

Original Article

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An examination of social, economic, and contextual factors influencing the physical heterogeneity of urban facades: A case study of Amir Kabir Corridor in Kashan, Iran

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Abstract

Urban façade heterogeneity cannot be attributed to differences in architectural style or aesthetic preference, as façades take form within social, economic, and cultural relations and with the surrounding context. This study provides an interpretive analysis of the social, economic, and cultural factors associated with differences and heterogeneity in urban façades along the Amir Kabir Corridor in Kashan, Iran. The research adopts a qualitative approach and a case study strategy. Data were collected by documenting 10 façades and conducting 20 semi-structured interviews with experts in architecture, urban design, urban planning, landscape, and management. Cases were selected through purposive maximum-variation sampling according to differences in style, scale, materials, ornamentation, and relationship to the surrounding context. Interview data were examined using deductive-inductive directed content analysis. Findings indicate that differences among façades are not limited to formal choices but also reflect owners' and designers' preferences, economic conditions, urban regulations, and contextual factors in the selected study area. Analysis revealed four patterns: "representational differentiation," "differentiation accompanied by scale dominance," "context-responsive differentiation," and "contemporary expression." Architectural differentiation does not necessarily produce heterogeneity; rather, when differences in form, materials, color, height, ornamentation, or skyline are accompanied by weak relationships with the surrounding street wall, visual fragmentation and reduced coherence increase. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, taste, and distinction, together with Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, were employed to interpret these relationships. Since owners, developers, and designers were not interviewed directly, this interpretive linkage does not establish a direct relationship between actors' capital and façade characteristics.

Keywords

Urban façade
physical heterogeneity
economic capital
cultural capital
aesthetic taste
Amir Kabir Corridor
Kashan
Iran

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1. Introduction

The city is the outcome of complex interaction of economic, social, cultural, and physical processes, and its visual character cannot be regarded merely as the result of independent technical architectural decisions. Urban space is socially produced and mutually contributes to reproducing social relations, values, and differences among various groups. From Lefebvre's perspective, space is not a neutral setting but a product of social, economic, political, and cultural forces that take shape and evolve (Lefebvre, 1991). Accordingly, the built environment, beyond responding to functional needs, can serve as a medium for representing social position, lifestyle, cultural values, and distinctions among actors. Location value, economic capacity, type of activity, decision-making structures, and the level of investment are among the factors that contribute to the physical production and transformation of cities, while social and cultural characteristics can be translated into visible signs through architectural and spatial elements (Abdulla & Ibrahim, 2023; Sorensen, 2024; Liu & Ma, 2023).

In this context, the physical and aesthetic characteristics of buildings are among the most important arenas in which these social processes become manifest. The selection of form, materials, color, scale, ornamentation, height, and architectural details, along with functional and aesthetic considerations, may be influenced by social position, economic capacity, cultural capital, and different actors' patterns of taste. From Bourdieu's perspective, aesthetic preferences are neither purely individual nor independent phenomena; rather, they are shaped in relation to social structures, levels of wealth, and individuals' positions within the social field (Bourdieu, 1984). Within this framework, architecture and the built environment can become arenas for representing capital, producing distinction, and displaying social position (Rahimi & Bose, 2018; Amini & Adibzadeh, 2020). Thus, economic and cultural capital may influence certain physical characteristics through architectural choices and, in some cases, become reflected in the use of particular materials, costly elements, distinctive scales, or prominent ornamentation. The façade occupies a particularly important position in this process because it lies at the interface between the building's private space and the public realm of the city and constitutes one of the first elements perceived in the experience of the urban environment. Characteristics such as form, proportions, scale, materials, color, openings, skyline,

ornamentation, depth, and façade complexity influence perceptions and evaluations of urban space's visual quality (Liang et al., 2024; Hashemi Kashani et al., 2023). Recent studies have also demonstrated that façades' physical and geometric characteristics can be associated with perceived complexity, visual preferences, and the quality of environmental experience (Hashemi Kashani et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2025). From this perspective, the façade is not merely an isolated physical element but part of the process through which urban space is produced and represented, in which economic, cultural, and aesthetic values interact with technical, institutional, and contextual conditions and may become manifested through architectural elements. This study distinguishes among four closely related but conceptually different terms. "Difference" refers to any observable dissimilarity between the characteristics of two or more façades, including form, materials, color, height, and ornamentation, and does not in itself imply a positive or negative evaluation. "Diversity" refers to the coexistence of differences that, while maintaining visual relationships, can contribute to the richness of a street wall. "Distinction" describes a condition in which a building, either intentionally or in visual perception, gains greater prominence relative to its surroundings through scale, style, materials, ornamentation, or other architectural elements. In contrast, "heterogeneity" emerges when the intensity or accumulation of differences, due to the absence of connecting elements, weakens the continuity of the skyline, rhythm, proportions, material and color coordination, or visual coherence of the street wall. Therefore, diversity and distinction are not necessarily undesirable; they may lead to heterogeneity only when accompanied by weak contextual integration. Given the importance of façades in shaping the city's visual experience and the need to understand the social factors that produce urban space, examining the relationship between economic and cultural capital, aesthetic preferences, and the physical characteristics of façades is particularly relevant in historical and tourism-oriented urban corridors. Accordingly, this study focuses on the Amir Kabir Corridor in Kashan. It analyzes the social, economic, cultural, professional, institutional, and contextual factors associated with the formation of physical differences and heterogeneity among façades, based on expert perspectives and physical evidence. The study first identifies patterns of difference, distinction, and heterogeneity among selected façades

and then examines experts' interpretations of the factors influencing these patterns. The study's novelty lies in proposing an analytical chain linking social and economic contexts, design preferences and decisions, the physical characteristics of façades, and their degree of relationship with the urban street wall. This chain provides an interpretive model for understanding façade heterogeneity and does not claim to establish causal relationships or fully reconstruct the decision-making processes of the principal actors. Research questions are: 1) From the perspective of experts, what social, economic, cultural, professional, institutional, and contextual factors contribute to the formation of differences and physical heterogeneity among the façades along Amir Kabir Corridor in Kashan?; and 2) What patterns of difference, distinction, and heterogeneity can be identified through the physical analysis of selected façades along Amir Kabir Corridor in Kashan?

2. Research background

The relationship between social, economic, and cultural structures and the built environment has become an important topic in urban studies, architecture, and the sociology of space. Contemporary approaches understand cities and their physical elements not merely as products of technical and aesthetic decisions, but also as outcomes of social, economic, and cultural processes. In his theory of the "social production of space," Lefebvre (1991) emphasizes that space is neither neutral nor independent of society; rather, it is produced through interactions among social, economic, political, and cultural forces. Accordingly, the physical elements of cities, including building façades, can embody social and cultural meanings and reflect different modes of producing and using space. Alongside this perspective, Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction provides an appropriate framework for explaining how the forms of capital and social position shape aesthetic choices. From Bourdieu's perspective, aesthetic preferences are not merely personal or innate; rather, they are influenced by social structure, the amount and type of economic and cultural capital, and individuals' positions within the social field. Individuals and social groups can represent their social differences and positions through choices related to lifestyle, consumption, and the built environment. Studies of housing and the built environment have likewise shown that the material characteristics of space can be associated with social identity, lifestyle, and

distinctions between social groups. Silva and Wright (2009) demonstrated that the material environment can contribute to the formation and representation of social differences, while Bridge (2001) highlighted the relationship between the valuation of physical and aesthetic characteristics of housing, economic and cultural resources, and social position. Similarly, Herath et al. (2021), in examining the factors influencing the formation of architectural taste, demonstrated the role of educational attainment, occupation, economic position, and social context in shaping architectural preferences. These findings are consistent with Bourdieu's perspective and suggest that architectural choices cannot be understood solely as expressions of individual taste. From another perspective, Lefebvre's theory of the social production of space provides a basis for examining how such social differences are translated into physical structures. This study employs two theoretical frameworks at different but complementary levels. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, taste, and distinction explain the level of resources, preferences, and strategies of social representation, whereas Lefebvre's theory situates these preferences within a broader network of market relations, regulations, professional decisions, and physical conditions. Thus, Bourdieu is used primarily to interpret the possible origins of architectural choices, while Lefebvre is employed to understand the contextual conditions through which these choices are transformed into the built environment. The connection between the two theories is established through the intermediate level of design and construction decision-making.

In a study conducted in Tehran, Sharghi et al. (2021) showed that characteristics such as building dimensions, materials, decorative details, and design elements can influence the perception of social status. In addition, studies on the physical and perceptual characteristics of façades have shown that buildings' visual and geometric elements influence environmental perception, visual complexity, and users' preferences (Hashemi Kashani et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2025). At the urban scale, differences among façades can contribute to distinction and heterogeneity in the streetscape. Such heterogeneity is manifested not only through differences in architectural style but also in building height, scale, color, materials, the rhythm of openings, skyline configuration, degree of ornamentation, and the manner in which buildings relate to one another. Askarizad et al. (2019) demonstrated that using highly ornate and visually distinctive façades can affect visual

coherence and the relationship between buildings and their urban context. Khatami and Boujari (2022) likewise highlighted the role of social, economic, and professional factors, as well as investment-oriented rationales, in transformations of building appearance. Taherian and Parsi (2023) showed that the growth of private-sector activity and the dynamics of forces contributing to capital accumulation, supported by financial rents, in the context of certain cultural relations, play an important role in the emergence of physical incongruity and spatial disorder. Azimi et al. (2024) also examined taste in façade selection and explained the influential factors through three categories: individual factors, external factors, and market-driven stimuli.

The reviewed studies can be categorized into three groups. The first includes research emphasizing the relationship between capital, status, and aesthetic choices. The second comprises studies examining the role of individual and professional factors, markets, and investment processes in façade formation. The third consists of research measuring the visual consequences of physical differences in terms of coherence, complexity, and the perception of building frontages. Although these three groups are complementary, most existing studies have not examined the links between social and economic contexts, design decisions, the physical characteristics of façades, and their consequences at the frontage scale as a single analytical chain. Accordingly, the transformation of urban façades can be understood as the outcome of interactions among individual decisions, economic conditions, and mechanisms of spatial production. This issue becomes particularly significant in historic cities, where the urban image represents not only visual quality but also the city's historical and cultural identity. In such environments, the issue extends beyond differences among individual façades to include the relationship between contemporary changes and the historical context, the continuity of vernacular characteristics, and the preservation of visual coherence. Kashan, as one of Iran's historic cities, provides an appropriate context for examining this process, as contemporary physical transformations, alongside its historical and cultural values, have created challenges concerning the preservation of identity and visual coherence. Previous studies have generally examined the relationship between capital and the built environment, the role of taste in architectural preferences, the influence of market conditions and professional factors on façade

design, and the visual consequences of differences among buildings, as separate lines of inquiry. This study addresses the research gap of an integrated interpretive framework that connects these levels at the urban frontage scale. It seeks to explain how social and economic factors, after passing through preferences and design decisions and interacting with regulations and physical context, may contribute to different patterns of distinction and heterogeneity. This relationship is examined through façades analysis and expert assessments and does not directly investigate the decision-making processes of owners, developers, and designers.

3. Research methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative approach and a case study strategy to examine Amir Kabir Avenue in Kashan, to explain the social, economic, cultural, and contextual factors associated with the formation of physical differences and heterogeneity among urban building façades. This qualitative study uses Bourdieu's and Lefebvre's theoretical concepts as interpretive frameworks for analyzing the data. This urban corridor was selected based on Kashan's historical and tourism significance, its position within the urban structure, and the observable diversity in architectural language and façade characteristics. The physical unit of analysis comprises the façades of 10 selected buildings and each façade's relationship to its adjacent frontage. The qualitative unit of analysis consists of statements and meaning units derived from interviews with experts. Accordingly, the object of interpretation is the factors associated with the formation of façade heterogeneity from the experts' perspectives; the study does not claim to directly investigate the decisions of the owners, developers, or designers of the selected buildings. During the field survey, characteristics including architectural style and language, form and proportions, materials, color, ornamentation, height, scale, skyline, rhythm of openings, and the degree of compatibility with adjacent buildings were recorded and compared. Photographic documentation was also conducted to record existing conditions and provide comparable evidence. Following an initial examination of the façades along the corridor, 10 cases were selected through purposive sampling using a maximum-variation strategy. Selection criteria included differences in architectural language, coverage of the observable range of physical differences along the corridor, and the identification of different patterns of distinction. The physical

assessment of each case was conducted using a standardized observation form in three stages. In the first stage, the independent characteristics of each façade, including architectural style and language, form, proportions, materials, color, ornamentation, number of floors, and scale, were recorded. In the second stage, the relationship between each façade and its neighboring buildings was examined in terms of continuity or discontinuity of the skyline, horizontal and vertical alignments, rhythm of openings, proportions, relative compatibility of materials and colors, and the degree of volumetric prominence. In the third stage, these components were qualitatively described using three categories: “appropriate,” “relative or moderate,” and “weak.” The appropriate condition refers to clear connecting elements with the surrounding frontage; the relative or moderate condition indicates the simultaneous presence of some connections and some discontinuities; and the weak condition refers to the dominance of discontinuity in scale, skyline, rhythm, or material expression. This classification is comparative and interpretive, not a quantitative measure or an assessment of citizens’ perceptions. To explain the social, economic, cultural, and contextual dimensions, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in architecture, urban design, urban planning, urban landscape, and urban management. Participants were purposively selected based on their professional experience, familiarity with the study area, and knowledge of the processes involved in the design, assessment, or management of urban façades. Maximum variation in professional expertise was considered in the selection of participants. Interviews continued until conceptual sufficiency was achieved. In the final interviews, no new theme that substantially altered the analytical structure was identified. The interview data were analyzed using directed content analysis, combining deductive and inductive analytical pathways. In the deductive pathway, the concepts of economic capital, cultural capital, taste, distinction, and the production of space, derived from the theoretical framework, were used as initial sensitizing concepts. In the inductive pathway, meaning units that did not fit within these initial categories were coded without imposing the theoretical framework on the data. Concepts such as land value, construction-market conditions, urban regulations, implementation constraints, and designers’ knowledge of the context emerged through this second pathway. The codes generated through both pathways were subsequently

compared and organized into final categories. The resulting codes were then organized into semantic codes, subcategories, and broader categories, from which the main themes were ultimately derived. This process identified factors such as land value, construction-market conditions, urban regulations, the role of investors, implementation constraints, and designers’ contextual knowledge. At the interpretation stage, the interview findings were compared with the results of the physical analysis and photographic documentation of the 10 cases. The purpose was to establish a relationship between the observable characteristics of façades and the factors that experts considered influential in their formation. However, physical characteristics were not treated as direct indicators of the owners’ economic or cultural capital, and their social interpretation was based solely on interview evidence and contextual information. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the interpretations, findings from three sources (physical observation, photographic documentation, and expert perspectives) were compared. This comparison examines the degree of consistency or discrepancy between the physical description of the façades and the experts’ interpretations. However, because physical observation and photographic documentation concern the same empirical subject, and because the primary actors involved in the production of the buildings were not interviewed, this procedure does not constitute independent confirmation of causal relationships between capital, taste, and physical form. Based on this analytical process, physical façade heterogeneity is not understood as the outcome of a single factor. Rather, it is considered to emerge from the interaction of forms of capital and socio-cultural preferences, aesthetic taste, design and investment decisions, economic and institutional conditions, and the contextual characteristics of the urban frontage. Differences among façades do not necessarily constitute heterogeneity; rather, when physical distinction is accompanied by weak contextual integration and differences in scale, height, color, materials, rhythm, or skyline, the likelihood of visual discontinuity increases. Given the qualitative nature of the study, its case study strategy, and purposive sampling, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to other urban corridors or cities. The purpose of the study is to provide a contextualized and interpretive analysis of the factors and patterns associated with physical differences and heterogeneity among the façades along Amir Kabir Avenue.

Accordingly, the findings are neither statistically generalizable nor a substitute for direct investigation of the decision-making processes of the actors involved in the production of each building.

4. Theoretical foundations and conceptual framework

The urban image is shaped by the interaction of physical, social, economic, and cultural factors. It cannot be understood solely as the outcome of technical and aesthetic decisions in building design. Urban space is formed through a multilayered process in which values, economic resources, cultural patterns, professional decisions, and mechanisms of building production influence the built environment. From this perspective, building façades are not merely physical elements; they can also convey meanings, values, and forms of social expression. As the interface between a building's private space and the city's public space, the façade also plays an important role in shaping visual experience and environmental perception. Within this framework, Bourdieu's theory of distinction provides a basis for explaining the relationship between social structure, capital, and aesthetic choices. From Bourdieu's perspective (Bourdieu, 1986), taste is not merely an individual attribute but is shaped in relation to social position, lived experience, and the amount and type of capital available to individuals. Economic capital can facilitate access to financial resources, technologies, materials, and costly architectural elements. Cultural capital, by contrast, can influence the selection of architectural styles, forms, materials, and modes of architectural expression through knowledge, experience, and the ability to recognize and evaluate aesthetic values. The transformation of social resources and preferences into physical form is neither direct nor linear. Factors such as the construction market, land value, urban regulations, technology, building function, and the roles of architects and investors influence it. Accordingly, façade characteristics emerge from the interaction of individual, social, economic, cultural, and institutional factors. In the analytical model of the present study, economic or cultural capital is not directly associated with a particular form or material. Instead, the proposed pathway consists of four levels: first, social resources and positions; second, taste, expectations, and preferences; third, the decisions of owners, designers, and developers within the constraints of the market and regulations; and fourth, the observable characteristics of façades and their relationship with

the surrounding frontage. The data collected in this study primarily cover the fourth level, together with experts' interpretations of the relationships among these levels.

Recent studies on the visual quality of streets have likewise emphasized the simultaneous importance of physical characteristics and their perception. For example, recent research has shown that order, complexity, color, materials, historical characteristics, and the organization of visual elements can influence the evaluation and perceived quality of the streetscape. On the other hand, the visual quality of an individual building does not, by itself, ensure the coherence of the urban image. At the street scale, relationships among adjacent façades, consistency of scale, continuity of visual elements, and compatibility with the surrounding context are also important. Recent studies on streetscape assessment indicate that visual quality results from the interaction between objective environmental characteristics and users' perceptions, while factors such as historical background, spatial characteristics, and cultural context may also influence such evaluations (Liang et al., 2024). Studies of visual preferences have similarly shown that individuals' cultural backgrounds can affect how they evaluate elements and characteristics of the urban environment. Accordingly, urban-image heterogeneity cannot be understood merely as differences among architectural styles; rather, it should be examined through the interaction among resources and preferences, construction conditions, and how buildings relate to their urban context. Economic and cultural capital, professional experience and knowledge, and actors' aesthetic preferences are transformed into architectural choices through decision-making and construction processes, in interaction with contextual conditions such as urban regulations, the construction market, site characteristics, and functional requirements. At the frontage scale, these choices can produce differences in form, materials, color, ornamentation, height, scale, and architectural language and, consequently, in varying degrees of distinction and heterogeneity within the urban image. Elements such as material selection, the degree of ornamentation, architectural language, formal complexity, the manner in which architectural elements are combined, and the degree of distinction from adjacent façades can potentially serve as indicators of preferences, strategies of distinction, and forms of social representation. For example, selecting a particular architectural language or emphasis on

distinctive elements may, within a Bourdieusian framework, be interpreted as an expression of differentiated identity or symbolic values. However, such characteristics alone are insufficient for determining the level of an owner's economic or cultural capital. Therefore, the relationship between physical form and theory in this study is established through the interpretation of spatial and architectural signs and their comparison with interview-based and contextual evidence, rather than through directly assigning architectural characteristics to a particular

social class or social position. Lefebvre's theory is also employed in this study without attempting to fully operationalize the triad of perceived, conceived, and lived space, as such an approach would require direct data from owners, designers, developers, managers, and users. The application of Lefebvre's theory here is therefore limited to the analytical proposition that a façade is not the product of an isolated design decision but is shaped within a network of economic, institutional, professional, and physical relationships.

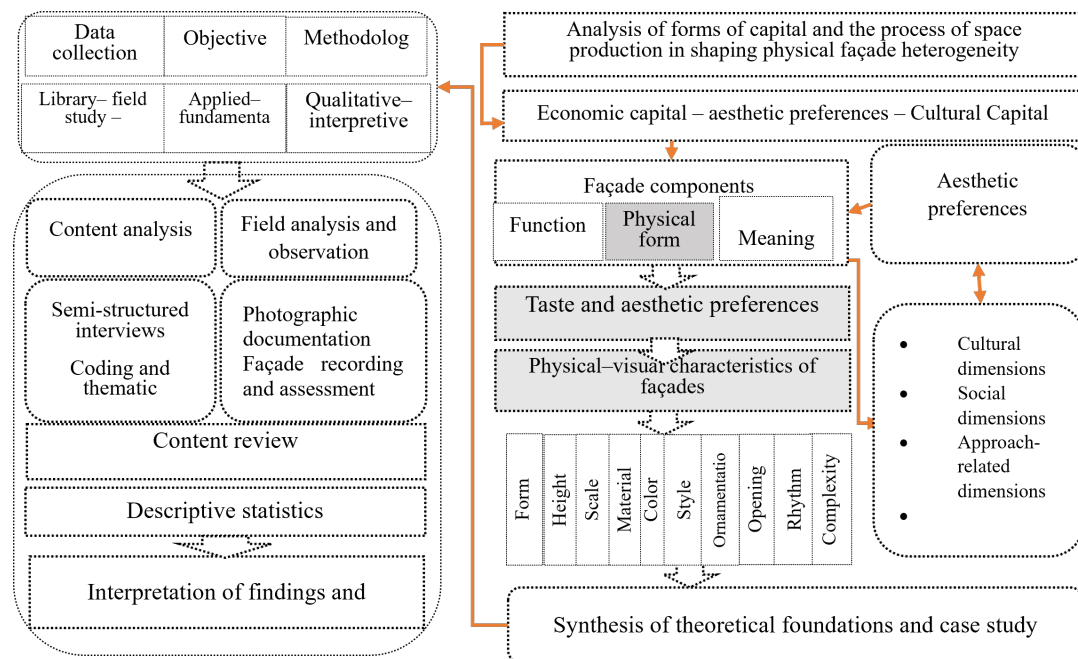


Figure 1. Interpretive framework linking social, economic, and contextual factors to the physical characteristics of façades (Source: authors)

5. Case study: Amir Kabir Avenue, Kashan

To complement the qualitative data and examine how social, economic, and cultural factors are reflected in the observable characteristics of façades, 10 buildings along Amir Kabir Avenue in Kashan were purposively selected and analyzed. The cases were selected to achieve maximum variation in physical characteristics and contextual conditions, rather than solely based on whether the buildings were new or old. Given the varying characteristics of different sections of the avenue, including vacant plots, garden houses, and denser and more recently developed areas, efforts were made to select cases from locations that have had a more noticeable role in shaping the avenue's contemporary image. In the denser and developing sections of the avenue, buildings whose façades had been primarily formed or completed within the

previous 5–10 years were selected based on their presence and visual influence within the urban frontage. This approach allowed the examination of cases reflecting relatively recent changes in construction patterns and façade design preferences along Amir Kabir Avenue. At the same time, given the presence of vacant plots and garden houses in some sections of the avenue, the sampling process considered the differences in density and contextual conditions so that the analysis would not be limited to a homogeneous section of the corridor. The selection criteria were based on observable and comparable characteristics in terms of architectural style and expression, form and proportions, materials, color, height, ornamentation, scale, skyline, rhythm of openings, and compatibility with adjacent buildings. Cases that, due to their distinctive physical

characteristics, scale, degree of ornamentation, material selection, or position within the frontage, played a notable role in shaping the visual image of the avenue were also prioritized. The cases were analyzed using a standardized observation framework to facilitate comparison among the buildings. Within this framework, the descriptive characteristics of each façade were first recorded. Subsequently, the degree of physical distinction, compatibility with adjacent buildings, and visual coherence were assessed. Physical distinction was assessed based on the relative prominence of the building's style, form, ornamentation, materials, or scale. Contextual integration was evaluated based on observable connections with the height, skyline, rhythm, proportions, materials, and color of the adjacent

frontage. Heterogeneity was defined as a condition in which physical prominence or difference was accompanied by a noticeable weakening of these relationships. In the next stage, the observed characteristics were interpreted in relation to the findings obtained from the expert interviews to examine how social, economic, cultural, and contextual factors may be reflected in the selection and formation of façade characteristics. The physical analysis was conducted at two levels. At the first level, the characteristics of each case were described and compared independently. At the second level, the cases were categorized according to shared patterns in terms of the degree of distinction, contextual integration, and their effects on the coherence of the urban frontage.

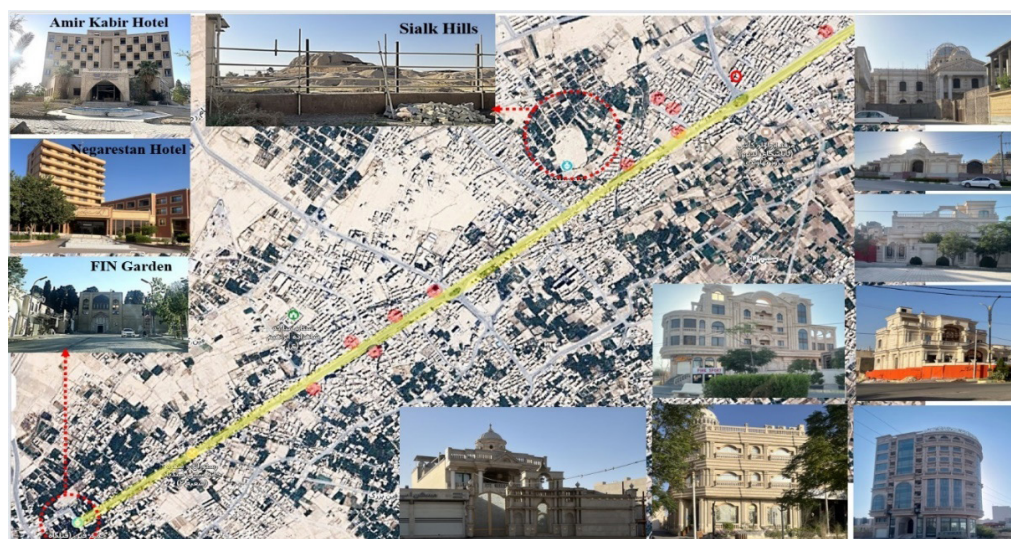


Figure 2. Location of the selected cases and the adjacency of Amir Kabir Avenue to Sialk Hills and Fin Garden, Kashan (Source: authors)

5.1. Qualitative and typological analysis of façade heterogeneity along Amir Kabir Avenue

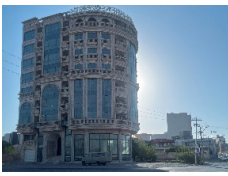
During the field survey, the physical characteristics of the façades were examined. A comparative analysis of the 10 selected façades along Amir Kabir Avenue in Kashan indicates that the physical heterogeneity of the urban frontage cannot be attributed solely to

differences in architectural styles. Rather, this heterogeneity results from the interaction of multiple factors, including the degree of building distinction, intensity of ornamentation, scale and height, material selection, color, skyline configuration, and the degree of relationship between each façade and its adjacent buildings (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of building façades along Amir Kabir Avenue, Kashan (Source: authors)

Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Owner	Code
				Neoclassical	Karimshahi House	F1
Stone and metal ornamentation; use of a dome and tall arched niches	Weak; inconsistency in scale, rhythm, skyline, materials, and color	Weak; particularly in façade alignment and connection with the adjacent frontage	Very large scale and strong emphasis on classical elements			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
The use of classical elements and higher-quality, higher-cost materials has made the building clearly distinctive. The dominance of an expressive façade and lack of connection with vernacular patterns distinguish it from the surrounding context.			2 stories	Cream / gold	Stone / metal	
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Neoclassical	Ranjbar House
						
Stone façade with appropriate, moderate ornamentation	Moderate to weak; inconsistency in the skyline and façade material	Relative; compatible with the newer adjacent building but inconsistent with the existing building	Geometric variation and creation of a distinctive façade composition			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
Relatively large dimensions and dense stone ornamentation distinguish the architectural expression. Within the theoretical framework of the study, these characteristics may be interpreted in relation to a preference for display and spatial distinction.			2 stories	Cream	Stone	F2
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Neoclassical	Moshiri House
						
Dome, pediment, stone carving, and numerous decorative stone motifs	Weak; height, materials, and skyline are inconsistent with the surrounding frontage	Weak; style, materials, and façade alignments differ from adjacent buildings	Very large scale and extensive classical-style ornamentation			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
Large-scale stone materials and prominent ornamentation create a highly distinctive architectural expression. These characteristics may, within Bourdieu's theoretical framework, be interpreted as potential signs of distinction and status representation.			2 stories	Cream	Stone	F3

Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Mr. Saber	F4
				Neoclassical		
Dome, stone and metal ornamentation, and a combination of cream and gold	Moderate; the shared use of stone creates a relative connection	Weak; style and ornamentation differ noticeably from adjacent buildings	Use of a Roman-style façade with Western elements			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
The use of prominent elements and relatively elaborate ornamentation creates a distinctive architectural expression. Despite the shared material with the surrounding context, the form and ornamentation reduce visual continuity.			2 stories	Cream	Stone	
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Shokariz Building	F5
				Neoclassical		
Stone carving, ornamentation on glass, dome, and classical form	Moderate; the skyline is coordinated, but the composition is different	Weak; limited relationship with the context in terms of materials and form	Difference in scale and form			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
The use of a dome, columns, and classical ornamentation emphasizes the architectural expression and indicates a preference for a prominent presence within the streetscape.			3 stories	Cream	Stone	
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Andisheh Carpet	F6
				Neoclassical		
Stone carving, use of arches, and decorative capitals	Weak; height and classical forms reduce the connection with the context	Weak; limited coordination between façade elements and the adjacent building	Difference in scale and form			
Description			Height	Color	Materials	
The combination of height, classical forms, and ornamentation contributes to visual distinction. In its exhibition-related use, the emphasis on visibility and a prominent façade expression is also notable.			2 stories	Cream	Stone	

Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Moshiri Museum F7
				Neo-classical	
Stone carving and tilework; use of the Shamseh motif	Moderate; the skyline is coordinated, but the form and materials differ from the context	Weak; discontinuity of materials and form and lack of connecting elements	Quality and type of materials and noticeable difference from the context		
Description			Height	Color	Materials
The combination of considerable height, a stone façade, a tall entrance, and classical elements has transformed the building into a prominent element of the streetscape. Differences in scale and architectural expression play an important role in its distinctiveness.			6 stories	Cream	Stone
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Non-local Builder F8
				Neo-classical	
Classical façade with ornamentation and emphasis on verticality	Weak; emphasis on grandeur, ornamentation, and height has caused visual discontinuity	Weak; form, color, materials, and style differ from the context	Variety in materials and classical expression		
Description			Height	Color	Materials
The combination of stone and glass, considerable height, and classical division creates a highly distinctive architectural expression. Difference in scale and emphasis on grandeur are the main factors distinguishing this example from the surrounding context.			8 stories	Cream	Stone
Ornamentation	Visual coherence	Relationship with adjacent buildings	Distinctive feature	Style	Mr. Pillevarian, Spinning Company F9
				Neoclassical	
Pediment, stone carving, and stone ornamentation	Relatively appropriate; greater coordination is observed in the skyline, form, and continuity of visual lines	Relatively appropriate; has a stronger relationship with adjacent façades	Quality and type of materials, degree of ornamentation, and complexity		
Description			Height	Color	Materials
The building is a villa with a classical expression and non-vernacular ornamentation. Despite its stylistic distinction, its scale and main lines have allowed its relationship with the surrounding frontage to be relatively maintained.			2 stories	Cream	Stone

Ornamentation	visual coherence	relationship with adjacent buildings	distinctive feature	Style
				Modern and minimalist forms
Modern and minimalist forms	Moderate to weak; the increase in the number of floors and difference in skyline have reduced continuity	Relatively appropriate; stronger relationship with the context in terms of materials and overall composition	Difference in style, simplicity of form, and manner of responding to the context	Modern and minimalist forms
Description		Height	Color	Materials
The simple and minimalist expression, compared with the Neoclassical examples, demonstrates a different approach to architectural distinction. Within the study's theoretical framework, this example may reflect contemporary preferences and cultural capital; however, such an interpretation requires qualitative evidence and cannot be inferred from façade characteristics alone.		7 stories	White/ brown	Brick and stone

Mr. Sadeghi

F10

5.2. Qualitative comparison of the selected cases

A qualitative comparison of the selected cases showed that, within the scope of the research data, the 10 façades can be categorized into four interpretive patterns: spectacular distinction, distinction accompanied by scale dominance, context-responsive distinction, and contemporary expression. The spectacular distinction pattern includes cases F1 to F4. The extensive use of stone, classical ornamentation, domes, pediments, columns, and prominent entrances creates a distinctive visual presence in these façades and increases their distance from the surrounding architectural language. Cases F5 to F8 fall within the distinction accompanied by a scale-dominance pattern. In this group, the height and volume of the buildings, together with their formal and ornamental characteristics, constitute the main sources of distinction. In particular, the six- and eight-story heights of F7 and F8 make them physically prominent against much of the surrounding frontage and affect the continuity of the skyline and vertical rhythm. This finding indicates that heterogeneity is not solely dependent on differences in architectural style or ornamentation; scale and height also play an important role. F9 represents a prominent example of context-responsive distinction. Despite its neoclassical architectural language, the building establishes a relative visual relationship with its adjacent buildings through compatibility in scale, skyline, and overall

visual structure. Thus, architectural difference does not necessarily imply a break with the context; a façade can maintain an independent identity while remaining compatible with the overall structure of the urban frontage. F10 falls within the contemporary expression pattern. Its formal simplicity, reduced ornamentation, and combination of brick and stone create distinction primarily through design language and proportions. This case demonstrates that architectural distinction does not necessarily rely on spectacular elements or extensive ornamentation and can also emerge through simplicity and formal control. Overall, the findings indicate that the main issue along Amir Kabir Avenue is not architectural diversity itself, but rather the transformation of some of this diversity into heterogeneity as a result of weak contextual relationships. Accordingly, managing the avenue's visual character, rather than imposing a uniform architectural style, could focus on elements such as scale, skyline, rhythm, color, materials, and relationships among adjacent façades. Such an approach can form context-responsive architectural diversity, allowing differences among buildings to be maintained without weakening the overall coherence of the urban frontage. These four patterns are derived from the purposively selected cases in this study and should not be interpreted as a comprehensive classification of all façades along Amir Kabir Avenue or of façades in other parts of the city.

Table 2. Comparison of the selected cases in terms of contextual relationship and social mechanisms (Source: authors)

Type	Cases	Physical characteristics	Relationship to context	Social mechanism	Outcome
Spectacular distinction	F1–F4	Ornamentation, stone, classical elements	Weak	Desire for distinction / representation	Visual discontinuity
Scale dominance	F5–F8	High height and large scale	Weak	Investment/display of presence	Skyline disruption
Context-responsive distinction	F9	Distinctive expression + proportion	Appropriate	Taste + contextual responsiveness	Controlled diversity
Contemporary expression	F10	Minimalist, brick/stone	Relative	Contemporary preferences / design knowledge	Non-spectacular distinction

5.3. Qualitative data content analysis

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using directed content analysis with a deductive–inductive approach. This method was selected based on the study's defined theoretical framework, including the concepts of economic and cultural capital, taste, distinction, and the social production of space, as well as the research objective of explaining the relationship between socio-cultural contexts and the physical characteristics of urban façades. In directed content analysis, existing theoretical concepts provide an initial framework for organizing and interpreting the data; however, the analysis is not restricted to predetermined codes, allowing new concepts to emerge from the interview data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The qualitative participant group consisted of 20 experts in

architecture, urban planning, urban design, urban landscape, and urban management and planning, selected through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria included relevant academic qualifications or professional experience related to the research topic, specialized experience in architecture, urban design, urban planning, landscape, or urban management, and familiarity with the physical and visual characteristics of Kashan. The number of interviews was not predetermined as a statistical sample size. Instead, data collection continued until conceptual adequacy was achieved and the main themes became repetitive. In the final interviews, the newly obtained data could largely be categorized within the existing codes and categories, and no new code or category was identified that would result in a meaningful change in the analytical structure of the study.

Table 3. Characteristics of the experts participating in the qualitative phase of the study (Source: authors)

Variable	Category	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
Area of specialization	Architecture	10	50
	Urban design	5	25
	Urban planning	3	15
	Urban management and urban landscape	2	10
Educational qualification	Ph.D.	20	100
Academic and professional experience	10–15 years	8	40
	16–20 years	9	45
	More than 20 years	3	15
Professional role	University faculty member	9	45
	Professional consultant and designer	7	35
	Urban management specialist	4	20

After completing and transcribing the interviews, each transcript was read several times to develop an overall

understanding of the data and the context of the participants' statements. In the first stage, meaning

units related to the research questions were identified and initially coded. Codes related to capital, taste, distinction, and the production of space were developed through the deductive pathway. In contrast, codes concerning land value, the construction market, regulations, implementation constraints, and contextual knowledge emerged from the participants' responses through the inductive pathway. In the final stage, the two sets of codes were integrated into a common categorical structure. At this stage, concepts such as economic capital, cultural capital, taste, desire for distinction, and social representation were used as initial analytical domains. However, coding was not restricted to these concepts, and any meaningful content related to façade formation, the urban context, and factors contributing to heterogeneity was also recorded. In the second stage, the initial codes were compared in terms of conceptual similarity, semantic differences, and relevance to the research questions, and were organized into semantic codes and conceptual categories. At this stage, several concepts not directly anticipated in the initial theoretical framework emerged from the data, including the role of land value, construction-market

conditions, urban regulations, the role of investors, implementation constraints, and the extent of designers' knowledge of the local context. In the third stage, the extracted categories were examined in relation to one another and organized into overarching themes. This process led to the identification of relationships among three main levels: first, socio-cultural factors, including capital, taste, and the desire for distinction; second, the design decision-making level, including owners' preferences, designers' knowledge and attitudes, and physical design choices; and third, contextual factors, including economic conditions, land value, regulations, and implementation constraints. Ultimately, the physical outcomes of these processes were interpreted in terms of differences in style, form, materials, color, ornamentation, height, skyline, and the degree of compatibility with the adjacent urban frontage. In the fourth stage, to strengthen the explanatory power of the findings, the interview analysis results were compared with field observations, photographic documentation, and the physical analysis of the 10 selected façades along Amir Kabir Avenue.

Table 4. Example of the qualitative data content analysis process (initial codes, semantic codes, and main themes)

ID	Selected interview quote	Initial code	Semantic code	Category	Final theme
P1	Large plot sizes and house floor areas indicate the owners' high economic status.	High economic status	Conversion of economic resources into physical signs	Distinction and luxury style	Social distinction and representation in façade appearance
P2	In many buildings, greater emphasis has been placed on making the façade appear different and distinctive rather than compatible with the surrounding environment.	Desire for façade differentiation	Tendency toward displaying physical distinction	Distinction and identity representation	Social distinction and representation in façade appearance
P3	Some owners tend to use distinctive materials and costly designs to demonstrate their economic success.	Use of valuable materials	Display of social status through architectural elements	Symbolic façade choices	Social distinction and representation in façade appearance
P4	The use of expensive stone and extensive detailing in façades is generally intended to create a distinctive image of the building.	Use of luxury materials	Conversion of economic resources into physical signs	Material and ornamentation choices	Social distinction and representation in façade appearance
P5	In many cases, façade decisions are influenced more by the owner's taste than by the characteristics of the surrounding environment.	Influence of owner preferences	Role of individual taste in architectural choices	Preferences and taste	Taste and architectural choices
P6	Some façades are appropriate in terms of execution quality but have little relationship with adjacent buildings or the street environment.	Independent façade design	Weak connection with the urban context	Building-centered design	Contextual responsiveness and frontage coherence

ID	Selected interview quote	Initial code	Semantic code	Category	Final theme
P7	The absence of a clear pattern for the street frontage has resulted in each building developing a separate visual identity.	Lack of frontage coordination	Absence of a shared visual system	Weak collective organization of the frontage	Contextual responsiveness and frontage coherence
P8	Significant differences in the color, materials, and forms of buildings have prevented the street frontage from achieving the necessary visual unity.	Differences in visual elements	Discontinuity in the urban landscape structure	Physical heterogeneity	Contextual responsiveness and frontage coherence
P9	When a designer lacks sufficient knowledge of local characteristics, the façade is more likely to become an isolated element.	Weak contextual knowledge	Influence of design knowledge on façade quality	Professional knowledge and experience	Role of professional and cultural factors
P10	Each owner makes decisions according to personal taste, which has contributed to considerable diversity in the façades along the street.	Influence of personal taste	Role of taste in shaping the urban visual character	Individual preferences	Taste and architectural choices
P11	Rhythm and coordination among façades make the street more legible and pleasant.	Importance of façade coordination	Effect of visual coherence on environmental perception	Collective frontage quality	Perceptual consequences of heterogeneity
P12	Façades that focus solely on ornamentation may contribute to visual disorder at the urban scale.	Dominance of ornamentation	Tension between individual attractiveness and collective quality	Visual competition	Physical consequences of heterogeneity
P13	Economic conditions in the construction market also influence materials' choice, the amount of detailing, and façade style.	Influence of the construction market	Role of contextual economic factors	Contextual factors	Contexts of physical production
P14	Façade design largely depends on the architect's knowledge of architecture and contextual characteristics.	Role of architectural knowledge	Influence of cultural capital on architectural choices	Professional cultural capital	Role of professional and cultural factors
P16	Along Amir Kabir Avenue, differences in building heights and façade forms have disrupted visual continuity.	Differences in building heights	Skyline discontinuity and weak visual continuity	Differences in scale and height	Contextual responsiveness and frontage coherence
P18	When façades are coordinated, citizens experience a greater sense of order and attachment to the space.	Perceptual coordination	Enhancement of environmental experience	Perceptual quality of the frontage	Perceptual consequences of heterogeneity
P19	A building façade is not merely a covering; it also reflects the owner's attitudes and social status.	Façade as a social symbol	Representation of identity and social status	Social meaning of the façade	Social distinction and representation in façade appearance
P20	The selection of different architectural styles reflects differences in people's perspectives, knowledge, and taste.	Differences in architectural style	Reflection of differences in cultural capital	Architectural preferences	Taste and architectural choices

Table 6 shows that the experts do not regard the physical choices made in façade design as resulting solely from technical and aesthetic considerations. They also consider factors such as taste, economic resources, the desire for distinction, market conditions, and the designer's knowledge of the context to be

influential. Conversely, codes such as "frontage discontinuity," "weak contextual relationship," and "disruption of visual continuity" reflect the experts' perceptions of the consequences of individual building distinction taking precedence over the collective relationships within the urban frontage. These data

provide a basis for interpreting the relationship between social factors and the façades' physical characteristics; however, because no direct interviews were conducted with the actors involved in producing

each building, they do not establish a causal relationship between the level of capital and specific architectural choices.

Table 5. Directed content analysis and extraction of final categories from the interview data (Source: authors)

Final category	Subcategories	Qualitative evidence	Analytical interpretation
Distinction and social representation in façades	Emphasis on distinctiveness, selection of valuable materials, ornamental elements, distinctive styles	Experts emphasized that some owners tend to create distinctive, visually prominent façades.	Some physical choices can be interpreted in terms of distinction and social representation, without establishing a direct relationship with the level of capital.
Taste and architectural preferences	Owner's taste, designer's attitude, style selection, aesthetic preferences	Experts repeatedly referred to the role of taste and individual choice.	Differences in architectural preferences contribute to diversity and variation among façades.
Role of professional knowledge and experience	Contextual knowledge, designer's experience, awareness of vernacular architecture, design capacity	Experts emphasized the importance of the architect's contextual knowledge.	The contextual responsiveness of façades is partly dependent on the designer's professional knowledge and experience.
Economic and contextual factors in building production	Land value, construction market, material costs, investment, implementation constraints	Experts referred to the influence of economic and implementation conditions on design decisions.	Physical choices are shaped within a context of economic and implementation-related constraints and opportunities.
Contextual responsiveness and relationship with the frontage	Compatibility with adjacent buildings, skyline, scale, rhythm, materials, and color	Experts reported weak relationships between some façades and their surrounding buildings.	Distinction becomes discontinuity when weak connections to the collective structure of the urban frontage accompany it.
Heterogeneity and visual discontinuity	Differences in height, color, materials, form, and ornamentation	Experts emphasized discontinuities in the skyline and frontage rhythm.	Accumulated differences without connecting elements can reduce the visual coherence of the urban frontage.
Perceptual quality and environmental experience	Legibility, visual order, sense of belonging, environmental comfort	Experts referred to the importance of coordination in the experience of urban space.	Perceptual consequences are addressed at an interpretive level based on expert perspectives, without claiming a direct causal relationship.

Table 6. Interpretive framework linking contextual factors, design decisions, and physical Outcomes.

Level of analysis	Theme	Influencing factors	Mechanism	Physical and urban outcome
Socio-cultural	Distinction and social representation	Status, individual identity, taste, preferences	Translation of values and preferences into architectural choices	Distinctive façade, ornamentation, and distinctive style
Cultural-professional	Design knowledge and experience	Contextual knowledge, architectural knowledge, professional experience	Interpretation of context and its translation into design decisions	Context-responsive or independent façade
Economic	Building production conditions	Investment, land value, material costs, construction market	Restricting or enabling design options	Differences in materials, scale, and execution quality
Design decision-making	Owner and designer choices	Style, form, color, materials, ornamentation	Translation of preferences and constraints into physical characteristics	Differences among adjacent façades
Physical context	Relationship with the urban frontage	Height, skyline, rhythm, proportions, materials	Degree of connection or disconnection from the existing structure	Frontage coherence or heterogeneity
Perceptual-social	Environmental experience	Legibility, order, sense of belonging	Users' interpretation of the visual structure	Enhanced or diminished perceptual quality

6. Discussion

The study's central finding is that physical difference becomes heterogeneity when it is accompanied by weak contextual responsiveness. Accordingly, the mere presence of different architectural styles, materials, or forms is not inherently problematic; the issue arises when differences in scale, height, skyline, rhythm, color, or materials weaken the connecting elements between a building and the urban frontage. Identifying F9 as an example of context-responsive distinction further supports the conclusion that distinction and visual coherence are not necessarily in conflict. This finding overlaps with Taherian and Parsi (2023), which concerns the role of capital accumulation in physical disharmony and spatial disorder, and with Azimi et al. (2024), which investigates how individual factors, external conditions, and market drivers affect façade preferences. The experts' emphasis on the role of the construction market, investment, and professional factors also aligns with Khatami and Boujari (2022). However, the present study does not directly attribute these factors to a particular style or material; instead, it considers design decisions and the degree of a building's relationship with its context as two intervening levels. From a physical perspective, the findings align with Askarizad and Jafari (2019) regarding the effect of highly ornate façades on compatibility with the urban fabric, and with Hashemi Kashani et al. (2023) concerning the role of physical façade characteristics in perceived complexity. Liang et al. (2024) and Lee et al. (2025) likewise emphasize the relationship between built environment characteristics and street-scene evaluation. The present study differs by interpreting the relationship among physical distinction, contextual responsiveness, and frontage coherence, based on case analysis and expert perspectives, rather than directly measuring users' preferences or perceptions. Therefore, its perceptual findings are not methodologically equivalent to studies based on direct user data. Theoretically, Bourdieu's concepts suggest that taste and the desire for distinction develop in relation to resources and social position, while Lefebvre's theory emphasizes that the translation of these preferences into physical form occurs within a network of economic, institutional, and professional relations. The study's distinctive contribution is proposing an interpretive chain extending from "social and economic factors" to "design preferences and decisions" and subsequently to "façade characteristics and their relationship with

the urban frontage." However, because the owners, builders, and designers of the selected buildings were not directly studied, this chain is an interpretive framework rather than a complete empirical reconstruction of the social production process of façades.

7. Conclusions, answers to the research questions, and recommendations

In response to the first research question, the interview findings showed that experts identify six groups of factors as influential in shaping physical differences and heterogeneity among the façades along Amir Kabir Avenue: socio-cultural factors, including taste, status, and the desire for distinction; economic factors, including land value, material costs, and investment logic; professional factors, including the designer's knowledge, experience, and contextual awareness; decisions made by owners, designers, and builders; institutional factors, including regulations and façade evaluation procedures; and physical contextual factors, including height, scale, skyline, rhythm, materials, and façade color. These factors do not operate independently but are interconnected through design and construction decisions. This finding reflects the experts' perceptions and does not provide direct evidence of the motives or level of capital of the owners of the selected buildings. From a theoretical perspective, the main contribution of the study is to establish a link between the social level of space production and the physical level of the façade. In this sense, the façade can be understood as an intermediary between capital and taste, design decisions, and the physical production of space. However, the findings do not establish a definite or linear relationship between individuals' level of capital and any specific façade characteristic. They indicate that capital's effects are mediated through taste, preferences, expectations, design decisions, and market and contextual conditions before being translated into physical characteristics. Accordingly, the relationship between socio-economic factors and façade characteristics is interpreted analytically, based on combined evidence from physical characteristics, field observations, and qualitative data.

In response to the second research question, the physical analysis of the 10 selected façades revealed four interpretive patterns: "spectacular distinction" in cases F1–F4, primarily associated with ornamentation, stone materials, and prominent classical elements;

“distinction accompanied by scale dominance” in cases F5–F8, where building height and volume dominate the frontage; “context-responsive distinction” in case F9, which, despite its distinctive expression, maintains a relative relationship with the scale and structural lines of the frontage; and “contemporary expression” in case F10, where distinction derives primarily from formal simplicity and reduced ornamentation. Comparison of these patterns shows that distinction is not inherently equivalent to heterogeneity and that the likelihood of visual discontinuity increases when distinction is accompanied by weak contextual responsiveness. From a physical and functional perspective, the findings indicate that an urban corridor’s quality cannot be inferred from the individual buildings’ quality alone. Façades collectively form a visual and spatial structure, and substantial differences in height, scale, materials, color, ornamentation, and rhythm can disrupt this structure. In addition to reducing visual coherence, such differences may affect route legibility, the perception of frontage continuity, and the quality of spatial experience. Since the present study did not directly measure citizens’ perceptions, these consequences are interpreted at the level of physical analysis and expert perspectives. They should not be regarded as definitive causal relationships with users’ perceptions or behavior. The study’s main limitation is that it obtained social data from experts, while the owners, investors, builders, and designers of the selected buildings were not directly interviewed. Consequently, the study cannot reconstruct the actual decision-making processes in individual projects or establish a direct relationship between the economic and cultural capital of the actors and specific façade characteristics. Furthermore, purposive sampling of 10 façades does not permit statistical generalization of the identified patterns to the entire avenue or to other cities. The findings should therefore be understood as a case study and a context-specific interpretation. From a management perspective, the findings suggest that standardizing façades is not an appropriate approach to controlling heterogeneity. Such an approach may reduce architectural diversity, constrain creativity, and limit the emergence of new forms of identity. A more context-sensitive approach would shift from “style control” toward “control of the relationship between the building and its context.” Under this approach, designers may employ different architectural languages while considering elements

that affect frontage continuity, including height, skyline, scale, rhythm, color, materials, and building placement in relation to adjacent buildings. Accordingly, it is recommended that context-responsive, performance-oriented, and flexible guidelines be developed for designing and evaluating façades along Amir Kabir Avenue. With regard to height, defining an acceptable height range and regulating upper-floor setbacks could help prevent severe breaks in the skyline. Regarding materials and color, rather than prescribing a single mandatory material, defining a range of materials and colors compatible with the context could preserve design freedom while reducing strong contrasts between adjacent façades. Similarly, the use of prominent elements such as domes, emphasized entrances, columns, and heavy ornamentation should be considered in terms of their scale, quantity, and placement so identity-forming elements do not become sources of visual competition or intensify physical distinction.

7.1. Practical and research recommendations

At the frontage level, it is also recommended that elements such as the baseline, floor levels, opening proportions, horizontal and vertical alignments, overall rhythm, and selected shared characteristics of materials and colors be considered as connecting elements. These elements can establish visual relationships among different buildings without imposing a uniform architectural style. For new buildings, façade assessment before permit issuance could also be based on the degree of distinction, contextual responsiveness, and the project’s potential impact on the continuity of the urban frontage. Given Amir Kabir Avenue’s location in an area of historical, cultural, and tourism value, particular attention should also be paid to the relationship between contemporary architecture and Kashan’s local identity. Rather than formally imitating historical elements or directly reproducing past patterns, characteristics such as proportions, scale, shading strategies, the organization of openings, frontage rhythm, and the logic of using local materials can be reinterpreted in contemporary ways. This approach can help balance historical identity with the requirements of contemporary architecture.

Overall, the findings indicate that the main issue in managing the visual character of Amir Kabir Avenue is not eliminating differences, but managing differences

within a shared framework of context, scale, and visual continuity. The corridor's rising economic value and emerging competition for distinction further underscore the need for such an approach. Accordingly, façade policy should not aim at "uniformity," but rather at creating coordinated diversity, context-responsive distinction, and a balance between the individual identity of buildings and the collective identity of the corridor. Such an approach can facilitate a transition from purely formal, style-based regulations toward a flexible, context-sensitive, and socially informed system of urban visual management. To further develop the proposed framework, future studies could examine the façade-formation process across several specific projects, from decision-making through construction, and conduct direct interviews with owners, investors, builders, designers, and urban managers. Comparing these actors' accounts with design documents, construction costs, regulations, and implementation changes could more rigorously examine the relationship among capital, taste, design decisions, and physical outcomes. In addition, assessing citizens' perceptions could directly examine the potential effects of heterogeneity on legibility, sense of belonging, and the quality of environmental experience.

Authors' Contributions

The authors contributed equally to all stages of the research.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this research.

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