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Investigating the Necessity of Applying Gilan's Vernacular Architectural Patterns in Contemporary Hotel Design

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Abstract


This study aims to investigate the necessity of integrating the vernacular architectural patterns of Gilan province into contemporary hotel design, in order to bridge the gap between modern tourism requirements and the cultural authenticity of the region. In recent decades, insufficient attention to climatic and cultural contexts in the design of many hospitality facilities in northern Iran has resulted in a decline in their spatial and visual quality. Using a descriptive–analytical research approach, the study first identifies key patterns of Gilan's vernacular architecture and then examines the importance of applying these patterns in contemporary hotel design. The findings reveal that incorporating elements such as the Telar (semi-open veranda), spatial permeability, and pitched roof systems not only contributes to climatic sustainability but also enhances the experiential quality of spaces for tourists. Ultimately, the study highlights the role of vernacular architectural principles in restoring architectural identity and strengthening the relationship between buildings, users, and the natural environment within hospitality contexts.

Keywords: Vernacular architecture, Architectural patterns, Gilan province, Hotel design, Architectural identity, Humid subtropical climate.

1 | Introduction

Gilan province, owing to its abundant natural attractions and rich cultural heritage, has long been recognized as one of Iran's major tourism destinations. This distinctive characteristic has significantly increased the demand for accommodation facilities and hotels throughout the region. However, an examination of contemporary architectural practices in Gilan reveals that many newly constructed hotels have been designed with little consideration for the region's vernacular architectural heritage [1]. This disconnection between modern architecture and indigenous identity has resulted in the emergence of buildings lacking a distinct sense

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of place. Such structures not only fail to respond effectively to the region's climatic conditions, including high humidity and heavy rainfall, but also diminish tourists' sense of place and overall travel experience [2]. Furthermore, the incompatibility between the physical form of modern hotels and Gilan's climate has contributed to a decline in the spatial and visual quality of the coastal landscape [3].

The vernacular architecture of Gilan is the product of centuries of adaptation to the natural environment. Its architectural elements, including the Telar (semi-open veranda), elevated foundations (Korsi-Chini), and compound sloped roofs, represent intelligent solutions for achieving thermal comfort while maintaining aesthetic sustainability [4]. Investigating the necessity of incorporating these architectural patterns into contemporary hotel design is an effort to restore regional identity within the tourism industry. As a cultural showcase of a region, a hotel should reinterpret local architectural characteristics through a contemporary design language [5–7].

Accordingly, this study seeks to clarify the functional and visual significance of Gilan's vernacular architectural principles and demonstrate how these traditional patterns can be integrated into contemporary hotel design. Such an approach aims not only to satisfy the functional requirements of modern travelers but also to establish a sustainable relationship between architecture, climate, and local culture.

2 | Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to identify and extract the enduring architectural patterns of Gilan's vernacular architecture and to explain the necessity of incorporating them into the design of contemporary hotels. The research aims to propose practical design strategies that establish a balance between the modern physical structure of hospitality facilities and the climatic and cultural authenticity of the region. Through this integration, the resulting architectural products can not only fulfill the functional needs of tourists but also serve as identity-defining elements within the context of Gilan. Recent studies have demonstrated that reinterpreting the principles of sustainable vernacular architecture in hospitality facilities contributes not only to reducing energy consumption but also to enhancing tourists' satisfaction with the spatial quality of hotel environments.

3 | Research Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive–analytical approach. Data concerning the vernacular architecture of Gilan were collected through library-based research, including the review of books, academic articles, and relevant documents. Subsequently, qualitative data analysis was employed to identify the distinctive characteristics of Gilan's vernacular architecture and to explain how its historical authenticity can be integrated with the functional requirements of contemporary hospitality architecture.

4 | Research Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 | Climatic Adaptation and Functional Efficiency

The findings of this study indicate that the vernacular architecture of Gilan is fundamentally based on maximizing interaction with the natural environment. Rather than merely replicating traditional architectural forms, contemporary hotel design should reinterpret the environmental principles embedded within these forms. Spaces such as the Telar (semi-open veranda) and Gholam-Gardesh (continuous surrounding veranda or circulation space) should be reimagined to satisfy contemporary thermal comfort standards. By providing extensive shading for building façades and facilitating natural air circulation around guest rooms, these architectural elements reduce cooling loads during warm seasons while simultaneously offering visitors the unique spatial experience of semi-open living environments. Therefore, reflecting vernacular architectural patterns in newly designed hotels should not be regarded merely as a stylistic decision. According to Elahi [8], this approach constitutes a fundamental strategy for achieving sustainable hospitality architecture that is consistent with the physical and cultural identity of Gilan province.

Similarly, elevating buildings above ground level through stone foundations (Korsi-Chini) represents an effective traditional solution for mitigating excessive ground moisture. In contemporary hotel design, this principle may be reinterpreted by incorporating lightweight and visually transparent ground floors that minimize visual barriers and preserve uninterrupted views of the surrounding natural landscape.

4.2 | User Experience and Social Sustainability

Beyond technical and physical considerations, the findings emphasize the importance of recreating the hierarchy of entrance spaces and communal areas in modern hotels by drawing inspiration from traditional houses in Gilan. In the region's vernacular architecture, the boundary between interior and exterior spaces is intentionally fluid, while transitional spaces play a significant role in facilitating social interaction. Accordingly, public spaces such as restaurants, traditional teahouses, and hotel lobbies should be designed by reinterpreting the characteristics of spacious verandas and central gathering spaces, thereby creating an atmosphere that evokes intimacy and the experience of rural life [9].

Such an approach not only encourages longer tourist stays but also contributes to the economic and cultural sustainability of the region through the incorporation of local handicrafts, indigenous materials, and traditional artistic motifs within interior design. In this regard, a successful hotel in northern Iran is one that establishes a harmonious balance between contemporary hospitality standards and the historical identity of its surrounding environment.

4.3 | Architectural Strategies for Reinforcing Regional Identity

Another significant finding of this research concerns the role of steeply pitched roofs. Beyond their functional efficiency in rapidly draining heavy rainfall, these roofs constitute one of the most recognizable identity-forming elements of Gilan's architectural landscape. In the proposed design approach, traditional roof forms can be reconstructed using contemporary building materials while preserving their original geometric character. Such an approach enables the creation of attic accommodation spaces offering panoramic views of forests or the Caspian Sea.

Furthermore, the integration of sustainable materials such as timber and terracotta in hotel façades strengthens visitors' sense of place and prevents hotel buildings from appearing as alien objects within Gilan's natural landscape. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that the intelligent integration of vernacular architectural principles with the functional and comfort requirements of contemporary hospitality design can produce environments where guests not only enjoy modern luxury but also experience the cultural identity, architectural heritage, and traditional lifestyle of northern Iran in an authentic and meaningful manner.

4.4 | Physical and Climatic Analysis

An examination of case studies and previous research indicates that the vernacular architecture of Gilan province is fundamentally based on maximizing interaction with the natural environment. The findings of this study demonstrate that the design of contemporary hotels should move beyond the superficial replication of traditional forms and instead reinterpret the environmental principles embedded in vernacular architecture to achieve modern standards of thermal comfort. Architectural elements such as the Telar (semi-open veranda) and Gholam-Gardesh (continuous peripheral veranda/circulation space) should be reintroduced as functional components rather than decorative features. By providing extensive shading for building façades and facilitating natural cross-ventilation around guest rooms, these semi-open spaces not only reduce cooling loads during the warm season but also recreate the experiential quality of living within a transitional indoor-outdoor environment.

Technical investigations of indigenous residential buildings in Gilan further confirm the crucial role of semi-open spaces in enhancing environmental sustainability. Ghanbari et al. [6] demonstrated that the incorporation of the Telar (veranda) can reduce cooling energy consumption by approximately 20% during

the hot season. These findings highlight the potential of vernacular architectural strategies to improve the environmental performance of contemporary hospitality buildings while preserving regional identity.

Furthermore, elevating buildings above ground level through traditional stone foundations (Korsi-Chini) represents an effective response to the region's exceptionally high soil moisture. In modern hotel architecture, this principle can be reinterpreted by designing lightweight and visually transparent ground floors that minimize physical and visual barriers while preserving uninterrupted views of the surrounding natural landscape. Such an approach simultaneously enhances climatic performance, strengthens the visual connection between the building and its environment, and reinforces the distinctive architectural identity of Gilan.

4.5 | Architectural Strategies for Reinforcing Regional Identity

Another significant finding of this study is that the use of steeply pitched roofs serves not only a functional purpose in efficiently draining heavy rainfall but also constitutes one of the most distinctive identity-defining elements of hotel architecture in Gilan. In the proposed design approach, these roofs can be reconstructed using contemporary building materials while preserving their traditional geometric character, thereby creating attic accommodation spaces with panoramic views of the surrounding forests or the Caspian Sea.

Moreover, the incorporation of sustainable local materials such as timber and terracotta in the hotel façade enhances visitors' sense of place and ensures that the building blends harmoniously with Gilan's natural landscape rather than appearing as a foreign architectural object. The findings further suggest that material authenticity plays a crucial role in strengthening the visual continuity between the built environment and its ecological context.

Ultimately, this study concludes that the thoughtful integration of vernacular architectural principles with the comfort and functional requirements of contemporary hospitality design can create accommodation environments that offer more than luxury amenities. Such hotels provide guests with an authentic experience of the architectural heritage, cultural identity, and traditional lifestyle of northern Iran, while simultaneously promoting environmental sustainability and reinforcing the regional character of the destination.

4.6 | User Experience and Social Sustainability

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of reinterpreting the spatial hierarchy of entrances and communal areas in contemporary hotels by drawing inspiration from the traditional houses of Gilan. Within this architectural framework, transitional spaces and verandas play a pivotal role in fostering social interaction and conveying the intimacy and warmth of rural life, thereby significantly enhancing the overall tourist experience. These semi-open spaces create opportunities for informal gathering, strengthen visitors' emotional connection with the environment, and contribute to a stronger sense of place.

Furthermore, integrating local handicrafts and indigenous artistic elements into interior design not only supports the preservation of cultural heritage but also contributes to the economic sustainability of local communities by promoting regional craftsmanship. Such design strategies enrich the authenticity of hospitality environments while reinforcing the cultural identity of the destination.

Ultimately, a successful hotel in Gilan's climatic and cultural context is one that establishes an inseparable balance between contemporary comfort and historical authenticity. By harmoniously integrating vernacular architectural principles with modern hospitality standards, the hotel becomes more than a place of accommodation; it serves as a cultural ambassador, representing the architectural heritage, local identity, and living traditions of Gilan.

5 | Analytical Study of Vernacular Architectural Patterns of Gilan in the Reconfiguration of Hospitality Spaces

The vernacular architecture of Gilan province is founded upon three fundamental principles: Outward orientation, climatic responsiveness, and the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces. The following section examines the physical characteristics of these architectural patterns and discusses their potential application in contemporary hotel design.

As illustrated in *Fig. 1*, one of the most distinctive manifestations of these principles is the presence of large, continuous verandas (Telar). This architectural element functions not only as a transitional and circulation space but also as a device for enhancing spatial transparency by blurring the boundary between interior and exterior environments. Consequently, it maximizes natural ventilation and provides extensive visual connections to the surrounding landscape. In contemporary hospitality architecture, this vernacular pattern can be reinterpreted as the basis for designing deep balconies, terraces, and semi-open communal spaces, thereby recreating an authentic spatial experience of Gilan's climate and natural environment for visitors while improving environmental performance and user comfort.



Fig. 1. Manifestation of outward orientation and spatial transparency in the vernacular architecture of Gilan.

5.1 | Physical Analysis of the Telar and Gholam-Gardesh Typologies

The Telar typology, as the most prominent element of Gilan's outward-oriented architecture, functions far beyond a simple veranda. It operates as a critical transitional space that dissolves the boundary between enclosed interior environments and the surrounding natural landscape. In analyzing this typology for hotel design, particular attention must be given to its role in creating a "Microclimatic Layer." By generating a stagnant air buffer and providing continuous shading on primary façades, the Telar prevents direct solar radiation from penetrating guest rooms while simultaneously enabling unobstructed landscape viewing during rainy conditions.

Furthermore, the extension of this spatial logic into the Gholam-Gardesh (a continuous semi-open circulation corridor surrounding the building) can, at the scale of a large hotel, function as a semi-open access pathway. This configuration facilitates continuous airflow circulation and significantly reduces humidity levels within interior spaces [8]. In addition to lowering operational costs associated with mechanical ventilation in shared spaces, this system ensures a constant movement of natural breeze across all floors, thereby enhancing environmental comfort and evoking the sensory experience of walking among trees for visitors.

5.2 | Morphological Analysis of Pitched Roofs and Kolpoosh Geometry

In the morphological study of vernacular buildings, pitched roofs (particularly four-sided roof systems) are not only a rational response to the region's intense rainfall but also constitute a major component of the building's volumetric identity and visual character. In the design of contemporary hotels based on this typology, the geometry of Kolpoosh roofs can be employed to create elevated duplex accommodation units on upper floors. The resulting roof form generates a large internal void that functions as a natural thermal buffer, allowing warm air to rise toward the apex and exit through ventilation openings placed at the roof ridge.

The steep inclination of four-sided roofs facilitates rapid rainwater drainage while also acting as an insulating layer against intense solar radiation [4]. Structural analysis of these roof systems suggests that, through the integration of modern roofing technologies (such as tile-patterned metal sheets or shingles) while preserving traditional geometric proportions, it is possible to achieve a form that ensures resilience against seasonal strong winds and simultaneously serves as a powerful symbol of Gilan's sustainable architectural identity in the perception of tourists.

5.3 | Functional Analysis of Korsi-Chini and Ground-Level Transparency

Another fundamental pattern examined in this study is the concept of Korsi-Chini, referring to the elevation of buildings above the moist ground. In traditional architecture, creating a separation between the building floor and the ground using wooden or stone stilts (Shakib) served as an effective strategy to prevent material decay and facilitate underfloor ventilation. In the reinterpretation of this system for contemporary hotel design, the ground floor can be transformed into a transparent pilotis level supported by elevated structural columns.

This strategy not only addresses the issue of rising damp but also preserves visual continuity from beneath the building toward the surrounding garden or forest. Consequently, instead of appearing as a heavy, grounded mass, the building gains a sense of lightness and suspension. This transparency at ground level transforms the hotel lobby and reception areas into an extension of the natural environment, allowing guests to experience direct sensory engagement with both climate and site conditions. As Mirzaei et al. [5] note, integrating vernacular architectural elements into contemporary hotel design can significantly enhance visual experience and strengthen users' sense of place.

5.4 | Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Potential

The use of deep verandas as thermal buffers, combined with locally sourced materials possessing favorable thermal properties, can reduce cooling energy consumption in hotels by up to 30% [10]. This approach not only decreases maintenance costs but also aligns with international standards of bioclimatic and sustainable architecture [11].

5.5 | Vegetation Systems and Green Roof Typology

Beyond structural considerations, indigenous vegetation plays a significant role in regulating the microclimatic conditions of hotel environments. This study proposes the use of green roof systems inspired by traditional Gali-Poosh (vegetation-covered) roofing typologies. In contemporary reinterpretation, these roofs can be transformed into green roofs covered with native plant species of the region.

Such systems provide a highly effective thermal insulation layer against summer solar radiation while simultaneously contributing to rainwater absorption and reducing water runoff and wastage. In addition, the incorporation of vertical greenery systems on hotel balconies, drawing inspiration from climbing plants commonly found in rural houses, can transform each guest room into a semi-private garden space with direct visual access to nature. This strategy has a direct positive impact on psychological well-being and enhances tourist satisfaction.

6 | Spatial Hierarchy and Circulation in Vernacular-Oriented Hotels (From Courtyard to Room)

An analysis of spatial hierarchy in Gilan's vernacular architecture reveals a gradual transition from public to private spaces. In contemporary hotel design, guests should not be immediately directed from the exterior environment into a fully enclosed lobby. As illustrated in *Fig. 2*, relocating circulation elements such as corridors and staircases to the building façade (Gholam-Gardesh) enhances natural ventilation while simultaneously transforming circulation spaces from purely functional elements into experiential components of architectural perception.

The findings of this section suggest that hotel entrances should be reimagined through a “green corridor” or an open courtyard system inspired by traditional Gilan houses. This intermediate space functions as a transitional buffer, gradually preparing visitors for entry into the more private and tranquil guest room areas. The integration of water elements, such as elongated pools along circulation paths, not only improves thermal comfort through evaporative cooling but also softens ambient noise levels, thereby creating a serene atmosphere for guests. This approach represents a contemporary reinterpretation of the concept of comfort within traditional architecture.



Fig. 2. The Gholam-Gardesh pattern and open circulation system in vernacular architecture.

6.1 | Exploration of Four-Sided Pitched Roof Geometry and Its Role in Hotel Morphology Technical and Climatic Analysis

Pitched roofs in Gilan's vernacular architecture are not merely protective coverings but are considered the primary element in the building's formal language. In the design of the proposed hotel, adopting steep four-sided (Kolpoosh) roof systems provides a direct response to the region's high annual rainfall levels. These roofs, by creating a large intermediary space known as the attic (*Zir-Shirvani*), function as a thermal buffer that reduces heat transfer from solar radiation to the upper residential spaces.

Fig. 3 illustrates the historical configuration of steep Kolpoosh roofs in traditional buildings. Cross-sectional analysis indicates that an optimal roof slope ranging between 35° and 45° not only facilitates rapid rainwater drainage but also allows upward-moving humid wind flows to pass over the building with minimal resistance, thereby reducing structural pressure.

In high-rise buildings such as hotels, this aerodynamic performance becomes particularly significant, as it enhances structural stability and improves resistance against seasonal storms and strong wind loads.

Consequently, the four-sided pitched roof is both a climatic and structural strategy that contributes to the resilience and identity of contemporary hotel design in humid regions.



Fig. 3. Geometry and climatic function of the Kolpoosh roof.

6.2 | Visual Analysis and Identity Formation

From an urban aesthetic perspective, pitched roofs in hotel architecture play a crucial role in harmonizing the building's skyline with the surrounding topography, including nearby hills and mountainous landscapes. In the reinterpretation of this vernacular typology, the use of contemporary materials with authentic visual qualities (such as clay tiles or dark-toned shingle roofing systems) can create a striking yet balanced contrast between the lush greenery of the forest and the architectural mass of the hotel.

Furthermore, the downward extension of roof planes, which results in the formation of deep overhangs over openings, enhances the perception of shelter and protection for guests, reinforcing the psychological sense of security. In interior spatial design, exposing timber roof trusses in key public areas such as restaurants and lobbies generates a sense of vertical expansion and architectural grandeur. This approach recalls the large ceremonial halls of traditional aristocratic houses in Gilan, significantly enriching the visual and spatial experience of visitors while strengthening the building's cultural and architectural identity.

7 | Pathological Analysis of Contemporary Hotels in Gilan

Unfortunately, in recent decades, a number of buildings have emerged along the coastal and forested areas of Gilan that, through the inappropriate imitation of classical architecture (commonly referred to as "Roman-style façades") or the adoption of identity-less international styles, have created a strong visual and contextual contradiction with both the urban fabric and the natural landscape of the region. These structures, by neglecting the principle of "outward orientation," often rely on small openings and thick concrete walls, which result in moisture entrapment and increased cooling demands during the summer season.

This cultural and climatic disconnection not only diminishes the tourist's perception of being in Gilan but also accelerates the physical deterioration of buildings due to continuous exposure to high humidity and heavy rainfall. Over time, such design approaches contribute to both environmental inefficiency and a loss of architectural identity, undermining the long-term sustainability of hospitality developments in the region.

7.1 | Climatic Sustainability and Energy Reduction in Vernacular-Oriented Hotel

Sustainability in Gilan's vernacular architecture is not merely a theoretical concept but rather the result of centuries of adaptation and coexistence with local environmental conditions. In the design of the proposed hotel, the use of deep verandas (Ivan-e Amigh) functions as a thermal buffer, preventing excessive heat gain in guest rooms during the summer season. The findings of this study indicate that through the application of

this strategy, it is possible to achieve up to a 30% reduction in electricity consumption for cooling systems in hotels [10].

In addition, orienting the building in accordance with prevailing regional wind patterns (sea-to-land breezes) enables effective natural cross-ventilation. This design strategy, in which the building does not resist wind but rather harnesses it to improve indoor air quality, represents one of the most effective principles of bioclimatic architecture and should be revived in contemporary hospitality projects in northern Iran.

Traditional Iranian architecture has consistently demonstrated intelligent responses to diverse climatic conditions. Ghobadian [4] emphasizes the importance of continuing these climatic design principles in contemporary buildings. Similarly, Memarian [1], through a typological classification of outward-oriented architecture in northern regions, identifies the physical characteristics of such buildings as a key factor in achieving thermal comfort.

7.2 | The Role of Architectural Ornamentation in Reconstructing Visual Identity

In the vernacular architecture of Gilan, ornamentation is not an applied or superficial layer but is inherently embedded within the structural system of the building. Elements such as wooden orsi windows with stained glass and delicate geometric wood joinery (Gereh-Chini) not only regulate light and privacy but also generate a poetic and colorful spatial atmosphere within hotel rooms. In the proposed design approach, the application of these elements in public spaces such as lobbies and restaurants not only enhances the attraction of both domestic and international tourists but also contributes to the preservation of endangered local crafts.

Through this perspective, the hotel is transformed from a purely functional accommodation facility into a “living museum of architecture,” where every brick, timber element, and piece of glass narrates the cultural and historical identity of Gilan Province to its visitors.

7.3 | Typology of Sustainable Materials in Climatic Architecture

In line with the goals of sustainable development in the hospitality sector, the return to indigenous materials is an unavoidable necessity. The findings of this section emphasize the use of Nafar (vegetative roof covering) and Fel (local clay tiles). Due to their high thermal mass, these materials absorb solar heat during the day and release it during the cooler nights of Gilan, thereby maintaining a more balanced indoor temperature.

Moreover, the analysis of Shakib (elevated wooden columns) reveals that this structural element not only serves a load-bearing function but also facilitates vertical air circulation. In contemporary hotel design, these columns can be reinterpreted using engineered timber technologies, ensuring both structural durability and resistance to humidity-induced decay while preserving their authentic visual character. This integration of traditional knowledge and modern technology not only reduces long-term maintenance costs but also creates a distinctive architectural identity that enhances the project’s cultural and touristic value.

8 | Conclusion

This study, through an analytical examination of Gilan’s vernacular architectural patterns, concludes that the creative reinterpretation of elements such as the Telar (veranda), four-sided pitched roofs, and spatial transparency is essential for achieving climatic sustainability and strengthening architectural identity in contemporary hotel design.

The findings demonstrate that integrating the embedded wisdom of traditional architecture with contemporary design requirements not only reduces energy consumption through natural ventilation and climatic responsiveness but also enhances the lived experience of visitors by reconnecting them with local cultural authenticity. In this sense, the revival of these vernacular principles dissolves the spatial and cultural disconnection between built form and natural context, acting as a bridge between modernity and tradition.

Ultimately, attention to these principles contributes to restoring architectural identity in northern Iran while generating functional, sustainable, and context-sensitive environments. These environments achieve a balanced coexistence between guest comfort and the spirit of place in Gilan.

Authors' Contributions

All aspects of the research and manuscript preparation were carried out by the author. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

All data supporting the reported findings in this research paper are provided within the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that they do not have any conflict of interest.

Consent for Publication

The author confirms consent for the publication of this work

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