

A Human-Centric Strategy for Malls

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In the ever-evolving world of retail and entertainment, malls are no longer just places to shop—they're spaces where people connect, engage, and create memories. To truly transform the visitor experience, the key lies in adopting a **human-centric approach** that prioritizes people's needs, emotions, and values across all aspects of the mall.

This strategy draws inspiration from the **Digital Human System**, which emphasizes putting humans at the center of innovation and design. By applying the principles of this system to malls, we aim to create spaces that cater not only to visitors' practical needs but also to their emotional and cultural experiences.

At its core, this approach focuses on two critical experiences within the mall:

1. The **mall experience** itself: This encompasses everything outside of retail, such as the ambiance, services, and unique attractions that make the mall a destination in its own right.
2. The **retail experience**: This involves enhancing interactions with individual stores, restaurants, and other tenants, ensuring a seamless, enjoyable shopping and dining journey.

The human-centric approach unites these two experiences, ensuring that every aspect of the mall is designed to serve the well-being, comfort, and engagement of its visitors.

Focusing on Two Key Experiences

To build a truly exceptional mall, we must focus on two distinct experiences, each with its own purpose and value:

1. The Mall Experience Itself

The mall should stand out as a destination, independent of the brands it hosts. This means creating attractions, services, and spaces that engage visitors beyond shopping.

From interactive installations to thematic seasonal events, the mall should offer activities that make people want to visit, whether they're buying something or simply enjoying the atmosphere. Rest areas, family-friendly zones, and unique architectural features also play a significant role in shaping this experience.

2. The Retail Experience

While the mall experience provides the framework, the retail experience focuses on the individual interactions visitors have with stores and restaurants. The layout, accessibility, and integration of retail spaces can enhance how visitors navigate and interact with brands. Supporting tenants with tools and services that make shopping and dining more convenient and enjoyable ensures the retail experience remains a vital part of the overall strategy.

Both of these experiences should be guided by the human-centric approach, ensuring that every decision is made with the visitor's needs, emotions, and values in mind.

Establishing a Customer Journey Experience Division

To deliver exceptional experiences, malls need a dedicated team responsible for understanding, designing, and optimizing the **customer journey experience**.

This division will ensure that every step of a visitor's interaction with the mall is intentional, seamless, and impactful, focusing on both the big picture and the finer details.

Mission of the Customer Journey Experience Division

This division's mission is to map, manage, and enhance the **main customer journey experience**, which represents the visitor's overall journey with the mall, from their initial interaction (e.g., marketing or digital touchpoints) to their departure.

The main journey is composed of multiple **specific customer journey experiences**, such as parking, dining, shopping, and digital interactions.

By carefully studying each of these journeys, the division ensures that every touchpoint reflects the mall's human-centric approach.

Responsibilities of the Division

1. Define the Main and Specific Customer Journeys:

- The **main customer journey experience** is the big-picture view of the visitor's entire engagement with the mall. It spans every interaction, from initial contact to leaving the mall and potentially engaging with post-visit services.
- The **specific customer journey experiences** are the individual components that make up the main journey. These could include:
 - Parking experience
 - Navigation experience (within the mall and online)
 - Dining experience
 - Retail shopping experience
 - Customer service experience (e.g., call centers, concierge)

2. Map Processes and Workflows:

- Develop detailed customer journey maps that outline every step of the main and specific experiences.
- Embed the human-centric approach into each step, ensuring every interaction is meaningful, efficient, and satisfying.

3. Collaborate Across Departments:

- Work closely with teams such as security, parking management, cleaning, customer service, marketing, and digital teams to align efforts and create seamless experiences.
- Integrate feedback and ideas from all departments to enrich the journey design.

4. Gather Feedback and Conduct Research:

- Use surveys, focus groups, and live testing to understand customer needs, behaviors, and pain points.
- Engage a diverse audience, including families, tourists, frequent shoppers, and casual visitors, to ensure all perspectives are represented.

5. Establish KPIs and Metrics:

- Attach clear performance indicators to each specific journey and the main journey as a whole.
- Use these metrics to evaluate success and identify areas for continuous improvement.

6. Test and Refine Journeys:

- Conduct live testing by inviting customers to experience the mall and provide feedback.
- Prototype new ideas and use real-world insights to optimize every journey.

Examples of Journeys

- **Main Customer Journey Experience:**

This represents the complete customer interaction with the mall, from discovering it through marketing channels, entering the premises, experiencing various activities, and eventually leaving (or following up with post-visit services).

- **Specific Customer Journey Experiences:**

The main journey is made up of smaller, focused experiences, such as:

- **Parking Journey:** From arriving at the mall, finding a parking spot, and navigating to the entrance.
- **Retail Journey:** Shopping in a store, interacting with sales staff, and checking out.
- **Dining Journey:** Locating a restaurant, ordering food, and enjoying the ambiance.
- **Digital Journey:** Using the mall's website, app, or digital kiosks for navigation or booking.
- **Customer Service Journey:** Engaging with call centers, concierge desks, or help booths.

Why This Division is Essential

By establishing a dedicated **Customer Journey Experience Division**, the mall ensures that every experience—big or small—is intentionally designed, human-centric, and seamlessly connected. This approach enables the mall to stand out as more than just a retail destination, transforming it into a place where visitors feel valued and engaged at every step.

How to Establish a Customer Journey Experience Division

Building a **Customer Journey Experience Division** is a strategic decision that requires thoughtful planning, clear objectives, and alignment with the mall's overall goals.

The foundation of a successful Customer Journey Experience Division lies in understanding the mall's unique goals and customer priorities. Whether hiring experts or starting with a virtual team, the ultimate focus should be on designing and optimizing customer journeys that resonate with the mall's target audience and align with its broader vision.

There are two main approaches to starting such a team: hiring dedicated experts or forming a virtual team as an initial step.

1.Hire Customer Journey Experts (Preferred Strategy):

Bringing in experienced professionals with expertise in customer experience, journey mapping, and data-driven strategies is the ideal approach. These experts can:

- Design the framework for the division.
- Introduce best practices and proven methodologies.
- Conduct in-depth customer research and build workflows tailored to the mall's needs.
- Train internal teams to sustain and grow the division over time.

2.Create a Virtual Team as a Starting Point:

If resources are limited, the mall can assemble a cross-functional virtual team by involving members from different departments. This team can work collaboratively to:

- Identify key customer touchpoints.
- Develop initial customer journey maps.
- Collect and analyze feedback to understand customer needs.
- Test and refine processes before transitioning to a full-fledged division.

Aligning with the Mall's Goals and Target Segments

The success of the division depends heavily on the mall's clarity about its goals and target customer segments. The mall's management must take a realistic and honest approach when defining these priorities.

- **Identify Target Customers:**

The mall cannot cater equally to all customer groups. It needs to prioritize its focus areas based on the customers it most wants to attract. For example:

- Families seeking convenience and entertainment.
- Teenagers or Generation Z looking for trendy, interactive experiences.
- Luxury buyers seeking premium shopping and exclusivity.

- **Prioritize Customer Segments:**

If the mall chooses to target multiple segments, it should establish a clear hierarchy of priorities, ensuring

the most critical segments receive focused attention first. This prioritization will guide the design of customer journeys and the allocation of resources.

The Role of Experts in Establishing the Division

Experts play a crucial role in laying the foundation for a successful Customer Journey Experience Division. Their responsibilities include:

- **Conducting Comprehensive Research:**
Experts can gather and analyze data on customer behavior, preferences, and pain points to provide actionable insights.
- **Building Frameworks and Workflows:**
They design detailed customer journey maps, processes, and workflows that align with the mall's objectives and target segments.
- **Training and Knowledge Transfer:**
Experts can equip internal teams with the skills, tools, and best practices needed to sustain the division and adapt to future changes.
- **Integrating Technology and Data:**
Leverage digital tools and analytics platforms to track customer interactions, collect feedback, and continuously improve the customer journey.

Starting Small, Thinking Big

For malls with limited resources, starting with a virtual team while hiring external consultants or experts on a project basis can be a cost-effective strategy. This hybrid approach allows the mall to build a foundation and test ideas while gradually transitioning to a dedicated team as the division evolves.

Leveraging Generative AI to Enhance Customer Journey Development

Building and managing a **Customer Journey Experience Division** is a complex process, requiring research, collaboration, and detailed workflows. Generative AI can be a transformative tool in this process, offering support across multiple areas to simplify, optimize, and innovate the customer journey.

Generative AI isn't just a supporting tool; it's a strategic partner in revolutionizing customer journey development. From simplifying research and mapping workflows to simulating experiences and integrating real-time feedback, AI ensures malls can build customer journeys that are efficient, innovative, and aligned with visitor expectations. By leveraging these capabilities, malls can create experiences that stand out, resonate with their target audience, and set new standards in the industry.

However, honestly speaking this area still need to integrate multi components or even multi tools of the available generic tools or AI assistant like CoPilot and ChatGPT and additional specific tools , which is not easy to do.

The recommendation is to depend first on the experts to build the division and identify those main journeys and specific journeys without depending heavily on the generative AI. !!!!

How Generative AI Can Revolutionize Customer Journey Development

1. **Streamline Market Research:**

Generative AI can analyze extensive data from customer surveys, market trends, and industry reports, providing instant insights. It can summarize findings, generate reports, and highlight areas of opportunity, saving time and resources.

2. **Derive Meaningful Conclusions:**

AI tools can process feedback from various sources, identify patterns, and offer actionable conclusions. For example, it can pinpoint common customer pain points or suggest trends in visitor behavior to inform journey design.

3. **Simulate Diverse Customer Experiences:**

AI can create simulations for different customer personas, such as families, luxury shoppers, or Generation Z visitors. These simulations help visualize their interactions across the mall, identifying potential bottlenecks or gaps in the journey.

4. **Automate Customer Journey Mapping:**

Generative AI can design detailed customer journey workflows based on input data. By automating the mapping process, it provides a structured framework that teams can refine and implement efficiently.

5. **Consolidate Feedback Across Stakeholders:**

By integrating inputs from multiple teams, such as marketing, operations, and customer service, AI ensures that the customer journey reflects diverse perspectives. It can aggregate and analyze feedback, providing unified insights for decision-making.

6. **Define and Optimize KPIs:**

Generative AI can suggest Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tailored to the mall's goals. For example, it might recommend metrics for parking convenience, customer satisfaction, or digital channel engagement, ensuring measurable success.

7. Create Personalized Customer Interactions:

AI can enhance customer engagement through tailored recommendations and content. For instance, it could suggest promotions, dining options, or events based on individual visitor preferences, creating a more personalized experience.

8. Enhance Predictive Capabilities:

Generative AI can forecast future customer trends and behaviors, enabling the mall to proactively design experiences and workflows that align with anticipated needs.

9. Run Scenario Testing and Risk Analysis:

AI can simulate and evaluate various "what-if" scenarios, such as layout changes, new service introductions, or promotional strategies. This helps the team assess risks and optimize decisions before implementation.

10. Facilitate Real-Time Adjustments:

Generative AI can provide dynamic, real-time suggestions based on live data. For instance, it could recommend reallocating resources to manage peak-hour parking congestion or adjusting digital messaging during high traffic times.

11. Create Training Material and Support:

AI can generate training resources for internal teams, ensuring that staff across all departments understand the customer journey goals and workflows. It can also provide live support to teams during the implementation phase.

12. Support Cross-Team Collaboration:

Generative AI can act as a central tool for collaboration, integrating input from multiple stakeholders and teams. It ensures alignment across all departments, reducing silos and improving workflow consistency.

13. Foster Innovation Through Insights:

AI tools can suggest innovative solutions based on data trends and comparisons with industry benchmarks. For example, it might recommend experiential zones, interactive installations, or new digital services to enhance the mall's appeal.

14. Continuous Learning and Improvement:

Generative AI learns from new data and feedback over time, enabling the customer journey division to adapt and evolve as customer expectations change. It ensures that processes remain fresh, relevant, and effective.