

Celebritization and Kitsch

Correlated Phenomena Shaping Aesthetic Values in Contemporary Mass Culture

Hedviga Tkacova

The paper presents the common characteristics and aesthetic implications of two correlated phenomena, celebritization and kitsch, in contemporary society. While celebritization refers to the process of transforming individuals into public figures through intense media attention, kitsch pertains to mass-produced objects and themes often considered unoriginal or aesthetically void. Both phenomena are rooted in contemporary mass culture and are closely linked to commercialization, media, and market values. The study examines how celebritization and kitsch influence aesthetic perception, aesthetic norms, and values in society, particularly through mechanisms of emotional simplification, repetition, and media-driven visibility. At the same time, the research highlights their socially integrative functions: celebritization shapes collective ideals and social aspirations, while kitsch democratizes aesthetic enjoyment, fosters cultural solidarity, and generates accessible emotional engagement across diverse groups. These findings suggest that both phenomena are not only markers of superficiality but also active agents in shaping cultural participation, public taste, and aesthetic sensibilities in modern society. | *Keywords: Celebritization, Kitsch, Aesthetic Superficiality, Consumption Culture, Social Integration*

1. Introduction

In today's media-saturated world, questions of taste, beauty, and cultural value are no longer determined solely by traditional artistic canons but are increasingly shaped by the dynamics of mass culture. Two phenomena stand at the forefront of this transformation: celebritization and kitsch. Celebrities dominate social media feeds, influence consumer choices, and set new standards of aspiration, while kitsch – often dismissed as superficial or unoriginal – permeates everyday life through mass-produced objects and popular aesthetics. Both are frequently critiqued for their lack of depth, yet their persistent presence in contemporary culture demands closer examination.

Far from being marginal curiosities, celebritization and kitsch reflect the very mechanisms through which culture operates in the 21st century. They reveal how commercialization, media amplification, and public fascination redefine what counts as authentic, valuable, or desirable. At the same time, these phenomena also play a socially integrative role: celebrities act as collective symbols of identity and aspiration, while kitsch democratizes aesthetic enjoyment, creating shared cultural experiences across social boundaries.

The present study therefore argues that understanding the interconnectedness of celebritization and kitsch is not only timely but urgent. Their combined influence reaches far beyond entertainment or decorative culture – it reshapes aesthetic perception, cultural preferences, and even social values. By situating these phenomena within the broader framework of mass culture, the paper seeks to uncover how the interplay of media, market forces, and public reception continues to redefine the boundaries of taste and the construction of aesthetic norms in contemporary society. More specifically, the paper focuses on the mechanisms through which these phenomena – individually and in interaction – shape aesthetic perception, normalize certain forms of taste, and structure cultural values in contemporary society. In this paper, the interconnectedness of celebritization and kitsch is understood not as a set of superficial similarities, but as a shared aesthetic mechanism, whereby celebrity culture incorporates kitsch-like forms of emotional simplification, visual standardization, and symbolic repetition which, through media circulation, become normalized and actively shape aesthetic perception, taste, and cultural values in contemporary mass society. The following sections therefore examine celebritization, kitsch, and their intersections in order to clarify how these phenomena operate within contemporary media and consumer culture.

2. The Dynamics of Celebritization: From Personal Popularity to Media Phenomenon

Fame is no longer defined solely by individual achievement; it emerges through visibility within media networks and public attention. (Turner, 2014, p. 5)

Common definitions equate a celebrity with fame, where celebrities are known for being known (Ahmed & Faiq, 2022). A celebrity is generally someone recognized for achievements or contributions in film, entertainment, sports, or other popular fields,¹ which attract media interest and turn individuals into public figures. However, in contemporary media environments, this understanding has shifted, as visibility itself – rather than achievement – has become a primary source of fame. Individuals may gain media attention through talent, skills, or achievements, but also through distinctive or tumultuous lifestyles (e.g., frequent relationship changes or controversies) that keep them in the spotlight and enhance their fame.

¹ A new form of celebrity culture, strongly supported by the media, is exemplified by the 'wellness economy', where famous individuals promote wellness activities and lifestyles, integrating them into daily life (Petrovic, Murgas and Kralik, 2023, p. 101). Another example is 'food tourism', represented by chefs and confectioners who have become national and global celebrities (Petrovic, Murgas and Kralik, 2023, p. 106).

In this context, the concept of celebrity is evolving due to advancements in mass media. Celebritization is understood as an interactive process between the celebrity and the public, where media-produced messages and meanings are fundamental elements (Marcus, 2019). More precisely, celebritization can be conceptualized as a process shaped by media logic, in which visibility, representation, and audience engagement play a constitutive role. Media culture that creates and sustains celebrities is closely tied to commercialization and market values. Rather than listing individual factors, this relationship can be understood structurally: media outlets depend on audience attention and profitability, shape content accordingly, and increasingly integrate promotional and consumer-oriented elements. Within this framework, celebrities function not only as public figures but also as commodities, generating economic and symbolic value.

With the rise of media production and growing interest in celebrities, new terms have emerged. ‘Celebrification’ refers to becoming a celebrity through specific achievements, whereas ‘celebritization’ involves attaining fame through media and entertainment, reflecting mediated fame (Ahmed & Faiq, 2022). This distinction highlights a shift from achievement-based recognition to visibility-based fame. Furthermore, the intriguing lifestyles of celebrities foster large fan bases, with fan-celebrity interaction being reciprocal, symbiotic, and mutually beneficial (Stever, 2009, p. 3).² Such interaction reinforces media visibility and contributes to the circulation of celebrity meaning. For the public, a celebrity is someone well-known due to achievements or lifestyle, who is also considered interesting by fans.³ The combination of fame and public interest enables celebrities to influence trends, opinions, and behaviour (Rusnák, 2010).

Building on this perspective, Jonathan E. Schroeder highlights how personal popularity is transformed into a media phenomenon through deliberate self-branding and the interplay between artistic identity and media visibility. In *The Artist and the Brand*, Schroeder (2005) argues that modern artists – and by extension celebrities – must manage their public persona strategically, akin to commercial entities. Appearance, aesthetics, and self-presentation thus function as key mechanisms sustaining recognition. Similar insights are offered by Turner’s (2014) notion of the *demotic turn*, showing how media visibility elevates ordinary individuals to celebrity status, and by Driessens’ (2013) theory of celebritization as a process driven by media logic and commercialization.

Scholars such as Neal Gabler, Neil Postman, and David Giles further illuminate the cultural and psychological dimensions of celebritization. Gabler (1998) described celebrity as a form of modern mythology, with stars embodying

² Based on G. Stever’s opinion, “a dialogue between artists and the patrons of their work gives the artist valuable feedback and gives the fan a sense of contribution to the ongoing career of the artist” (Stever, 2009, p. 30).

³ A well-known person who attracts significant public attention, such as a government official, is not necessarily a celebrity. Although they are well-known to the public, they do not qualify as a ‘celebrity’ unless they are considered interesting by others. A celebrity fulfils both conditions: being well-known and being perceived as interesting.

narratives that entertain and provide symbolic meaning. Postman (1985) emphasized that television turns public life – including politics, religion, and education – into entertainment, accelerating celebrity creation across society. Giles (2000) analysed parasocial relationships as a mechanism sustaining audience attachment. Taken together, these perspectives demonstrate that celebritization operates as a cultural mechanism linking media production, symbolic meaning, and audience engagement.

Building on these insights, P. David Marshall, Graeme Turner, John Street, and Fred Inglis conceptualize celebritization as a structural and political process shaped by media visibility, symbolic value, and commercialization. Marshall (1997, 2010) interprets the *celebrity persona* as a form of cultural capital, while Street (2004) demonstrates how media representation transforms political actors into entertainment figures, thereby reshaping public perception and political legitimacy. Inglis (2000), in turn, highlights the commercialization of culture and its role in constructing public values and symbolic hierarchies. Together, these perspectives show that celebritization functions not merely as entertainment, but as a broader mechanism through which media environments shape social meaning, value, and public authority.

As indicated, contemporary celebrities influence public attitudes and behaviours not only through achievements and fame, but also through strategic self-presentation and visual identity. This influence remains ambivalent, as motivations may conflict with public benefit (Rončáková, 2023; Stewart & Giles, 2020). Some celebrities exhibit behaviours that provide no societal advantage or may even be harmful (Rončáková & Sámelová, 2023). As Rusnák (2010, p. 47) observes, celebrities tend to attract attention particularly when they are “striking, unusual, or standing out from the crowd”, while Stewart and Giles (2020, p. 3) emphasize that public responses to celebrities reveal how value is constructed and circulated in contemporary society.

Within this framework, the aesthetic dimension of celebritization becomes particularly significant. Celebrity culture relies on forms of self-presentation that are immediately recognizable and emotionally engaging, privileging visibility, accessibility, and repetition.

In this sense, celebrity culture frequently operates through aesthetic strategies closely aligned with kitsch sensibility. The visual and narrative self-presentation of celebrities often relies on simplification, emotional intensification, and easily recognizable symbolic forms, such as idealized lifestyles, sentimental storytelling, and standardized visual aesthetics. These features correspond to established definitions of kitsch as emotionally charged, reproducible, and accessible forms of cultural expression (Călinescu, 1987; Kulka, 1996). Consequently, celebritization not only incorporates but actively relies on such aesthetic strategies to sustain visibility and audience engagement. Importantly, this does not imply that all forms of celebrity culture are inherently kitsch; rather, kitsch functions here as a recurrent aesthetic mode operating within celebritization, particularly in media environments driven by visibility, repetition, and affective immediacy.

3. Kitsch as a Cultural and Aesthetic Phenomenon

Kitsch thrives on emotional clichés and predictable sentimentality, yet it remains a pervasive and socially integrative form of popular culture. (Călinescu, 1987, p. 114)

The concept of kitsch⁴ has attracted significant scholarly attention, with definitions ranging from strictly negative to ambivalently or even positively framed. Contemporary discussions increasingly approach kitsch as a historically evolving and internally differentiated aesthetic phenomenon shaped by changing cultural, media, and consumer contexts (Ryynänen & Barragán, 2023). One of the most influential critical interpretations comes from Jean Baudrillard, who in *The Consumer Society* (1998, pp. 110–111) describes kitsch as a ‘pseudo-object’ and a simulation devoid of authentic meaning, characterized by excessive reproduction and imitation. Within this context, kitsch possesses a low distinctive value, yet this low value is connected to its high profitability, as entire social classes adopt it. Baudrillard’s observation that the weak value of kitsch is linked to maximum statistical profitability highlights ‘the cultural demand’ across all societal levels, a phenomenon increasingly evident in the 21st century – namely, that objects traditionally classified as kitsch may nevertheless acquire cultural and market value within contemporary consumer culture (Baudrillard, 1998, pp. 110–111).

Kitsch thus reaffirms the value of rare, precious, or unique objects, even though such objects can also be industrially produced. Therefore, kitsch and the ‘authentic’ object organize the world of consumption according to their own logic (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 111). At the end of this comparison of aesthetic value, individuals who cannot distinguish between the authentic and the reproduced may ultimately attribute value to the reproduced object itself, revealing how aesthetic value in consumer culture may become detached from authenticity and increasingly shaped by visibility, reproducibility, and market circulation (Baudrillard, 1998; Kulka, 1996).

So, what differentiates popular kitsch (previously described as unoriginal or aesthetically null) from kitsch that is today identified as art? It seems that originality has become the measure of what is considered cheap kitsch and what is instead regarded as a well-crafted and critically and popularly appreciated piece of art. Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917), Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* (1964), and Damien Hirst’s *Tiger Shark* (1991)⁵ provoked astonishment, attracted intense media attention, and were quickly elevated into objects of prestige desired by wealthy collectors. This process reflects the dynamics of celebritization and kitsch as correlated phenomena shaping

⁴ See Călinescu (1987, pp. 225–230) for a broader discussion of the historical development and etymology of the concept of kitsch.

⁵ One example among many: An iconic work of British art from the 1990s is titled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*. Created by Damien Hirst in 1991, this work consists of a preserved tiger shark in a 5% formaldehyde solution within a display case. The shark cost Hirst £6,000, and the total cost to assemble the piece was £50,000. In 2004, the shark in formaldehyde was sold for an undisclosed amount, estimated to be between \$8–12 million. Critics argue that Hirst’s piece confronts us with reality and physicality, forcing us to consider it within a new context (Stańska, 2023).

aesthetic values in contemporary mass culture: media exposure and public fascination elevate certain objects – or their creators – into cultural icons, while their aesthetic evaluation becomes inseparable from commercialization, popularity, and market value (Stewart & Giles, 2020).

An interesting perspective on kitsch is offered by Czech novelist Milan Kundera, who concurs with the low aesthetic value, lack of originality, and ‘cheapness’ of kitsch. However, he also emphasizes the distinctive sentimentality that kitsch evokes, independent of the object’s aesthetic value, originality, or price. Kundera illustrates this phenomenon by stating that kitsch induces two tears to flow in rapid succession. The first tear signifies the joy of seeing children play on the grass, while the second reflects the pleasure of sharing this sentiment with all humanity. According to Kundera, kitsch is less about the object observed than about the observer’s own emotional response. This mechanism can be understood here as a form of detached emotion. According to Kundera (1984), kitsch redirects emotional attention from the represented object toward the observer’s own sentimental response, making the experience partly an affirmation of one’s own capacity to feel. This sentimentality shifts attention from the represented object toward the observer’s own emotional response. In Kundera’s (1984) understanding, kitsch thus encourages an emotionally gratifying experience centred less on the object itself than on the individual’s awareness of sharing and experiencing the expected sentiment. In this sense, the emotional response associated with kitsch remains detached from deeper engagement with its object. This notion aptly illustrates the position of kitsch within the contemporary hierarchy of art.

From this perspective, kitsch can also be understood in relation to the experience of the ‘kitsch consumer’, whose engagement is characterized by immediate emotional responses to aesthetic stimuli. Rather than encouraging critical distance, kitsch reception often prioritizes emotional accessibility, familiarity, and symbolic recognition. In broader theoretical reflections on kitsch, including those associated with Gillo Dorfles and Ludwig Giesz, this affective mode of reception helps explain the persistence and mass appeal of kitsch within contemporary consumer culture.

From a social perspective, however, kitsch performs integrative functions: it provides a common symbolic language that bridges differences of education, class, and cultural background. As Călinescu (1987) notes, kitsch thrives on shared codes of sentimentality, which makes it a socially cohesive force capable of generating feelings of belonging. Eco (1986) similarly highlights that the repetitive and easily recognizable forms of kitsch allow for a broad and inclusive aesthetic experience that does not demand specialized knowledge. In this way, kitsch fulfils an important social role by democratizing access to aesthetic enjoyment, creating cultural touchpoints that are widely understood, and reinforcing a sense of community through collective emotional engagement. Its accessibility and sentimental appeal thus contribute not only to its persistence but also to its capacity to foster cultural solidarity in mass society.

Yet, kitsch also has positive dimensions: it fosters emotional engagement, provides accessible aesthetic experiences, and creates a sense of shared sentiment across social groups (Eco, 1986; Călinescu, 1987; Kulka, 1996). In this sense, kitsch operates simultaneously as a commercially successful, socially inclusive phenomenon and as an aesthetic form that prioritizes reproduction, accessibility, and sentimentality (Jacobus & Martin, 2018; Mihăilescu, 1997a). In other words, its circulation demonstrates how aesthetic evaluation in contemporary culture can become inseparable from market forces as well as media attention.

Moreover, kitsch must also be situated in the context of mass production and consumer culture. It has become a part of mass culture by acting according to the changing dynamics of consumer culture and the expectations and tastes of consumer society (Özler & Kizilelma, 2023, p. 30).⁶ Media culture appears to be a significant supporter not only of celebritization but also of kitsch. In this light, the endless reproducibility of kitsch contributes to its profitability, as whole social classes adopt it, a process that Baudrillard (1998, pp. 110–111) connects with “cultural demand”. As Mihăilescu (1997b) notes, kitsch production often prioritizes marketability over aesthetic criteria, shaping a cultural environment where superficiality and accessibility become valued qualities.

Lastly, definitions of kitsch also acknowledge its paradoxical status. *The Oxford Art Dictionary* (n.d.) defines it as “in poor taste because of excessive garishness or sentimentality but sometimes appreciated ironically or knowingly.” This duality resonates with Jacobus and Martin’s (2018) view that kitsch’s *weak value* contributes to its endless reproduction but also its cultural persistence. Thus, kitsch emerges as a paradoxical category: simultaneously dismissed as superficial and celebrated as emotionally compelling, commercially successful, and socially inclusive. It mirrors consumer society while responding to fundamental human needs for recognition, emotion, and belonging, explaining both its persistence and transformation in contemporary culture. These characteristics of kitsch become particularly significant when examined in relation to contemporary celebrity culture and mediated aesthetic visibility.

4. Celebritization and Kitsch – Convergences and Divergences of Two Significant Phenomena

This section examines the principal intersections and distinctions between celebritization and kitsch to clarify the mechanisms through which these phenomena jointly shape aesthetic perception, cultural values, and media-driven forms of public engagement.

The intersections of celebritization and kitsch reveal the intricate dynamics of contemporary mass culture. While both phenomena are distinct in focus and form, they share key characteristics, including reliance on media systems, audience engagement, and commercialization. This convergence underscores

⁶ Let us add that the nature of the term ‘consumer society’, its development, and many suitable examples of consumer society can also be found in older works. For example, we can mention Holmwood et al. (1997), Scitovsky (1976) or Baudrillard (1998), and so on.

how public attention, popular taste, and market forces collectively shape perceptions of value, aesthetics, and cultural significance. Importantly, this relationship is not limited to external similarities, as celebrity culture itself often operates through aesthetic mechanisms that can be understood as intrinsically kitsch-like.

By examining the intersections between celebritization and kitsch, several convergences can be observed:

a) Anchoring in mass culture and commercialization – Both phenomena operate within media-driven, consumer-oriented environments. Celebritization transforms individuals into public figures whose fame is amplified and monetized, while kitsch comprises widely produced and consumed objects or cultural forms that appeal to broad audiences despite limited aesthetic distinction (Baudrillard, 1998; Stewart & Giles, 2020). These conditions are not treated as the central explanatory claim, but rather as the structural environment within which the aesthetic mechanisms linking celebritization and kitsch operate.

b) Media attention – Media visibility sustains both celebritization and kitsch. Celebrities remain in public consciousness through curated images, achievements, and lifestyles (Schroeder, 2005; Turner, 2014), whereas kitsch relies on mass exposure via advertisements, social media, and popular culture channels to reach consumers (Baudrillard, 1998).

c) Dependence on public interest – The success of both relies on audience engagement. Celebrities capture attention through persona and performance, often promoting consumerist values (Marshall, 2010; Street, 2004), while kitsch caters to widespread emotional and aesthetic preferences, often prioritizing appeal over originality (Özler & Kizilelma, 2023).

d) Criticism and perceived superficiality – Both are subject to critique for promoting shallow engagement. Celebritization has been criticized for fostering idolization and undermining substantive social and moral values (Gabler, 1998; Postman, 1985), whereas kitsch is often associated with emotionally simplified forms of aesthetic experience. In Kundera's (1984) interpretation, kitsch redirects emotional attention from the object itself toward the observer's own emotional response. In the present study, this mechanism is understood as a form of detached emotion characterized by sentimentality, immediacy, and reduced critical distance (Kundera, 1984; Călinescu, 1987).

e) Influence on aesthetic norms – Both shape perceptions of value and taste. Celebrities establish ideals of beauty, success, and lifestyle that influence social norms (Schroeder, 2005; Turner, 2014), while kitsch, through simplification and repetition, reinforces standardized aesthetic patterns, potentially constraining originality (Baudrillard, 1998).

f) Kitsch sensibility within celebrity culture – Beyond structural similarities, celebrity culture itself frequently embodies features of kitsch. The construction of celebrity personas often involves emotional clichés,

idealized imagery, and repetitive aesthetic codes that enable rapid recognition and mass appeal. This 'kitsch lining' of celebrity culture reflects its dependence on affective immediacy and simplified symbolic communication, aligning it with broader dynamics of kitsch as an aesthetic mode of mass culture (Călinescu, 1987; Kulka, 1996).

g) Celebrities as carriers of kitsch meaning – Additionally, kitsch may also operate through the use of celebrities as symbolic carriers of meaning, where familiar public figures enhance emotional accessibility, recognition, and mass appeal, further reinforcing the circulation of simplified aesthetic forms.

This overlap is not merely descriptive but operates as a mechanism shaping aesthetic perception and cultural values. The kitsch-like features of celebrity culture – such as emotional simplification, visual standardization, and repetitive symbolic forms – enable rapid recognition and affective engagement across audiences. Through constant media exposure and circulation, these aesthetic patterns become normalized, gradually influencing what is perceived as attractive, desirable, or valuable. In this way, celebritytization, by incorporating kitsch sensibility, contributes to the stabilization of simplified aesthetic norms and to the broader structuring of taste within contemporary mass culture.

Key divergences between the two phenomena include:

a) Focus and object – Celebritytization is centered on individual figures and their constructed personas, whereas kitsch pertains to objects or cultural forms that often mimic high culture without generating originality (Baudrillard, 1998).

b) Emotional engagement – Celebrities elicit admiration, idealization, or disappointment, reflecting complex parasocial dynamics (Giles, 2000; Stewart & Giles, 2020). Kitsch, by contrast, produces immediate, sentimental, or superficial affective responses, exemplifying detached emotion (Kundera, 1984).

c) Originality – Personal stories, achievements, and uniqueness underpin celebritytization (Schroeder, 2005; Turner, 2014), whereas kitsch relies on replication and formulaic appeal (Baudrillard, 1998; Dorfles, 1969).

d) Long-term cultural impact – Celebritytization can influence societal norms and aesthetic ideals over time (Marshall, 2010; Inglis, 2000), while kitsch affects aesthetics indirectly, normalizing consumption-driven and easily digestible forms of culture (Baudrillard, 1998).

e) Social reach and mechanisms – Both phenomena achieve wide dissemination, but through different pathways: celebrities operate as social models amplified by media, whereas kitsch capitalizes on accessibility, affordability, and reproducibility to permeate cultural consciousness (Turner, 2014; Stewart & Giles, 2020; Özler & Kizilelma, 2023).

5. Summary and Future Considerations

The tragedy of *King Lear* begins when real individuals – Kent, Cordelia, Edgar, Gloucester – are driven out by counterfeit figures, i.e., the deceitful and emotionally false sisters Goneril and Regan. (Shakespeare, n.d., Act 1, Scene 1, line 62)

The concluding reflection of this study begins with a literary metaphor drawn from William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In this pivotal scene, king Lear engages with his daughters Goneril and Regan, who profess their love for him in exaggerated and insincere terms, while Cordelia, the youngest, expresses her affection simply and genuinely. Her honesty, however, leads to her banishment – a critical turning point in the play. This dramatic moment resonates strongly with contemporary mass culture, where authentic individuals and genuine aesthetic experiences are often overshadowed by media-constructed celebrities and mass-produced kitsch. Just as in *King Lear*, superficial representations frequently gain prominence over depth, originality, and human value, shaping public taste and perceptions of aesthetic and social worth. In this sense, the metaphor provides a lens through which to understand celebritization and kitsch as interrelated phenomena that reflect and influence cultural hierarchies, market dynamics, and collective emotional engagement.

This study has emphasized the correlated nature of celebritization and kitsch, pointing to their shared foundations in contemporary mass culture and their close connection to commercialization, media dynamics, and market-driven values. Celebritization, through the transformation of individuals into public figures, and kitsch, through the proliferation of mass-produced objects with varying aesthetic quality, jointly shape cultural preferences and aesthetic perceptions. Both phenomena influence contemporary aesthetic experience, yet they do so in different ways, reflecting a complex interplay between media exposure, public fascination, and market forces.

Celebrity culture is defined by its focus on individuals who gain public recognition through media presence, personal success, or distinctive lifestyles. Celebrities often shape social norms and trends, and their visibility influences public attitudes and behaviours. This phenomenon is strongly influenced by media dynamics, commercial interests, and public perception, with the aesthetics of these personalities frequently becoming symbols of societal values and trends (Schroeder, 2005; Marshall, 1997, 2010; Turner, 2014). Celebritization not only reflects media-driven amplification of personal identity but also actively contributes to shaping public taste, aesthetic ideals, and social aspirations.

Kitsch, in contrast, is characterized by mass production, low aesthetic distinction, and a form of sentimentality in which emotional attention is directed primarily toward the observer's own response. In Kundera's (1984) interpretation, kitsch does not merely evoke emotion toward its represented object; it also encourages satisfaction in experiencing and sharing an expected sentiment. As Baudrillard (1998, pp. 110–111) observes, kitsch possesses low distinctive value yet gains high profitability, as it is adopted across entire

social classes, reflecting a broad cultural demand. Its circulation is inseparable from commercial and media dynamics, with objects widely consumed regardless of originality or artistic merit (Özler & Kizilelma, 2023, p. 30). In this sense, the emotional appeal of kitsch may be understood as being directed more toward the observer's own sentimental experience than toward deeper engagement with the represented object (Kundera, 1984). Yet, kitsch also has positive dimensions: it fosters emotional engagement, provides accessible aesthetic experiences, and creates a sense of shared sentiment across social groups (Eco, 1986; Călinescu, 1987; Kulka, 1996). In this sense, kitsch operates simultaneously as a commercially successful, socially inclusive phenomenon and as an aesthetic form that prioritizes reproduction, accessibility, and sentimentality (Jacobus & Martin, 2018; Mihăilescu, 1997b). From a social perspective, it may even function as a symbolic language that bridges differences of education, class, and cultural background, democratizing aesthetic enjoyment and reinforcing cultural solidarity through collective emotional engagement (Călinescu, 1987; Eco, 1986). Its circulation demonstrates how aesthetic evaluation in contemporary culture can become inseparable from market forces, media attention, and public fascination, highlighting the paradoxical status of kitsch as both trivial and emotionally resonant, yet also unifying and culturally participatory.

Shifts in cultural norms and values are likely to affect the role and significance of both phenomena. Celebrity culture and kitsch may adapt to new social trends, potentially changing what is considered aesthetic, valuable, or desirable. Evaluating celebrities and kitsch provides insight into broader social trends and priorities, including the level of cultural progress or cultural demand at all societal levels.

While both phenomena have been extensively discussed in academic literature, their interconnected operation – particularly at the level of shared aesthetic mechanisms – remains insufficiently theorized. Both phenomena continuously shape public taste and discourse, yet they are often perceived as superficial or lacking critical value. This suggests a need for intensified research into how media, commercial interests, and popular reception interact to influence contemporary aesthetic standards. By examining these interactions, researchers can better understand how celebrity culture and kitsch contribute to the perception of aesthetic worth, social values, and emotional engagement in modern society.

Looking ahead, several potential developments merit consideration. If societal attitudes shift toward renewed emphasis on authenticity and originality, evaluation criteria for both celebritization and kitsch may change, requiring updated aesthetic standards and frameworks. Conversely, the proliferation of digital platforms and social media influencers may amplify superficial aspects of both phenomena, further entwining public recognition, commercial appeal, and emotional resonance. Both trajectories offer fertile ground for research into the evolving relationship between media, culture, and aesthetics.

In conclusion, celebritization and kitsch are intertwined phenomena with distinct yet overlapping impacts on contemporary culture. Celebrities shape aesthetic ideals and social norms through visibility, personal branding, and public fascination, while kitsch reflects mass production, emotional engagement, and broad cultural participation. Both highlight the interplay of media, market forces, and audience reception, illustrating how contemporary mass culture constructs, disseminates, and evaluates value, beauty, and emotion. The study underscores the importance of recognizing both the superficial and the socially integrative functions of these phenomena, advocating for a nuanced approach to understanding their role in shaping cultural and aesthetic sensibilities.

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Hedviga Tkacova
 Faculty of Arts and Letters Catholic University (Slovakia)
hedwiga.tkacova@gmail.com

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