

Designing Customer Environments That Create Value

How the spaces we build — campuses, districts, workplaces — become the customer experience

THE PROVOCATION

What is the "customer environment"?

- ◆ Most students name competitors, customers, government, the economy.
- ◆ The HBR article on the Urban Knowledge Campus pushes further.
- ◆ The space where customers meet an organisation is itself the experience.



THE INSIGHT

The environment IS the experience

- ◆ The physical AND digital environment is part of the product.
- ◆ It shapes behaviour, expectations, satisfaction and loyalty.
- ◆ A simple shift — but a powerful one for MBA thinking.



THE LOGIC

From environment to advantage

Customer Environment → Customer Value → Customer Satisfaction → Competitive Advantage. Each link feeds the next: the environment you design sets the value customers perceive, which drives their satisfaction, which becomes your edge.



THE SHIFT

Yesterday's customer vs today's

- ◆ Then: good products, fair prices, good service.
- ◆ Now: convenience, speed, sustainability, wellbeing.
- ◆ Plus collaboration, community, digital integration, experiences.

8

new expectations customers now bring —
beyond product, price and service

RETHINKING "CUSTOMER"

Look inside the organisation first

- ◆ Students often answer "employees" — that's only the start.
- ◆ Internal customers: employees, managers, researchers.
- ◆ Their experience of the environment shapes value too.



THE WIDER CIRCLE

And far beyond the building

- ◆ Partners, clients, investors, suppliers.
- ◆ Startups, universities, government agencies.
- ◆ And the local community. The campus creates value for all.

8

external stakeholder groups the campus
serves — from startups to whole
communities

UAE EXAMPLE

A whole city built as an environment

- ◆ Offices, restaurants, hotels, universities, innovation centres.
- ◆ Metro, green spaces, smart mobility, events.
- ◆ Why work, visit or invest there? The environment creates value.



UAE EXAMPLE

An ecosystem, not an office park

- ◆ Customers aren't only technology companies.
- ◆ Employees, entrepreneurs, investors, universities, startups.
- ◆ The ecosystem itself drives collaboration and innovation.



UAE EXAMPLE

People come for more than banking

- ◆ Fine dining, art exhibitions, luxury retail, networking.
- ◆ Metro connectivity and walkability.
- ◆ The integrated environment is what enhances the experience.



THE EQUATION

Value is more than product + price

- ◆ Traditional: Customer Value = Product + Price.
- ◆ Modern: + Service + Experience + Environment.
- ◆ + Community + Convenience + Digital connectivity.

7

sources of modern customer value —
product is only one of them

THE COURSE FIT

It hits the syllabus head-on

- ◆ LO1 evaluate the business environment; LO2 read macro trends.
- ◆ LO3 mechanisms that drive value; LO4 continuous improvement.
- ◆ LO5 relational & multichannel marketing; LO6–7 what creates value & quality.

7/7

course learning outcomes the article maps
directly onto

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

ADNOC wants the world's best engineers

- ◆ Higher salaries — or better offices, housing, childcare?
- ◆ Green spaces, cafés, fitness centres, AI collaboration spaces?
- ◆ Students realise: the environment drives attraction, engagement, loyalty.



TAKE IT FURTHER

Three questions to open the room

- ◆ Q1 How does the campus reflect today's customer environment?
- ◆ Q2 Which UAE development best shows it — Expo City, DIC, DIFC, Masdar — and why?
- ◆ Q3 Design a new Dubai campus: what would you build in to create superior value?



THE CONCLUSION

We now compete through environments

- ◆ Firms no longer compete on products or services alone.
- ◆ University, HQ, retail or innovation district — the environment shapes loyalty.
- ◆ Design the environment, and you design the competitive advantage.



WE COMPETE THROUGH ENVIRONMENTS

In today's economy, organizations no longer compete only through products or services — they compete through the environments they create. Design the environment, and you design the experience, the relationship, and the loyalty.

Dr. Aftab Ahmad