

relationships. Families with multilingual backgrounds can preserve cultural heritage and maintain connections with relatives who speak different languages (Bialystok, 2009).

**Conclusion.** Multilingualism is more than just a linguistic skill—it is a cognitive, social, and professional asset. By enhancing brain function, expanding career opportunities, and fostering global connections, multilingual individuals gain a significant advantage in today's interconnected world.

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## CULTURAL KITSCH IN THE CONTEXT OF VISUAL CULTURE

Kitsch, as a cultural phenomenon, has been a subject of academic discussion for decades, often positioned at the intersection of mass appeal and aesthetic critique. Its omnipresence in visual culture, from everyday objects to high art adaptations, raises essential questions regarding its role, significance, and the implications of its consumption. Whether seen as a diluted form of artistic expression or as a legitimate cultural artifact, kitsch continues to shape contemporary visual and cultural landscapes. This paper explores kitsch's aesthetic strategies, social functions, and its role in shaping mass consciousness.

According to Tomasz Kulka, kitsch is a phenomenon that arises at the crossroads of aesthetic and social needs, putting aesthetic pleasure above the content and semantic depth. According to Väänen, 'kitsch does not offer complex intellectual or emotional depth, but instead appeals to simple, idealised images that evoke emotional pleasure' (Kulka, 1996, 51). Instead of penetrating deeply into cultural contexts or revealing

complex issues, kitsch works with superficial, often overly visual or emotional elements, creating the illusion of ‘depth’ through simplification, standardisation and the use of stereotypical images. Kulka emphasises that ‘kitsch appeals to stereotypes because they allow to create the effect of “lightness” and accessibility for a wide audience’ (Kulka, 1996, 52). This approach makes kitsch accessible to a wide audience by simplifying cultural codes to make them understandable and attractive to the largest number of people.

This simplification is often manifested in visual and figurative tricks that increase the emotional effect through excessive brightness, aggressive emotionality, or deliberate banality, which causes immediate perception without the need for additional cognitive effort. According to Christine Congdon and Dow Blandy, kitsch can be a social marker that ‘creates an emotional, sometimes idealized, perception of reality that can be interpreted as high culture, although in reality it is significantly simplified and distorted’ (Congdon, Kristin G., Blandy, Doug, 2005, 199). This confirms the role of kitsch as a part of pop culture, where it often becomes an instrument of mass consciousness, combining elements of high culture with popular, often banal images.

At the same time, kitsch is not necessarily superficial or tasteless. It can also perform a social function, creating certain ideological narratives or communicative effects that are important within certain cultural or social groups. Scholars believe that kitsch “does not only interprets but also actively shapes social consciousness, reflecting and even manipulating social ideas” (Congdon, Kristin G., Blandy, Doug, 2005, 202). This allows kitsch to influence the emotional perception of the audience and exert cultural influence through accessible images and stereotypes.

In the field of pop culture, kitsch performs the function of shaping the mass consciousness, simplifying and adapting cultural ideas to the needs of a wide audience. Its visual images are often reduced to stereotypes, which give them clarity and universal appeal. In this way, it unites different social groups by offering a universal visual language that is understandable to all.

It is important to note that kitsch is not limited to decorative or household objects; it is actively integrated into various areas of visual culture, including advertising campaigns, cinema, television and other media. This contributes to its ability to shape

collective ideas of ideal life, social status or aesthetic standards. Kitsch in advertising, for example, often uses bright colours, exciting imagery and emotionally charged symbolism to create a sense of happiness or a desirable lifestyle, even if these images have no basis in reality.

Despite its superficiality, kitsch has a deep socio-cultural meaning. According to scholars, it often becomes part of the mass consciousness, providing access to culture through simple, understandable images that are accessible to all segments of the population. They emphasize that 'kitsch becomes a part of mass culture when it simplifies cultural ideas and adapts them to the needs of a wide audience' (Congdon, Kristin G.; Blandy, Doug, 2005, 206). Due to this, kitsch becomes a kind of measure of cultural norms, helping people to identify themselves with certain social or cultural groups.

Thus, kitsch in the context of visual culture is not only an instrument of aesthetic pleasure, but also a powerful social and communication tool that can influence the perception of culture, social norms and ideals. It allows expressing certain cultural ideas and ideals, simplifying them for mass consumption and making them accessible to the largest audience. At the same time, kitsch has both positive and negative aspects of influence, as by simplifying cultural images, it often contributes to the spread of stereotypes, but at the same time helps to create collective perceptions and social connections.

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