

A Challenge between Modernity and Tradition- Consumerism in Tajrish Architecture

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous modern elements and unprecedented spaces which may result in the determination of the traditional elements of life, whereas traditional elements and their relevant components are ubiquitous and carry on life in interaction with the modern world. Drawing from empirical research, documentary literature, and practical experiences, this paper presents a conceptual frame for understanding shopping centers and the traditional bazaar sector in Tajrish and the trajectory of the sector in confronting modernism. The paper also develops a conceptual framework to describe and comprehend the dialectics of modern-traditional shopping systems in Tajrish. The objective of the paper is to assess and refine the traditional-modern shops in Tajrish through 60 on-site interviews. The paper applies the concept of consumer society via theoretical approaches derived from Jean Baudrillard. The findings of the interview indicate that, unlike many other sites in Iran, this site has met a coexistence among the two different traditional and modern spaces. As an emblem of the contrast inside the Iranian bazaar- traditional men in traditional bazaars and modern men and women in modern shops it results in contrast in traditional economy and modern economy in Iran's future; the conditions head towards a new economic behavior, a combination of traditional bazaars and modern shops and the intercommunion of the two spaces.

Keywords: Consumerism, Baudrillard, Iranian Bazaar, Tradition-Modernism, Tajrish.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The history of the Iranian Bazaar is broad and, according to historical evidence, it has always acted as the main element in forming cities. It is the symbol of urban life and the clearest emblem of dwelling in the Iranian urban ecosystem. The retailing sector of Iran remains in a transition spiral for the future. Iran has a history of thousands of years. Many Iranian cities are as old as Iran itself. During its lifetime, Iran has confronted multiple challenges, for example, its geographical location causes numerous changes. Such a change in the urban ecology has affected the social structure of the country. Different cultures and climates have also resulted in deliberate or indeliberate international conflicts. The traditional bazaar has had an irreplaceable function in conserving cultural identity in Iran as an influential institution. "Bazaar" is the key sector of the Iranian city and has thereby formed a social institution related to other institutions

in cities. The bazaar has mostly been in collaboration with religion and politics: two other important social institutions of eastern history (Azadarmaki, 2012). The emergence of the three institutions in central regions of the Iranian historical cities is an index, whereas the three named institutions have evermore been the moderation of power in Iran. Also, the spatial presence of the bazaar in the heart of an Iranian city and close to other historical monuments reveal the primordial status of the bazaar in the city. The history of the Iranian Bazaar is broad and, according to historical evidence, the bazaar has always acted as the main element in the formation of cities. It is the symbol of urban life and the clearest sign of dwelling in the Iranian urban ecosystem. According to Ashraf, many urban developments and expansions were based on the bazaar location and figure (Ashraf, 1974). The bazaar was known as the pillar of the city formation and the main route that connected the outdoor port to the high priority core of the city.

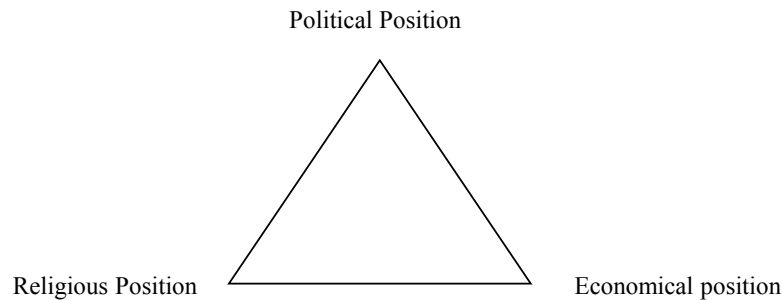


Fig. 1. The Traditional Bazaar

The emergence of modernity in towns resulted in a cease in the old social and cultural life. The human was changing and experiencing the pleasure of modernity and the glamour of the new lifestyle. "Shopping Centers" become a symbol of the extension of consumerism, consumer society, and globalization. They emerged to expose youth subcultures and cultural challenges against the hegemony at the national level, leading to the devaluation, and gradually, and declining traditional bazaar. As Kostyukova states: "Rapid development of the globalization results in the emergence of the individual multi-cultural development that brings about the realization of conceptual equality of various cultures, as well as the necessity to rescue different cultures with their unique representations" (Kostyukov, 2015, p. 263).

Today, the bazaar has a great reputation in cities. Has the bazaar or somewhat "tradition" survived in the battle against modernism and modern elements? Or has it denied it and eliminated from the urban eco-cycle? The focus of this paper is specifically on the case study, "Tajrish traditional bazaar", located on the northern outskirts of Tehran in the Shemiran district. This sector is located adjacent to a modern shopping center recalled the Ghaem Mall.

2. METHOD

The research method was qualitative, providing a detailed description and analysis of the quality or the nature of the human experience (Marvasti, 2004). The significance of qualitative research is that it can study people in the natural settings, in which they are, rather than artificial or experimental contexts (Flick, 2017). Kirk and Miller define qualitative research as a "particular tradition that fundamentally depends on watching people in their territory, and interacting with them in their language or their terms". Watching people in their territory can entail observing, joining in, talking to people, and reading what they have written (Pope & Mays, 2006). Focus groups and chatting are ways to talk to people and receive their viewpoints. This theoretical study brought its challenges, and therefore theories in terms of their applicability were compared. According to the multi-dimensional nature and the interdisciplinary focus of the article, the following methods were applied in this paper: Documentary Studies, Observation, Experimental and field studies including interviews.

In this article, 60 interviews were studied, half dedicated to the traditional and another half to

the modern shopping center. The privilege of the qualitative method used in the open-ended questions and the probing, which allows participants to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose fixed responses, was among the purposes of the methodology. The case study of this paper was the Tajrish traditional bazaar and the Ghaem modern shopping center.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

First of all, traditional moral values are the initial values that were chosen by certain people during their history and formed their culture and traditions. Secondly, they are the values that form the people's lifestyle and are represented in the language and customs of the people where they create the basic archetypes of the national worldview. Thirdly, these values make a certain national culture unique and

different from other cultures (Kostyukova, 2002). In the modern world, there are numerous modern elements and unprecedented spaces, which may result in determining the traditional elements of life, whereas traditional elements and their relevant components are ubiquitous and carry on life in interaction with the modern world. It seems that the present situation shows the collapse of traditional bazaars, making modern shopping centers inclusive soon (Ingelhart & Welzel, 2009). Today, Tajrish is an important business center in the northern area of Tehran, allocating many superior social classes to itself. It includes the significant old traditional Tajrish bazaar as an icon of the core of old Tajrish, as well as the Ghaem modern shopping center. Thus, the existence of the modern and the traditional in the same geographical location, along with the modernization of borders of the traditional bazaar due to its adjacency with the modern shopping center, is a very appropriate example for the paper.

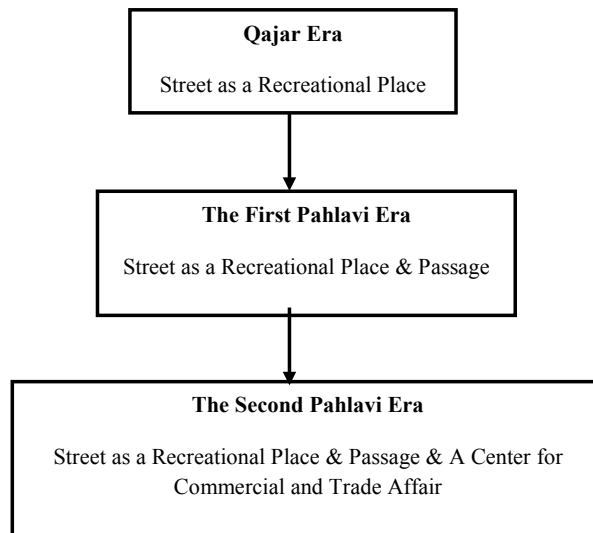


Fig. 2. The Importance of the Street

Modern shopping centers and traditional bazaars function similarly in a modern and traditional city. They are both symbols of the urban system and the era in which they live and reveal the significance of the two environments in which they are located in, as well as their intertwined connection in functionality. In this paper, these two antithetical environments coexist. They are reviewed as the synthesis of the modern and tradition and an indication of the mixture of modern and traditional social and economic behaviors. Our concern is mostly the connections and compound orientations of the two places and how they conflict. The objective of the article is to conclude why the traditional bazaar continues to act dynamically and proceed despite the emergence of absorbing modern shopping centers.

4. THEORETICAL APPROACH

The theory of consumerism is the structure of the

theoretical approach of the research. In the following, the framework of consumerism is introduced and described, explaining why the research problem exists.

4.1. The Society of Consumerism

Cultural Consumption is an interaction between producers and consumers, which goes beyond the absolute figures of consumption (Felicia, 2011). Consumerism is recognized as the principal notion of the theoretical approach of the current research, where consumers endow their experience of life in modern spaces. Shopping Centers are identified as places where life is not particularly manifested at the physical level of spaces but is known as a simultaneously emotional and architectural experience. It might seem that the first concept of consumption is the economic function, which responds to our needs, albeit scholars in the twentieth century mostly emphasized the

cultural form of consumption and its dimension as the most important components of the new society. John Storey states: "Cultural consumption makes our lives, arranges our needs and desires, and provides the essentials of our imagination and dreams meanwhile showing social differentiation" (Kazemi, 2009). This theory is the study of behaviors from a social and cultural point of view. It also embraces the relations between lived culture and social resources that are used to construct identity.

During the past 30 years, the meaning of "urban lifestyles" has changed from a stable prerogative of social status to an aggressive pursuit of cultural capital. For men and women, this pursuit encourages various forms of cultural consumption (Zukin, 1998). Baudrillard has also addressed this issue from his perspective. In his categorization, he sees consumption as a language, where each object has a symbol related to itself. He believes a consumptive pattern is often described through differences rather than utilities. As he claims: "We consume to be different from others; therefore, these differences are described through what and how we consume it" (Baudrillard, 2017). Zukin also believes: "while most urban consumption still involves the satisfaction of everyday needs, many new urban consumption spaces relate to new patterns of leisure, travel, and culture (Zukin, 1998). Marx and Baudrillard define consumptive instruments as instruments making consumption possible (Baudrillard, 2017). In the Ghaem shopping center, a great number of products are related to leisure needs rather than essential ones. Jean Baudrillard says: "Creative destruction is a process in which old structures are destroyed to create a way for newer structures, which act more effectively (Baudrillard, 2017). The Tajrish district has been influenced by recent demolitions and reconstructions either by the municipality or private investors. These recreations have resulted in alterations in the Tajrish bazaar in some respects. The location of the Ghaem shopping center adjacent to the traditional bazaar has also affected the circumstances. According to Baudrillard's allegation, changes take place so rapidly that many new consumptive instruments are treated by newer means of consumption before being used.

4.2. Proponent Theories on Consumerism

In the late twentieth century, the western approach saw consumption as a cultural process containing semiotics. To avoid a merely economical and unilateral approach, we must concentrate on the cultural values and symbols (Bocock, 2002). Bourdieu and Jean Baudrillard also have a special focus on consumption. They often emphasize the structure of symbols and semiotics in modern consumption. Objects in the modern Ghaem shopping center, as









Fiske says, are not just economical commodities but symbols that convey meanings. Consumers consume the hidden semiotics of the objects by purchasing products (Bocock, 2002). In many cases, customers are interested in allocating semiotics to themselves and therefore, they tend to purchase objects. Whether they neither need it nor they belong to those commodities. Bocock reclaims it as an endless mental experience, which leads to an ever-alive modern phenomenon, appealing to the youth in Tehran.

4.3. Correlation between Tradition and Modernity

There are three presumptions among tradition and modernism and their social worlds. First, according to the modernists' approach, modernism is the origin of tradition's destruction. The second presumption is the traditionalists' radical approach against modernity, and third, is a combination of the two approaches, i.e., tradition and modern, each of which will be discussed in this paper. This approach intertwines the physical traditional and modern system; for instance Tehran, where the two modern and traditional bazaars coexist. "Modernist experiments seldom simply destroyed or rejected traditional methods of representation or traditional literary forms; rather, the modernists sought to enter into a kind of conversation with the art of the past, sometimes reverently, sometimes mockingly" (Eliot, 2010). What we deal with is "trans-modernism" where there is a place for both antiquity and tradition, and modernity and progressiveness. Tradition, as a system of learned and shared meanings, is conveyed throughout generations. This philosophical and cultural movement contains elements of both modernism and postmodernism. Hence, it is a place for both tradition and modernity, which seeks to revitalize and modernize tradition rather than destroy or replace it.

Researches show that a part of bazaars, today, predated the growth of the village of Tehran under the Safavids government. However, it was not until this time when the bazaar began growing gradually. Because of modernity, the traditional bazaar has been classified to a typical typology. In some cases, the traditional bazaar has not changed and functions as it did before the phenomena of modernism (neglecting minor interventions, such as applying electronic devices or electricity in the bazaar). The traditional bazaar has maintained its previous style, architecture, and form. However, in some cases, the traditional bazaar has fully surrendered by modernism; hence it has either entirely been destroyed or remained without functioning. The most relevant example to the paper is the arrival of modernism and the contemporization of traditional architecture. At this level, it will have numerous variations to an extent where tradition evolves.

Table 1: Chart on Differences of Shopping Centers and Bazaar

	Flooring	Light	Access	Guild
Ghaem Center				
	New Materials used for paving	Artificial Light	Elevators & Escalators for Access	International Fashionable Brands
Tajrish Bazaar				
	Simple Asphalt used for Paving	Natural Light	Walking as Access Tool	Traditional Products

5. CONCLUSION

The Iranian bazaar has truly been a significant element in forming cities in Iran. It has been recognized as the backbone of the city formation. The phenomenon of invasion and succession in cities has affected the functionality of the bazaar. Shopping centers, however, are symbols of the extension of consumerism and the occurrence of a consumer society and globalization, representing youth subcultures and cultural challenges against the hegemony at the national level. The Tajrish bazaar has been designed with a linear approach, connecting the traditional-style bazaar with the modern shopping center seamlessly. Shopping spaces in the Ghaem area are harmoniously connected via an entry to the shopping center from the bazaar. Traditional materials, such as bricks, have been used throughout the bazaar, and well-veneered marble tiles have been utilized in the shopping center, giving a beautiful contradictory look to it. What social theoreticians recall as consuming societies is very relevant to this

issue. In Iranian architecture, these spaces are not only an effect of change but also substantiations and impellers for changes. The appearance of the modern shopping center phenomenon is an expression of different attitudes, social systems, and relationships which undemanding imposes marginal roles to the traditional bazaar and expels it. This could be the reason for the demand for one of the two architectural spaces. However, the results of this paper using interviews, observations, documentary studies, and direct observation, reveal that the Tajrish site, unlike many other sites in Iran, has met a coexistence among the two different traditional and modern spaces. Culture is a concept that has always had uncertain underlying spatial implications, which has been assumed to have distinct spatial territories. The two spaces in this article are a product of social relations, and according to this issue, the differences in the two spaces have made each environment specific for its audiences and users. Some of these differences are mentioned in tables as follows:

Table 2: Comparing Architectural Aspects in the Bazaar & Shopping Center

Features	The Modern Shopping Center	The Traditional Bazaar
Style	Modern Architecture and Style	Traditional and Domestic Architecture
Proportions	Proportions not Very Near to the Human Scale and are Less Tangible	Proportions are Closer to the Human Scale and are More Tangible
Dimensions	Small Boutiques without Storage	Larger Shops with Big Storages
Material & Texture	Modern Materials such as Glass, Ceramic, Tiles, Metal, and Plastic	Traditional Natural Materials, such as Brick, Wood, Soil, and Rock
	Transparent and Flexible Surfaces	Opaque and Solid Surface
Geometry	Non-Symmetrical and Fragmental	Symmetrical
	No Special Hierarchy	Spatial Hierarchy of Great Importance
Colors	Phosphorous & Attractive Colors	Often Colors Related to Nature
Light	Bright and Luminous	Dim and Somber
	Artificial Lights Provided by Halogens or Lamps	Natural Lights Provided through Skylights Embedded in the Ceiling

Features	The Modern Shopping Center	The Traditional Bazaar
Sound & Odors	Modern Music and Sounds, Modern Odors such as Perfume, Luxurious Products, and Western Food	Sound of Adhan and other Traditional Instruments, The Smell of Traditional Spices, Vegetables, Food and Snacks
Access	Modern and Technical Accesses such as Elevators and Escalators+ Facilities for Handicaps Circulation and Access in Length & Height (Vertical and Horizontal Circulation) Surrounded by Streets, Accesses, and Districts	No Technical Access, Just One Level Access for Customers+ No Facilities for Handicaps Merely Linear Circulation & Access (Vertical Circulation) Consists of Streets and Accesses which Link Urban Elements
Dependent or Marginal Spaces	Recreational, Administrative, or Residential Spaces	Religious Spaces such as Mosques, Holy Shrines
Window Shops	Decorated and Designed Window Shops	Simple Window Shops, Less Decorated
Furniture	Furniture such as Benches, Trash Cans, Flowerpots	No Furniture
Greenery	Natural & Artificial Greenery Including Plants, Small Trees, and Flowerpots in the Spaces Around Escalators and Entrances	Natural Greenery Including Plants and Big Trees in the Holy Shrine
Parking	Parking Lots Embedded in Primitive Designs	No Parking Lot, Open Spaces Further Allocated to Parking
Infrastructure	Modern Infrastructure Predicted in the Design Based on the Space From the First Stage	The Newer Infrastructures Put into Consideration after Modernism
Heating & Cooling Systems	Modern Heating and Cooling Systems inside the Shops and in the Hallways	Modern Heating and Cooling Systems inside the Shops and Natural Climate Systems in the Hallways
Relationship with History	Not Related to Historical Eras	Well known due to Historical Dynasties or Characters
Location	Separated and Far from History Spread in the Districts	Historical Continuity Situated in the Core of the City

In comparing the customer features and the experience of shopping in the bazaar and the shopping center, it is understood that customers who refer to modern shopping centers are relatively less religious than those who prefer shopping in the traditional bazaar. Many who choose the traditional bazaar for shopping often decide to pray at the mosques in the traditional bazaar or go to the holy shrine after shopping. However, the customers in the shopping centers have no such objective due to the relevant spaces in the modern shopping center. Modern shopping centers are spaces that often attract the young generation. Therefore, most of the customers in the shopping center are young due

to the decorative and modern environment of these spaces. Products, colors, and modern desires are all reasons for the referral of this group of age to modern shopping centers. On the other hand, in the traditional bazaar, there are other attractions for groups rather than the young, such as ancient and historical atmospheres or nostalgic memories filling the traditional space with groups holding more traditional attitudes. This issue is closely connected to the interests of two different ages. The young are often more interested in fashion and modernism and the older ones fond of tradition. These two different tastes and desires create the signification of the two different spaces.

Table 3: Comparing Shopkeeper's Features in the Bazaar & Shopping Center

The Modern Shopping Center	The Traditional Bazaar
Young Shopkeepers and Young Generation Desires	Older Shopkeepers and More Traditional Behaviors
Relatively Less Religious Shopkeepers	Relatively more Religious Shopkeepers
Shops are often Rented by Shopkeepers	Most Shops are Owned by Shopkeepers, Ownership is Important in Relationships
No Particular Social Identity Available	The Concept of Social Identity Available (Related to Guilds)
No High Shopping Integration among Shopkeepers	High Shopping Integration due to the Charities and Board of Trustees

To identify the differences and features among the traditional bazaar and the shopping center, the author has considered the two “Ghaem” and “Tandiis” shopping centers as a whole, however, they have a few differences that are mentioned as follows: The Tandiiis shopping center is not adjacent to the Tajrish bazaar. It is located about a kilometer further but on the same site of Tajrish. Therefore, many e issues, which need precise adjacencies are not definitely a fact for the Tandiiis shopping center. Tandiiis has more special customers than the Ghaem shopping center as a modern shopping

mall due to its higher prices and more foreign brands. The Tandiiis shopping center has a special parking and is more like what we assume as modern shopping centers. Hence, it has been regarded and designed as a shopping center since the primitive stages of the project. Yet, the site of the Ghaem shopping center has become available with the destruction of the ancient houses around the Tajrish bazaar with more limited site dimensions. Therefore, it does not have special parking lots, and customers must use shared parking with the holy shrine and the traditional bazaar.

Table 4: Comparing Commodity Features in the Bazaar & Shopping Center

The Modern Shopping Center	The Traditional Bazaar
Consumption	Production and Consumption
Modern Products, Foreign Taste	More Traditional and Home-Made Products
Modern and Foreign Commodities of More Importance	National and Local Commodities of More Importance
Foreign Snacks and Meals	Traditional Snacks and Nutrition
High Prices	More Random and Various Prices
Limited Number of Commodity	High Number of Commodity
Selectivity in the Presented Products	non-selectivity in the Presented Products, More Various
Guilds are more definite and specified, Shoes, Clothes, Accessories, Decoration, and Ornaments	more various Guilds, Repairmen and Alimentation Guilds Included

This is an emblem of the contrast inside the Iranian bazaar: traditional men in traditional bazaars and modern men and women in modern shops results in contrast in traditional economy and modern economy in Iran’s future; the conditions head towards a new economic behavior, which is a combination of traditional bazaars and modern shops and the intercommunion of the two spaces. The relationships between shopkeepers and shoppers in the traditional bazaar appear to be the type of identification-based trust. There are often very close relationships among the shoppers and their customers. Also, credit is based on personal relationships. Here, both parties identify each other’s demands and need closely.

Little pieces of modernity injected into the century-old bazaar have created a sense of harmony. The interviews and documentary findings show several main proofs of the mutual existence of tradition and modernity in the two places, including the presence of specifically identified guilds in each place, investors held in common in both places, particular attractions in each place, which can attract specific audiences, and has a close connection with the propinquity of the dual Iranian subjective desires. Public opinion believes that the simultaneous presence of tradition and modernism is a paradoxical issue. However, the Iranian wants both modern and traditional spaces since a part of his subjectivity is modern while others are traditional. The Iranian person has a reciprocal personality move from tradition to modern and a mutual movement from the bazaar to the shopping center. This metaphoric coexistence of tradition and modernism is unlike the

antagonistic of other bazaars and shopping centers. From homological aspects, the bazaar is a proper location for the Iranian tendency, thanks to this tendency the bazaar still lives.

The intensification of competition between the bazaar and the shopping center in inter-type or inter-category in an adaptable manner is another reason for this suitable coexistence. It can develop specific privileged attractions in the two ambiances, which is efficacious for everyone’s persistence of the spaces. In some circumstances, the high congestion of the bazaar unwillingly leads the crowd to a more silent, well-air-conditioned, and modern area as the shopping center, where there is the choice of rerouting to previous historical location when needed. This occurrence can also induce coexistence. These multiple factors and the physical structure of the bazaar have resulted in the continuity of the adaptive retail strategies in the traditional and modern atmospheres. Architects and urban planners need to carefully study these unique cases and foresee other adjacencies of tradition and modern as successful as the studied site. Shopkeepers have iconic differences which must be compared. To compare the shopkeeper features in the bazaar & shopping center, certain criteria are remarkable, such as shopkeeper’s age, religion, ownership, credibility, and shopping integration. Shopkeepers who work in the shopping center are often young due to the modern atmosphere of the shopping center. Their tastes are new, modern, and young. The presence of young shopkeepers ameliorates the young generation’s appeals and desires versus the traditional manner of

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communication, which takes place in the traditional bazaar by older and more experienced shopkeepers. Generally, the young generation is less religious in all aspects of life comparing to its previous generation, which is something very distinguishable in Iran during

the last decades. Therefore, the presence of a younger generation in a place represents relatively fewer religious shopkeepers in the modern environment and more in the traditional environment.

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