub-theme	Feature	Description
Aesthetically-physically	Comprehensible innovative expression	Comprehensible expression	-Pop works are expressed in the lowest levels of ambiguity to be understood by everyone (Barber, 1987; Carroll, 2001). -Popular works of pop tend to repeat familiar forms, and on the opposite side of ambiguity, its orientation is towards ease (Fisher, 2013).
		Random attitude	-The random and unrelated approach of the pop architect indicates that this movement lacks a specific structure and clear rules (Wexman, 1971). -Kitsch architecture is a combination without rules of shapes and styles (Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014).
		Emphasis on visual novelty	-Popular works which emphasize their novelty and newness, are seeking to show their first execution or presentation. Therefore, being placed in front of previous works causes a decrease in the audience’s satisfaction (Kaplan, 1966; Wang et al., 2020).
	Visual appeal	Use of mass technology	-Kitsch architecture uses technology to create diverse spaces (Irazabal, 2007).
		Attention to stereotyped	-The form in Kitsch architecture has become a stereotype and this stereotype presents a template of a form rather than the form itself (Hosseini, 2011).
		Freedom in the use of elements	-The pop and Kitsch architect emphasizes, connects, and distorts any element for any purpose (Glass, 1971; Irazabal, 2007). -Pop architects do not consider objects as sacred, so they don’t have fear or anxiety when using them (Wexman, 1971).
		Imitation and copying	-Pop architecture, instead of designing suitable spaces for humans, is more about imitating something that happens (Glass, 1971). -Imitating and freely manipulating references from any cultural genre, without any consideration or purpose, is considered Kitsch (Attfield, 2016).
		Use of unnecessary decorations	-In popular architecture, what is most dominant is considered attention-grabbing and satisfying, and other complex elements are considered unnecessary (kaplan, 1966; Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023; Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014).
		Shiny and colorful combinations	-The complexity of popular architecture is caused by the combination of luxurious and colorful elements from mass-produced elements (Wexman, 1971). -The popular architecture uses strong color contrasts and bright and vibrant primary colors (Wang et al., 2020).

several studies such as Novitz (1989) and Greenberg (2004) (Table 4).

From an economic perspective, investing in popular art and architecture has two attractive and risky aspects. Due to the public nature of popular art and architecture, it creates a favorable environment for activity and encourages companies and individuals



Fig. 5. Italy Square and the use of popular symbols. Source: <https://mymodernmet.com/post-modern-architecture/>

to take advantage of every opportunity that arises. As a result, this phenomenon leads to a significant fluctuation in the production of popular works and fundamental changes in their essence. Economic instability and commercial competition direct popular works towards the creation of new forms and diversification and in this way, producers expand options and potential choices (Barber, 1987). This subject is indicative of the characteristic instability and new interpretations of beauty in popular architecture, which has been emphasized in research by Ozler & Kizilelma (2023), Dambrin and Lambert (2017), and Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska (2014). Ozler and Kizilelma argue that “the temporary use of specific materials such as reflective glasses, composite facades, special colors, etc. is the result of consumerist advertising, and as a result, a certain product is widely used at certain times” (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023).

Table 4. Features and themes of popular architecture from the semantic-emotional dimension. Source: Authors.

Main theme	Sub-theme	Feature	Description
Semantic-emotional	Semantic	Multiplicity of meanings	-Venturi by stating a large list of words with different meanings, wanted a plurality of meanings in architecture and pop architecture (Glass, 1971). -The goal of pop architecture is to create a meaningful environment for people that is liked by people (Wexman, 1971).
		Use of symbolism	-Pop architecture uses “symbolic language” and popular techniques to express the common people’s emotional desires (Wang et al., 2020). -Pop architecture is expressed by shapes, signs, forms, and symbolic contents (Maraini, 2020; Wexman, 1971).
	Emotional-sensory	Attention to sensory taste	-Pop architecture is seeking excitement, which is caused by novelty, unexpected combinations, playing with forms, elements, scales, and any other influence (Glass, 1971; Kaplan, 1966; Islami et al., 2012; Anderson, 1990). -The result of Kitsch is promoting rapid consumption of products that evoke strong emotions and sensations (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023; Fisher, 2013; Shayganfar, 2007). -Venturi and Scott Brown found that the success of pop architecture is based on its ability to satisfy all the imaginations of its inhabitants (Tzonis & Lefaivre, 2005).
		Evoking nostalgia	-Imitation in Kitsch architecture is done without any specific rule or principle and is mainly based on imitating elements that evoke a nostalgic sense (Hosseini, 2011; Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014). -Kitsch refers us to previously familiar feelings instead of new feelings (Greenberg, 2004).
		Neglect of deep meanings	-Most popular works of art tend to deal with fear, pity, romantic love, and ... and are lacking in deep or ambiguous feelings (Novits, 1989). -Kitsch, enthusiasm, and emotionalism replace expressions of a richly meaningful human concept or deep meanings (Greenberg, 2004).

The promotion of consumerism and luxury (Table 5) as the other characteristics of popular architecture, has been emphasized by researchers, particularly Klaufus (2015). Leszczynska and Jablonska also argue that “investors are inclined to appreciate the taste and culture of the masses in the hope of earning quick profits, and interior architects and designers are influenced by this inclination and direction, which leads them to disregard some aesthetic aspects” (Trocka-Leszczynska & Jablonska, 2014). The promotion of luxury (Fig. 6) is a result of this

approach, and it is demonstrated in various forms, such as the inclusion of unnecessary elements (Klaufus, 2015). The two issues of vertical development and economic changes, or in other words, profit-making, and consumerism, have not been unaffected in guiding architecture towards luxury, particularly in residential architecture. Luxury buildings are seeking world-class architecture, expensive materials, extensive plans, and comfortable spaces (Lauer mann, 2021). According to the research findings, the

Table 5. Features and themes of popular architecture from the economic dimension. Source: Authors.

Main theme	Sub-theme	Feature	Description
Economic	Consumerism	Luxury	-In popular architecture, luxury is displayed in various forms, such as incorporating excessive elements that convey a sense of luxury (Klaufus, 2015). -Kitsch (and popular architecture) is essentially a self-promoter and salesman, imposing itself (Greenberg, 2004). -Pop works are heavily influenced by commercial and ideological considerations (Novitz, 1989).
		Use of fake materials and coverings	-Popular architecture does not have an authentic basis (Glass, 1971; Lebensztein & Cooper, 1981). -Kitsch works are the false use of pseudo-real materials (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023).
	Fashionism	Use of fashionable materials	-The temporary use of specific materials such as reflective glasses, composite facades, special colors, etc. is the result of consumerist advertising, and as a result, a certain product is widely used at certain times.” (Ozler & Kizilelma, 2023).
		Constant changes in the standard of beauty	-Creating fashion and redefining beauty standards is one of the features of a consumer society (Dambrin & Lambert, 2017).



Fig.6. Decorative and luxurious architecture. Source: Authors archive.. characteristics of popular architecture can be described in ten subcategories. This architectural trend has different architectural features from traditional and modern architecture and the differences in approach between this trend and traditional and modern architecture can be explained in all ten subcategories (Table 6).

Data Analysis

Urban masses are under the influence of transformations resulting from the Industrial Revolution and local values and beliefs have been fading away. With the blurring of cultural and social differences, a homogeneous culture has emerged among urban dwellers. Based on this, the outcome of the evolution and change in the preferred values and tastes of these groups has led to a new architectural trend. This trend, which is oriented towards the aesthetics of the masses, is expressed in a different range of principles and concepts from traditional or modern architecture. Considering the research findings, ten sub-categories can be identified for analyzing the formation of mass-pleasing architecture. These include categories such as public approval, social appearance, stylistic reference, lack of clear identity expression, innovative and visually perceptible expression, visual appeal, meaning, emotional-sensory experience, consumerism, and fashionism (Fig. 7).

In the cultural-social dimension, in contrast to populism and the pursuit of popular architecture aimed at achieving “public approval”, in traditional architecture, a type of People’s values is accepted

Table 6. Differences in approach between traditional and modern architecture compared to subcategories of popular architecture. Source: Authors.

Sub-theme of popular architecture	Approaches of Traditional Architecture	Approaches of Modern Architecture
Public acceptance	Derived from People’s values transmitted from one generation to another (Barber, 1987).	Elitist and imposing values on the public group (Wexman, 1971).
Social pretense	Unity between exterior and interior (Hojjat, 2015)	Attention to purity and lack of decorations in modern architecture (Ward, 2008).
Style referencing	Limited to geographical location and lack of connection with other cultures (Barber, 1987), Forms are in harmony with local culture (Sadeghipey, 2007).	Modernism and negation of the past - not paying attention to the historicist approach (Naghizadeh, 2000).
Lack of identity	Rooted in traditional and local culture (Barber, 1987)	Rooted in rationalism (Naghizadeh, 2000).
Comprehensible innovative expression	Gradual and cautious innovation (Hojjat, 2015) Attending to methods, patterns, and Experiences (Hojjat, 2015)	Attention to truth and architectural creativity (Inventing innovative forms and shapes) (Glass, 1971).
Visual appeal	Beyond mere decoration (Maraini, 2020)	Use of the machine aesthetic (Rahmani et al., 2016).
Semantic	Traditional architecture is drowned in beliefs (Maraini, 2020) Pay attention to deep meanings (Hojjat, 2015)	Functionalism (Islami et al., 2021) Lack of attention to the spiritual and symbolic foundations (Naghizadeh, 2000).
Emotional-sensory	Pay attention to the spiritual and psychological needs of people (Sadeghipey, 2007).	Abstract and logical systems of modern architecture (Ward, 2008).
Consumerism	Abstain from consumerist patterns and pay attention to methods, patterns, and Experiences (Hojjat, 2015)	Attention to truth (Ward, 2008) and cost reduction (Islami et al., 2021)
Fashionism	Contrary to the many changes in fashion, values are the result of continuity and experience (Hojjat, 2015),	Attention to heroic and original modernist architecture (Lebensztejn & Cooper, 1981).

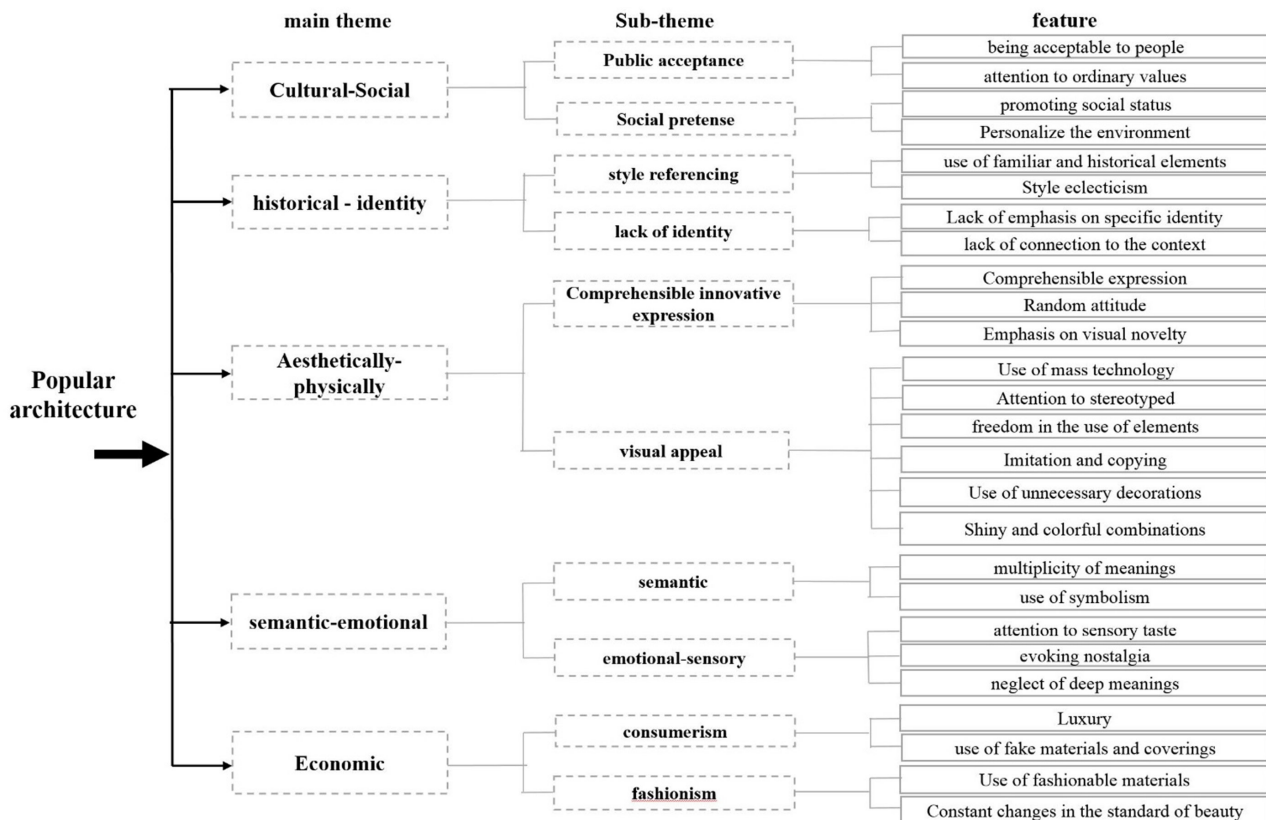


Fig. 7. Main themes, sub-themes, and features of popular architecture. Source: Authors.

that people think about and believe in, and these beliefs have been shaped in specific social-historical conditions (the transfer of values from one generation to the next) and it is not caused by the homogenized culture of the urban masses. On the other hand, modern architecture has an elitist approach and by rejecting ornamentation and creating architecture without luxury, presents a kind of inattention to the category of popularism and social pretense of popular architecture.

In the historical identity dimension, one of the most important features of popular architecture is style referencing, which is emphasized due to the lack of underlying fundamental concepts in this stream of architecture. Therefore, the popular architect creates a collage-like architecture by borrowing and mixing different architectural styles from various geographical locations. This phenomenon is rejected in folk architecture (traditional architecture) due to the presence of underlying fundamental concepts and identities

rooted in traditional culture. On the other hand, modern architecture, which is defined based on rationalism and modernity, has always emphasized the rejection of historical and stylistic referencing. In the aesthetic-physical dimension, attention to two issues, comprehensible innovative expression, and visual appeal, is important in popular architecture. The innovativeness of popular architecture is superficial and is mainly achieved through random combinations. Modernity and innovation are also important in modern architecture, but unlike the superficial and random approach of popular architecture, they are accompanied by a sense of truth, creativity, and architectural genius. While modern architecture emphasizes the beauty that arises from the performance and functionality of each component, popular architecture uses various approaches to present visually appealing and thrilling images, including the use of unnecessary ornamentation, dazzling and colorful combinations, freedom in distorting scale, the use of stereotypes,

technological capabilities (Mass technology)² and also imitation and copying. (On the other hand, in folk architecture traditional architecture), due to the attention to experiences and values transmitted from generation to generation, innovation is cautious and the aesthetic appeal and beauty values are derived from the continuity of values and based on experience and the visual manifestation of this is beyond mere decorative and temporary manifestations. Therefore, innovations and visual appeal in popular architecture are pursued with greater freedom than in both modern and folk architecture, and it has more diverse expressions.

In the semantic-emotional dimension, considering the important position of audience emotions in popular architecture, it is very important to pay attention to the semantic category as well as the emotional-sensory. The diversity of meanings, symbolism, emotional stimulation, and nostalgic approaches are highly indicative in this context. In folk architecture, similar to public architecture, attention is paid to meaning through various approaches, but mostly meanings are profound and rooted in enduring beliefs and values and in contrast to the extreme emotional stimulation of popular architecture, attention to feelings and deep spiritual and psychological needs is emphasized. On the other hand, in modern architecture, concepts of meaning and emotion are considered unimportant and in contrast to semanticism (symbolism, plurality of meanings), attention to performance, and emotional criteria, attention to abstract and logical systems (rational) is emphasized.

In the economic aspect of popular architecture, two concepts can be analyzed: consumerism and fashionism. In popular architecture, due to goals such as commercial competition and Social pretense, on one hand, “consumerism” is used by applying fake materials and luxurious displays, and on the other hand, “fashionism” is shown by displaying current materials and coverings. These two concepts, which are in line with the values of contemporary consumerism, are rejected in folk (traditional)

architecture due to relatively stable and enduring values, and in modern architecture due to the values and principles governing modern architecture, such as honesty in architecture (avoiding fake displays, unnecessary decorations, and showcasing reality).

In the formation of popular architecture, in addition to the importance of the mentioned dimensions, the interrelation, and influence of each on another is also important. However, considering the importance and mutual influence of the aesthetic-physical dimension with other dimensions of popular architecture, and also the direct or indirect relationship between most of the features mentioned with this dimension, which is consistent with the results of Fawcett et al. (2008) and Gifford et al. (2002), it can be emphasized that the aesthetic-physical dimension plays a central role in its connection with other dimensions. The connection between the aesthetic-physical dimension and the cultural-social dimension, in line with paying attention to the values and preferences of the general public and also ensuring the acceptance of the created architecture, is done by the general public. On the other hand, the connection with the identity-historical dimension, considering the lack of specific underlying concepts and identity in popular architecture, is in line with historical allusion and stylistic referencing. This stylistic referencing is accompanied by changes in proportions, color, shape, and... and provides attractive and exciting images for the general public. The connection between the aesthetic-physical dimension and the semantic-emotional dimension is to express and present symbolic and attractive images that evoke strong emotions and sensations in the general public. The importance of this relationship is emphasized in some cases by the use of exaggeration, simulation, and technology. Finally, the connection between the aesthetic-physical dimension and the economic dimension, due to consumerism and fashionism, provides an opportunity for investors to influence the general public, especially in the housing sector

(which is the most important place of human life). Therefore, the connection between these two concepts (consumerism and fashionism) with the aesthetic-physical dimension and also with the social-cultural dimension (social pretense) in contemporary consumerist and urban society has led to the creation type of popular architecture, which is mainly luxury.

Conclusion

In response to the first question of the research, popular architecture is a type of architectural movement that considers two types of architecture: Kitsch and Pop, and both types of architecture have many common characteristics. The field of the emergence of popular architecture is mainly in the modern and urban context, and the audience of popular architecture are individuals who are influenced by the values of urbanization and the transformations caused by the Industrial Revolution. As a result, on the one hand, new and homogeneous values and tastes have been formed in them, and on the other hand, local and traditional values (beliefs, cultural, social, and identity differences) have diminished. The aesthetic philosophy of popular architecture differs from both modern aesthetic philosophy (which is based on reason, utility, and machine aesthetics) and folk (traditional) aesthetic philosophy (which is based on needs, values, and beliefs transmitted from generation to generation) and is influenced by two concepts: “apparent modernity” and “visual appeal” and is expressed through various approaches, including the use of unnecessary decorations, flashy combinations, colorful colors, imitation, and copying, as well as freedom in changing shapes and scales.

Popular architecture, as one of the contemporary trends, has relatively diverse dimensions. The research results indicate that this trend of architecture goes beyond the purely aesthetic-physical dimension. In response to the second question of the research, popular architecture has five main dimensions: cultural-social, historical-identity, aesthetic-physical, semantic-emotional, and economic. In the cultural-social dimension, the two categories

of “Public acceptance” and “Social pretense”, in the historical-identity dimension, the categories of “Style referencing” and “Lack of identity”, in the aesthetic-physical dimension the categories of “Comprehensible innovative expression” and “Visual appeal”, in the semantic-emotional dimension the categories of “Semantic” and “Emotional-sensory” and finally in the economic dimension the two categories of “consumerism” and “fashionism” can be expressed. A significant portion of the analyzed features of this type of architecture have a direct or indirect connection with the aesthetic-physical dimension. In general, the characteristics of popular architecture (26 features) include: attention to the democratic appearance (approved by the public), attention to ordinary and common values (popular culture), attention to the promotion of the audience’s social status, personalization and individualism, the use of historical and familiar elements, stylistic eclecticism, the absence of a specific identity, lack of connection with the context, comprehensible expression (familiar to the audience), lack of specific structure and rules (random attitude), emphasis on novelty and apparent innovation, freedom in the use and distortion of elements, having a clichéd appearance, imitation and copying, using mass technology, using unnecessary decorations, flashy and colorful combinations, paying attention to the plurality of meanings, using symbolism, excessive stimulation of emotions, evoking a nostalgic feeling, not creating deep meanings, luxury, use of materials or false covering, use of modern materials and finally continuous changes are criteria of beauty (instability).

Endnotes

1. The main theme of the theorists of “mass society” is based on the fact that mass society develops mass culture in which values, cultural and political beliefs tend to become homogeneous and fluid. As a result, people think and feel the same at the middle or lower levels. But these thoughts and feelings are prone to fleeting fashion (Wilensky, 1964).
2. The richness and multiplicity formed in popular architecture is mainly obtained through luxurious and colorful combinations of mass production elements. An example of this is the “Moore” house, which has been transformed into a collection of small rooms full of colorful technological and non-technological artifacts, toys, a complete set of lighting devices, etc. Another example is the “Football Hall of Fame” building, which was designed by Robert Venturi and has a large billboard across its facade that displays a sequence of pictures, magazines, and graphics of famous football players (Wexman, 1971).

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