# Project Management Role in Development and Delivery of Experiential Retail Urban Infrastructure in Riyadh's Mixed-Use Master Plans [1]

**Habib Fayadh**

## Abstract

This paper investigates the transformation of retail from a purely commercial function to a form of urban infrastructure within Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. It demonstrates that in Riyadh's new generation of giga-projects, including Diriyah, Qiddiya, King Salman Park, and the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD), retail is strategically deployed as soft infrastructure to achieve economic goals: fostering social cohesion, mediating extreme climate, enhancing pedestrian mobility, and constructing a new national-cultural identity. Through a multi-method analysis synthesizing urban theory, spatial policy, experience design (XD) frameworks, project management (PM) methodologies, and document analysis of masterplans and sustainability reports, this research argues that Riyadh represents a distinct model of the "experiential turn." Findings reveal retail's dual role in climate adaptation and cultural branding but also highlight delivery challenges. The paper foregrounds the critical role of hybrid PM methodologies in enabling these outcomes and proposes a new **Holistic Experiential Retail Infrastructure Model (HERIM)**. Riyadh's master-planned retail ecosystems are not merely market responses but instruments executing a national urban vision, offering a potent case study of retail's role in 21st-century city-making within rapid-development contexts.

***Keywords:*** *Experiential Retail, Urban Infrastructure, Vision 2030, Riyadh, Mixed-Use Development, Public Space, Customer Experience (CX) Design, Mega-Projects, Soft Infrastructure, Retail Resilience, Project Management Methodologies,*

## 1. Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a global "experiential turn" in retail, a strategic move from just a transactional space to curated destination in response to e-commerce and shifting consumer desires for meaning and community (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Concurrently, urban scholarship has begun to reconceptualize retail environments as "soft" or "social" infrastructure—spaces that

[1] How to cite this paper: Fayadh, H. (2026). Project Management Role in Development and Delivery of Experiential Retail Urban Infrastructure in Riyadh's Mixed-Use Master Plans; *PM World Journal*, Vol. XV, Issue VI, June.

perform essential civic functions beyond commerce, facilitating interaction, identity formation, and urban vitality (Kärrholm, 2018).

In Riyadh, these global trends converge with unprecedented force and specificity under Vision 2030, the nation's transformative socio-economic blueprint launched in 2016 to diversify the economy, reduce oil dependency, and enhance quality of life (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). Vision 2030 explicitly links urban form to goals of economic diversification, tourism growth, and enhanced livability, catalyzing an array of multi-billion-dollar "giga-projects" that integrate retail as a core component (Zaidan & Abulibdeh, 2021). This paper contends that within these projects—Diriyah, Qiddiya, King Salman Park, KAFD, The Avenues, and Jawharat Alriyadh—retail is engineered as primary urban infrastructure. It serves as a spatial tool for: (1) creating walkable, climate-resilient public realms in a car-dependent metropolis; (2) synthesizing heritage narratives with futuristic ambitions; (3) attracting domestic and international tourism; (4) enhancing the national economic growth; and (5) generating the "vibrant society" central to the national vision.

This research addresses a persistent gap in the literature, which often frames Gulf urbanism as exceptional or spectacular (Elsheshtawy, 2019), by offering a systematic, theoretically grounded analysis of retail-led urban production in Riyadh. Drawing on sources such as The Architectural Newspaper's (2026) analysis of Diriyah and recent ESG reports, it poses the following questions: How is retail conceptualized, planned, and designed to function as infrastructure? What are the implications for public space, social interaction, and long-term urban resilience?

This research is structured in the following manner: First, an expanded and theoretically deepened literature review synthesizes classic urban retail theory with contemporary frameworks of infrastructure, experience design, retail resilience, territorialisation, and Saudi-specific mega-project dynamics. Second, the methodology and development frameworks section details the analytical core. Third, case studies provide empirical illustration, followed by comparative analysis and a critical discussion of challenges. The conclusion reflects Riyadh as a paradigmatic case for global urban retail studies.

Furthermore, this paper specifically examines how sophisticated project management (PM) methodologies and techniques enable the successful delivery of experiential retail as urban infrastructure. It is structured as follows: (2) expanded literature review; (3) methodology; (4) PM methodologies; (5) CX design toolkit; (6) case studies; (7) proposed HERIM model; (8) discussion; and (9) conclusion.

## 2. Literature Review: From Central Place to Curated Experience

Traditional urban geography positioned retail within hierarchical models, as in Christaller's (1933) Central Place Theory, where locations optimize market thresholds and accessibility. Globalization, suburbanization, and digital disruption have eroded this predictability, rendering retail location a multifaceted outcome of spatial patterns, policy interventions, consumer behavior, and institutional forces (Luo & Rose, 2025; Efeoglu et al., 2025). Systematic reviews underscore retail's contributions to urban resilience amid disruptions, including pandemics and e-commerce shifts, emphasizing adaptability in fragmented urban systems where retail clusters enhance vitality or exacerbate socio-spatial divides (Guimarães, 2021; Efeoglu et al., 2025).

Urban form acts as both structural basis and connective thread, linking retail landscapes to governance, consumer behavior, cultural diversity, resilience, environmental outcomes, and social inclusion (Efeoglu et al., 2025). In the Gulf, retail evolution aligns with post-oil diversification, where mega-projects embed commerce in mixed-use fabrics to boost competitiveness and economic resilience (Zaidan & Abulibdeh, 2021; Wiedmann et al., 2016). Vision 2030 accelerates this trajectory, projecting substantial retail market growth driven by urbanization, tourism, and experiential formats (IMARC Group, 2025; S&P Global, 2025). Riyadh's retail dominance reflects policy-driven agglomeration in giga-projects, where retail not only responds to demand but actively shapes urban economic structures and spatial morphologies (Ken Research, 2026).

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) "Experience Economy" shifted value creation from goods/services to staged, memorable events, evolving into experiential retail where physical stores become narrative stages for brand immersion, emotional engagement, and "aha" moments through multisensory and domain-distance innovations (Alexander & Cano, 2020; Susilo et al., 2025; Lee & Kim, 2025). Critiques highlight commodification risks, performative consumption, and potential alienation in curated environments (Carù & Cova, 2003; Murtola & Smith, 2022).

CX Design operationalizes this through seamless touchpoints, data-driven personalization, and metrics like dwell time and sentiment (Renascence, 2024; Grewal et al., 2009). In Gulf contexts, experiential retail supports tourism and youth demographics, blending global brands with local cultural adaptations to create purpose-driven, immersive experiences that redefine consumption landscapes (Alhumaid & Alotaibi, 2025; PwC, 2025). Mega-projects like Diriyah exemplify this, positioning retail as a bridge between heritage authenticity and modern luxury consumption within broader urban spectacle (The Architectural Newspaper, 2026; Alraouf, 2008).

Kärrholm (2018) reframes retail as soft infrastructure through territorialisation processes, where retail actively produces, curates, maintains, and inscribes public space. Retailisation extends beyond commerce to territorial control, dynamic contestation, and the reconfiguration of public

domains into consumption-oriented territories, influencing everyday territorial productions and the materialities of urban life (Kärrholm, 2018). This perspective is vital for arid environments, where retail mitigates extreme climate via controlled microclimates, enabling public life, mobility, and social interaction (Lukač et al., 2023).

Retail resilience frameworks analyze adaptive capacities in town centers and urban systems, linking performance to vulnerability, sustainability, and stakeholder orchestration (Guimarães, 2021; Jakobsson et al., 2022; Barata-Salgueiro & Guimarães, 2020). In transit-oriented developments, retail integrates with public transport to foster 15-minute cities and livability (Moreno, 2019; Al-Thani et al., 2025).

Gulf urbanism features rapid mega-projects mediated by international consultancies, often prioritizing spectacle and consumption landscapes that juxtapose hyper-modern malls with hidden everyday spaces (Boussaa, 2016; Alraouf, 2008, 2025). Retail in Dubai and Riyadh exemplifies "landscapes of consumption," where mega-developments create branded, experiential hubs blending heritage restoration with futuristic consumption to support tourism and national identity (Alraouf, 2008; Research and Markets, 2025; PwC, 2025). Vision 2030 positions retail as a diversification tool, with giga-projects producing territorialised consumption territories that reinforce urban branding (Wiedmann et al., 2016).

## 3. Methodology & Development Frameworks: Building the Experiential City

This study employs a multi-method approach: thematic content analysis of masterplans, promotional materials, and sustainability reports (e.g., Diriyah Company, 2024; The Architectural Newspaper, 2026); synthesis of urban theory, territorialisation, and resilience frameworks; and secondary data on metrics and emissions. Coding targeted themes like "climate adaptation," "territorialisation," and "resilience".

The big new developments in Riyadh are built using detailed master plans that deliberately mix shops and retail spaces together with other uses — such as homes, offices, hotels, parks, and cultural venues. Putting all these functions close together creates useful connections and makes the whole area feel unified and well-organized (for example, as seen in the King Abdullah Financial District plans).

Within these large master plans, developers create clearly themed zones or “precincts” (small districts with their own character). Each zone tells its own story and offers a distinct experience, using customer experience (CX) storytelling techniques to make the place more memorable and emotionally engaging. At the same time, these themed areas help give each part of the city its own

special identity and sense of place (examples include Diriyah's heritage zones and Qiddiya's entertainment districts; see Diriyah Co., MAS, Renascence 2024, and Kärrholm 2018).

Because these projects are so huge, they are built in stages (phased rollouts). Developers also test new ideas through temporary pop-ups, events, and trial activations. This step-by-step and experimental approach allows them to quickly learn what works, make improvements, and build more flexible and adaptable city districts over time (The Storefront, 2024; Guimarães, 2021).

## 4. The Role of Project Management Methodologies and Techniques in Developing and Delivering Experiential Retail Properties

A deep analysis of Riyadh's giga-projects reveals that their success in integrating experiential retail as urban infrastructure hinges not only on design and policy but also on sophisticated project management (PM) methodologies and techniques. These projects, characterized by their immense scale (e.g., Diriyah's 3,450 acres and Qiddiya's 366 sq km), multi-billion-dollar budgets (e.g., Diriyah's $63 billion and Qiddiya's $40 billion), and multifaceted objectives aligning with Vision 2030, face unique challenges such as cost overruns, delays, supply chain disruptions, and the need for seamless integration of heritage, sustainability, and modern experiential elements. Drawing from industry reports (e.g., MEED Projects, 2025; Mace, 2025; AWS, 2025) and case-specific updates (Diriyah Company, 2026; Qiddiya Investment Company, 2026), this section examines the PM approaches employed, their application to experiential retail delivery, and associated tools, while addressing gaps in resilience, equity, and sustainability. Recent studies emphasize digital transformation in these projects, including 4D/5D Building Information Modeling (BIM), AI-based scheduling, and cloud-based systems, which revolutionize planning and execution to drive Vision 2030's goals. Furthermore, sustainable PM techniques such as green procurement, stakeholder engagement, and lifecycle cost optimization are increasingly integrated to mitigate environmental impacts in arid contexts.

### Conceptual Overview of PM in Experiential Retail Contexts

Experiential retail properties in Riyadh's giga-projects represent a convergence of construction, technology, and user-centric design, requiring PM frameworks that balance predictability with flexibility. Conceptually, PM here acts as a "nervous system" for urban transformation: it coordinates diverse stakeholders (e.g., Public Investment Fund (PIF) oversight, international consultancies, and local contractors) while embedding resilience against disruptions like the 71% drop in large-scale contracts from 2024 to 2025. For illustration, consider the hybrid nature of these projects—fixed infrastructure (e.g., passive cooling systems in Diriyah) demands structured planning, while adaptive elements (e.g., IoT-driven personalization in Qiddiya) benefit from iterative refinement. This duality is visualized in the following Venn diagram, which highlights the overlap between traditional and agile

approaches, fostering efficiency in mega-scale developments.

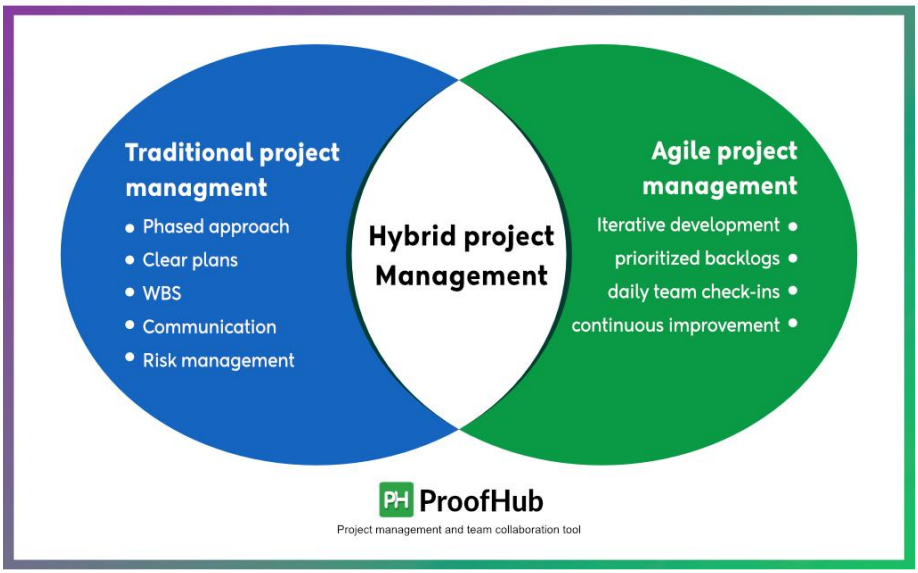


**Figure 1:** Hybrid Project Management

Prospectively, PM promotes sustainability through smart tracking and predictive analytics, reshaping decision-making across Saudi projects.

## Key Project Management Methodologies

Riyadh's giga-projects predominantly adopt hybrid PM methodologies, blending traditional structured approaches with agile elements to accommodate the rigid timelines of infrastructure development and the iterative nature of experiential design. This hybridity is essential for projects like these, where fixed-scope elements (e.g., foundational construction) coexist with adaptive features (e.g., CX personalization via IoT). Hybrid models allow for resilient infrastructure planning, enabling adjustments to uncertainties like contractor shortages or supply chain issues prevalent in 2025-2026. Below, each methodology is detailed with pros, cons, and conceptual applications to experiential retail.

1. **Waterfall Methodology**: This linear, sequential approach is ideal for predictable phases in large-scale infrastructure, such as site preparation, master planning, and construction. In King Salman Park, Waterfall ensures linear progression from environmental assessments to planting 1 million trees, with milestones tied to sustainability reports (King Salman Park Foundation, 2026). Conceptually, it resembles a cascading waterfall, where each phase

(e.g., requirements gathering to deployment) must complete before the next, ensuring compliance with LEED certifications in projects like Jawharat Alriyadh. **Pros**: Clear documentation, easy budgeting, and risk minimization through upfront planning. **Cons**: Rigidity exacerbates delays, as seen in Qiddiya's Speed Park (39% complete in 2026; Qiddiya Investment Company, 2026). In experiential retail, this can hinder quick adaptations to user feedback on immersive elements. **Application Illustration**: For Diriyah's heritage zones, Waterfall structures the sequential build of mudbrick architecture before integrating sensory features, but hybrids with agile for post-construction tweaks.

2. **Agile and Scrum**: These iterative methods are applied to flexible components like themed precincts and pop-up activations. Agile allows iterative testing of experiential retail features, such as sensory engagement in Diriyah's Najdi-style districts, enabling rapid feedback loops from pilot events (Diriyah Company, 2026). Scrum teams, often cross-functional (including architects, CX designers, and stakeholders), facilitate sprints for personalization tech integration, reducing time-to-market for immersive narratives. In Qiddiya, Scrum sprints optimize entertainment districts, incorporating AI for real-time adjustments. **Pros**: High adaptability, stakeholder involvement, and faster delivery of value increments. **Cons**: Requires mature teams; scope creep can occur without strong governance. **Application Illustration**: Visualize Agile as a series of loops: plan, build, test, review—perfect for refining CX in pop-ups, where initial prototypes (e.g., event plazas) evolve based on dwell time metrics.researchgate.net

3. **PRINCE2 (Projects IN Controlled Environments)**: Favored for its emphasis on governance and risk management in PPP models. In KAFD, PRINCE2 structures stage-gate reviews for LEED Platinum certification, ensuring alignment with Vision 2030's financial hub goals (KAFD, 2026). It incorporates business justification at each stage, mitigating risks like labor . **Pros**: Strong focus on benefits realization and controlled changes. **Cons**: Bureaucratic overhead in fast-paced environments. **Application Illustration**: PRINCE2's seven principles (e.g., continued business justification) ensure experiential retail aligns with cultural branding, with gates for equity checks in mixed-use developments.

4. **PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge)**: Provides a comprehensive framework for scope, time, cost, quality, and stakeholder management. Project Management Offices

(PMOs), as in King Salman Park (Parsons, 2026), use PMBOK for portfolio oversight, integrating metrics like emissions reduction (15% in Diriyah from 2024-2026). **Pros**: Holistic coverage of knowledge areas; scalable to giga-projects. **Cons**: Can be overly prescriptive without customization. **Application Illustration**: PMBOK's process groups (initiating to closing) guide the lifecycle, with tools like earned value management tracking ROI on tourism-focused retail.

5. **Lean Project Management**: Emphasizes waste reduction and value maximization, critical in arid climates for resource efficiency. Lean techniques, such as value stream mapping, optimize supply chains for materials like mudbrick in Diriyah, aligning with circular economy mandates (P&S Intelligence, 2025). In sustainable contexts, Lean integrates green procurement to minimize environmental waste. **Pros**: Efficiency gains, cost savings (e.g., 4-13% reductions via collaborative approaches; Mace, 2025). **Cons**: May overlook long-term innovation if too focused on elimination. **Application Illustration**: Lean visualizes processes as streams, eliminating non-value steps in retail precinct integration, such as redundant approvals in phased rollouts.researchgate.net

6. **Critical Path Method (CPM) and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT)**: For scheduling complex interdependencies, e.g., coordinating retail precincts with transport in transit-oriented developments (Al-Thani et al., 2025). PERT's probabilistic estimates handle uncertainties like water scarcity. **Pros**: Identifies bottlenecks; supports Monte Carlo simulations for risk forecasting. **Cons**: Data-intensive; assumes accurate estimates. **Application Illustration**: CPM charts the longest path (e.g., from planning to activation), ensuring timely delivery of experiential features amid delays.

**Table 1:** Comparison of PM Methodologies in Riyadh's Giga-Projects

| Methodology | Key Strengths | Key Weaknesses | Best Suited For | Example in Projects |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Waterfall | Predictability, documentation | Inflexibility | Infrastructure phases | King Salman Park greening |
| Agile/Scrum | Adaptability, feedback loops | Scope creep | Experiential design iterations | Qiddiya personalization |
| PRINCE2 | Governance, risk control | Bureaucracy | PPP governance | KAFD certifications |
| PMBOK | Comprehensive oversight | Prescriptive | Portfolio management | Diriyah emissions tracking |
| Lean | Efficiency, waste reduction | Short-term focus | Resource optimization | Diriyah supply chains |
| CPM/PERT | Scheduling precision | Data dependency | Interdependency planning | Transit-retail coordination |

## 5. The CX Design Toolkit: Principles for Experiential Retail

The on-the-ground success of Riyadh's retail districts hinges on the strategic implementation of Customer Experience (CX) design principles, which transform retail spaces from mere points-of-sale into dynamic, immersive stages for consumer engagement and urban interaction (Renascence, 2024; Grewal et al., 2009). Rooted in the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), CX design treats the entire customer journey as a cohesive, emotionally resonant narrative, optimizing every touchpoint to foster loyalty, dwell time, and brand affinity. In the context of Riyadh's giga-projects, CX principles extend beyond individual stores to the territorialisation of public space, curating urban environments that blend transactional efficiency with experiential depth, while addressing arid climate challenges and cultural sensitivities (Kärrholm, 2018; Alhumaid & Alotaibi, 2025).

This toolkit draws on human-centered design, emphasizing inclusivity, sensory engagement, and intuitive flow to create safe, accessible, and inviting spaces (Randstad Digital, 2025). The following subsections detail core principles, expanded with theoretical backing, Riyadh-specific applications, metrics for evaluation, and critical reflections. These principles are not isolated but interlinked, forming a holistic framework for retail-as-infrastructure that aligns with Vision 2030's "vibrant society" goals.

| Principle | Core Elements | Riyadh Application Example | Theoretical Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Seamlessness & Omnichannel | Frictionless digital-physical fusion | Jawharat Alriyadh's Cenomi Plus app | Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) |
| Narrative & Immersion | Storytelling through space/materiality | Diriyah's Najdi heritage evocation | Territorialisation (Kärrholm, 2018) |
| Community & Social Connection | Social condensers for interaction | Diriyah Square food halls/events | Soft Infrastructure (Kärrholm, 2018) |
| Data-Driven Personalization | Proactive adaptation via IoT/analytics | Qiddiya's beacon-optimized flows | Retail Resilience (Guimarães, 2021) |
| Sensory Engagement | Multisensory appeals (sight, sound, touch, scent, taste) | KAFD's aromatic cafes/textured facades | Multisensory Design (Susilo et al., 2025) |
| Inclusivity & Accessibility | Human-centered design for diverse users | King Salman Park universal features | Inclusive Retail (Randstad Digital, 2025) |
| Intuitive Flow & Navigation | Logical pathways guiding journeys | The Avenues' themed phases | Store Experience Design (Ripple, 2023) |

**Table 2:** CX Design Principles Applied to Riyadh's Experiential Retail Infrastructure

## 5.1 Seamlessness and Omnichannel Integration

The physical and digital sides of shopping need to work together seamlessly to create a smooth, hassle-free customer experience. This includes features like Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store (BOPIS), loyalty programs that connect online and in-store rewards, and mobile apps that provide easy navigation, personalized offers, and other helpful tools (Cenomi Centers, n.d.; Extensiv, 2024).

This approach forms the core foundation of modern retail, treating shopping as a convenient infrastructure service. It reduces the mental effort customers need to shop (lowering cognitive load) and allows the experience to flow freely between online and physical spaces without strict boundaries (Kärrholm, 2018).

In Riyadh, the Cenomi Plus app from Jawharat Alriyadh (a Cenomi Centers mall) is a strong real-world example. The app links online browsing and discovery with in-store visits—offering interactive maps, exclusive deals, events info, and rewards—helping these malls stay competitive against pure e-commerce players (Guimarães, 2021).

On a broader level, this strategy fits the Experience Economy framework, which has evolved from delivering basic services to creating meaningful, transformative customer experiences. Omnichannel approaches build unified, consistent brand worlds that feel connected across all touchpoints (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Key performance indicators for success include higher conversion rates (turning browsers into buyers) and strong user engagement with the app (Zuboff, 2019; Elsheshtawy, 2019). In essence, blending online and offline channels smoothly makes shopping easier and more enjoyable, while helping traditional malls adapt and thrive in a digital-first world.

## 5.2 Narrative and Immersive Storytelling

Space must tell a compelling story, evoking emotional connections through architecture, materiality, and thematic elements (Renascence, 2024; NORR, 2024). In Diriyah, mudbrick facades and Najdi detailing immerse visitors in historical authenticity, while Qiddiya's districts plunge them into cinematic genres, driving loyalty and dwell time (Diriyah Co., n.d.; MAS, n.d.). This principle draws on territorialisation, where retail inscribes cultural narratives onto urban space, fostering identity-building in Vision 2030's nationalist framework (Kärrholm, 2018; Alraouf, 2025). Enhanced by human-centered design, narratives align brand messages with consumer values, creating "aha" moments (Lee & Kim, 2025). Evaluation uses sentiment analysis and repeats visits (Carù & Cova, 2003). In Riyadh's context, this balances global spectacle with local authenticity.

## 5.3 Community and Social Connection as a Service

Retail spaces in Saudi Arabia are intentionally designed to act as social condensers—places that bring people together and build community. Features like food halls, event plazas, and workshops help meet the growing need for lively, inclusive public spaces (Ripple, 2023).

A great example is the Time Out Market in Diriyah Square, which transforms retail areas into welcoming spots for social interaction and a real sense of belonging (Diriyah Co., n.d.).

From a theoretical perspective, this approach combines "soft infrastructure" (such as community-focused amenities) with ideas of urban resilience. Strong social ties and connections help cities better withstand stresses and challenges (Kärrholm, 2018; Guimarães, 2021).

These designs also emphasize inclusive principles, taking into account differences in age, gender, ability, and other factors to ensure the spaces feel safe and accessible to everyone (Randstad Digital, 2025).

Success can be measured using tools like social mix indices (which track how diverse groups use space) and event attendance figures.

### 5.4 Data-Driven Personalization and Adaptation

Experiential design takes a forward-thinking, proactive approach. It uses technologies like IoT sensors, beacons, and data analytics to create personalized experiences, improve crowd movement, and make real-time adjustments (Medium UX Case Study, 2023; Renascence, 2024).

In Qiddiya, this means visitors can follow customized, immersive routes through the destination. These tailored paths boost both operational efficiency and overall enjoyment.

This connects directly to building retail resilience: by collecting and analyzing user data in ongoing feedback loops, spaces can quickly adapt to changing consumer preferences and unexpected disruptions (Guimarães, 2021).

To address this, performance should be measured not just by metrics like personalization conversion rates (how effectively tailored offers turn into actions), but also through regular equity audits. These checks help guarantee that the design remains inclusive and accessible to Riyadh's diverse population.

### 5.5 Sensory Engagement and Multisensory Design

Appealing to all five senses—sight, sound, touch, scent, and taste—helps create deep, unforgettable experiences that go far beyond just visual appeal (Susilo et al., 2025; NORR, 2024).

In the "Wadi" plaza at KAFD (King Abdullah Financial District) in Riyadh, this approach comes to life through elements like aromatic cafes (engaging smell and taste), varied textured surfaces (touch), and carefully curated ambient sounds. These features help moderate the city's intense heat and climate, encouraging people to stay longer and engage more fully with space.

## 6. Case Studies: Empirical Illustrations of Retail as Infrastructure

This section examines Riyadh's key projects as exemplary experiential retail infrastructure, drawing on master plans, promotional materials, sustainability reports, and 2026 updates (Diriyah Company, 2026; Qiddiya Investment Company, 2026; King Salman Park Foundation, 2026; KAFD, 2026; Mabanee, 2026; Cenomi Centers, 2026). Each case highlights CX applications, urban functions, and theoretical links, with metrics reflecting progress as of early 2026.

| Project | Typology | Key CX Features | Urban Function | Climate-Territorial-Resilience | Scale/Metrics (2026) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Diriyah | Cultural-Heritage Retail | Narrative Immersion, Sensory Engagement | Cultural tourism, identity formation | Passive cooling; heritage territorialisation; authenticity resilience | 566,000 sqm retail; Phase 1 operational; $5B contracts awarded; 390,657 tCO2e emissions (reduced 15% from 2024); Contemporary Art Biennale 2026 |
| Qiddiya | Entertainment-Integrated Retail | Personalization, Immersion | Tourism, youth engagement | Mechanical control; spectacle territory; tech adaptability | 500,000 sqm retail; Six Flags 100% complete; Aquarabia 99% (opens March 2026); Golf 91%; Speed Park 39%; 17M visitors projected |
| King Salman Park | Park-Integrated Retail | Convenience, Sensory | Social wellbeing, green infrastructure | Microclimate shading; public territorial extension; green resilience | 500,000 sqm retail; 16.6 sq km; First phase opens 2026; 1M trees; $1B mixed-use development; RIBA award 2025 |
| KAFD | Mixed-Use Core Retail | Seamless Flow, Service | 24/7 district, live-work | High-tech cooling; metabolic integration; functional resilience | 130,000 sqm retail; LEED Platinum; W Riyadh opens May 2026; 1,000 new apartments; Central financial hub |
| The Avenues | Evolved Destination Mall | Community, Omnichannel | Regional anchor, lifestyle | Enclosed control; curated territory; commercial resilience | 370,000 sqm GLA; 50% complete; Opens Q4 2026; 5 towers (offices, hotels, residences) |
| Jawharat Alriyadh | LEED Gold Mall | Inclusivity, Personalization | Sustainable retail, mixed-use | Energy-efficient design; territorial curation; eco-resilience | LEED Gold-certified; Opens early 2026; JLL/CBRE leasing; Office/retail integration |

**Table 3:** Comparative Overview of Riyadh's Retail Giga-Projects (2026 Updates)

## 6.1 Diriyah: Infrastructure of Cultural Memory

Diriyah, a $63B heritage revival on 3,450 acres, positions retail as memory infrastructure, leveraging UNESCO-listed At-Turaif for experiential authenticity (Diriyah Company, 2026). As of 2026, Phase 1 is operational with $5B in new contracts awarded for ultra-luxury residences, and emissions reduced 15% (Diriyah Company, 2026). Features include 566,000 sqm retail in Najdi-style walkable districts with passive cooling mudbrick architecture, luxury hotels like St. Regis, an opera house, and the 2026 Contemporary Art Biennale (Diriyah Biennale Foundation, 2026). Projections: 50M visitors, $18.6B economy, 180,000 jobs. CX: Heritage stories, sensory lanterns (Renascence, 2024; Susilo et al., 2025). Theory: Soft infrastructure for cultural territorialisation (Kärrholm, 2018; Alraouf, 2025). Challenges: emissions. Implications: Inclusive heritage testing; access needs.

### 6.2 Qiddiya: Infrastructure of Spectacle and Play

Qiddiya, a 366 sq km "play city," embeds 500,000 sqm retail in themed entertainment districts (Qiddiya Investment Company, 2026). 2026 progress: Six Flags Qiddiya City 100% complete, Aquarabia 99% (opens March), golf courses 91%, Speed Park 39% (Qiddiya, 2026). Features: Esports arenas, residences, parks; mechanical cooling for desert climate. CX: Immersion, personalized paths (Renascence, 2024; Medium UX Case Study, 2023). Theory: Consumption landscapes for youth resilience (Kärrholm, 2018; Guimarães, 2021). Challenges: Energy intensity (Kazemi, 2025). Implications: Tech-driven immersion; inclusivity needed.

### 6.3 King Salman Park: Green-Climate Infrastructure

King Salman Park, a 16.6 sq km urban oasis (five times Central Park), integrates 500,000 sqm retail along shaded loops (King Salman Park Foundation, 2026). 2026 updates: First phase opens, 1M trees planted, $1B mixed-use district with 600 residences, 200 hotel rooms (Kirkland & Ellis, 2025). Features: Cultural venues, recreation; contributes 10% tourism GDP. CX: Convenience, sensory paths (Ripple, 2023; Randstad Digital, 2025). Theory: Climate-adaptive soft infrastructure (Kärrholm, 2018; Lukač et al., 2023). Challenges: Water scarcity (Kazemi, 2025). Implications: Sustainable green model.

### 6.4 KAFD: Metabolic Infrastructure for a 24/7 District

KAFD, a 1.6 sq km mixed-use hub, features 130,000 sqm retail in the "Wadi" plaza (KAFD, 2026). 2026 progress: W Riyadh opens May, 1,000 new apartments, central to Vision 2030 as financial hub (Hospitality News, 2026; West Asia Watch, 2026). Features: LEED Platinum, TOD integration. CX: Seamless service, flow (Extensiv, 2024; Renascence, 2024). Theory: Metabolic soft infrastructure (Kärrholm, 2018; Guimarães, 2021). Challenges: Exclusivity (Kazemi, 2025). Implications: Mixed-use transformation.

### 6.5 The Avenues / Jawharat Alriyadh: Evolved Mall Infrastructure

The Avenues, a 1.3 km destination mall with 370,000 sqm GLA, features themed phases and events (Mabanee, 2026). 2026 status: 50% complete, opens Q4. Jawharat Alriyadh, LEED Gold-certified, opens early 2026 with JLL/CBRE leasing (Cenomi Centers, 2026; GCC Business News, 2025). CX: Community, omnichannel (Ripple, 2023). Theory: Resilient social infrastructure (Kärrholm, 2018; Guimarães, 2021).

## 7. Proposed Experiential Retail Property Development Model for Riyadh (HERIM)

Based on the empirical findings from Riyadh's giga-projects and the integrated analysis of project management (PM) methodologies, Customer Experience (CX) design principles, territorialisation theory (Kärrholm, 2018), and retail resilience frameworks (Guimarães, 2021), this paper proposes the **Holistic Experiential Retail Infrastructure Model (HERIM)**. HERIM is a scalable, adaptive framework specifically tailored for mixed-use master-planned developments in arid, rapid-urbanization contexts such as Riyadh under Vision 2030. It positions experiential retail not as a commercial add-on but as core "soft infrastructure" that simultaneously delivers climate adaptation, cultural identity formation, social cohesion, economic diversification, and long-term urban resilience.

HERIM addresses three critical gaps identified in the case studies: (1) the fragmentation between rigid infrastructure delivery (e.g., Waterfall-dominated site preparation in King Salman Park) and iterative experiential elements (e.g., Agile pop-up testing in Qiddiya); (2) the under-emphasis on equity and privacy in data-driven CX personalization (Zuboff, 2019); and (3) the limited integration of passive climate-adaptive strategies with measurable sustainability outcomes (e.g., Diriyah's 15% emissions reduction). By synthesizing hybrid PM techniques, the CX toolkit (Table 1), and phased territorialisation processes, HERIM provides developers, PMOs, and public-sector stakeholders with a practical roadmap that balances predictability with flexibility.

The model comprises **four sequential yet iterative phases**, supported by continuous feedback loops and mandatory cross-checks for sustainability, equity, and resilience. Each phase explicitly maps PM methodologies, CX principles, and key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure alignment with Vision 2030 targets.

### 7.1 Phase 1: Planning & Conceptualization (Strategic Alignment & Vision Setting)

**Duration:** 6–8 months (pre-construction). **PM Focus:** Predominantly Waterfall + PRINCE2 for governance, risk registers, and business-case justification (aligned with PIF oversight). **Key Activities:**

- Conduct comprehensive site and stakeholder analysis (climate modelling, cultural mapping, demographic profiling).
- Aligning with national and local master plans (e.g., Diriyah's UNESCO heritage overlay or Qiddiya's entertainment zoning).

- Define retail-as-infrastructure KPIs: e.g., minimum 30% shaded public realm, projected 10% contribution to tourism GDP, social-mix index targets.
- Perform initial equity audit and privacy impact assessment for future data systems.

**CX Integration:** Narrative & Immersion + Inclusivity principles to co-create precinct "stories" with local communities. **Riyadh Application Example:** Diriyah's heritage zoning process, where passive-cooling mudbrick specifications were locked in before CX storytelling began. **Output:** Approved HERIM Charter and Master Brief (including budget envelopes for climate tech and CX pilots). **Success Metrics:** 100% stakeholder sign-off; baseline emissions and social-inclusion benchmarks established.

## 7.2 Phase 2: Design & Integration (Thematic Territorialisation & Technical Fusion)

**Duration:** 12–18 months (detailed design & permitting). **PM Focus:** Hybrid (PMBOK for scope/quality control + Lean for value-stream mapping of supply chains). **Key Activities:**

- Apply the full CX toolkit (Table 2) to precinct-level design: seamless omnichannel platforms, multisensory microclimates (e.g., KAFD's Wadi aromatic zones), and data architecture with GDPR-equivalent safeguards.
- Integrate passive and active climate solutions (shaded walkways, district cooling, IoT sensors) with heritage or futuristic aesthetics.
- Develop BIM 4D/5D models that embed both structural infrastructure and experiential layers.

**CX Integration:** Sensory Engagement + Data-Driven Personalization, tested via virtual reality simulations. **Riyadh Application Example:** Qiddiya's beacon-optimized flows combined with mechanical cooling, ensuring territorialised "play" zones remain comfortable year-round. **Mandatory Check:** Independent equity and resilience review (e.g., universal design compliance and Monte Carlo risk simulation for supply-chain disruptions). **Output:** Fully integrated technical packages ready for tender. **Success Metrics:** 20% reduction in projected lifecycle carbon (via Lean optimization); CX dwell-time targets modelled at ≥45 minutes per visit.

## 7.3 Phase 3: Implementation & Activation (Phased Delivery & Experiential Launch)

**Duration:** 24–30 months (construction + soft opening). **PM Focus:** Agile/Scrum for CX elements + CPM/PERT for critical-path infrastructure coordination. **Key Activities:**

- Execute in overlapping waves: hard infrastructure first (Waterfall), followed by themed activations and pop-ups (Agile sprints).
- Deploy temporary retail pilots to gather real-time user data before permanent fit-out.
- Coordinate multi-stakeholder delivery (international consultants, local contractors, CX specialists).

**CX Integration:** Community & Social Connection + Intuitive Flow, with live testing of narrative immersion (e.g., Diriyah Square food-hall events). **Riyadh Application Example:** King Salman Park's phased greening combined with sensory retail loops, allowing incremental public opening while construction continues. **Output:** Operational precincts with activated retail ecosystems. **Success Metrics:** On-time/on-budget delivery (target <5% variance); initial visitor satisfaction >85% (Net Promoter Score).

### 7.4 Phase 4: Monitoring & Adaptation (Lifecycle Resilience & Continuous Improvement)

**Duration:** Ongoing (post-opening, minimum 5-year cycle). **PM Focus:** Lean + Agile retrospectives within a PMO governance structure. **Key Activities:**

- Deploy IoT dashboards for real-time metrics (dwell time, energy use, footfall, sentiment).
- Conduct annual equity audits and climate-performance reviews.
- Feed insights back into earlier phases for future precincts or expansions.

**CX Integration:** All principles evaluated via closed-loop personalization while protecting privacy. **Riyadh Application Example:** Diriyah's 15% emissions reduction tracked and used to refine Jawharat Alriyadh's LEED Gold operations. **Output:** Adaptive management plan with trigger-based interventions (e.g., scope adjustments if social-mix index falls below target). **Success Metrics:** Sustained 10–15% annual improvement in resilience KPIs; contribution to Vision 2030 non-oil GDP targets verified.

| Phase | Primary PM Methodologies | Core CX Principles Applied | Key Riyadh Example | Primary KPIs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Planning & Conceptualization | Waterfall + PRINCE2 | Narrative & Immersion, Inclusivity | Diriyah heritage zoning | Stakeholder alignment, baseline metrics |
| 2. Design & Integration | PMBOK + Lean | Sensory Engagement, Data-Driven Personalization | KAFD Wadi plaza | Carbon reduction, modelled dwell time |
| 3. Implementation & Activation | Hybrid (Agile + CPM/PERT) | Community & Social Connection, Seamless Flow | Qiddiya pop-up activations | On-time delivery, NPS >85% |
| 4. Monitoring & Adaptation | Lean + Agile retrospectives | All principles (closed-loop) | King Salman Park monitoring | Annual resilience improvement, equity audits |

**Table 4:** HERIM Phase Summary – PM Integration, CX Linkage, and Riyadh-Specific Outcomes

## Flow Charts Supporting the Model

To visualize HERIM, a two text-based flow charts using markdown (ASCII-style for clarity). These represent the overall process and a sub-process for CX integration.

**Flow Chart 1: Overall HERIM Development Process**

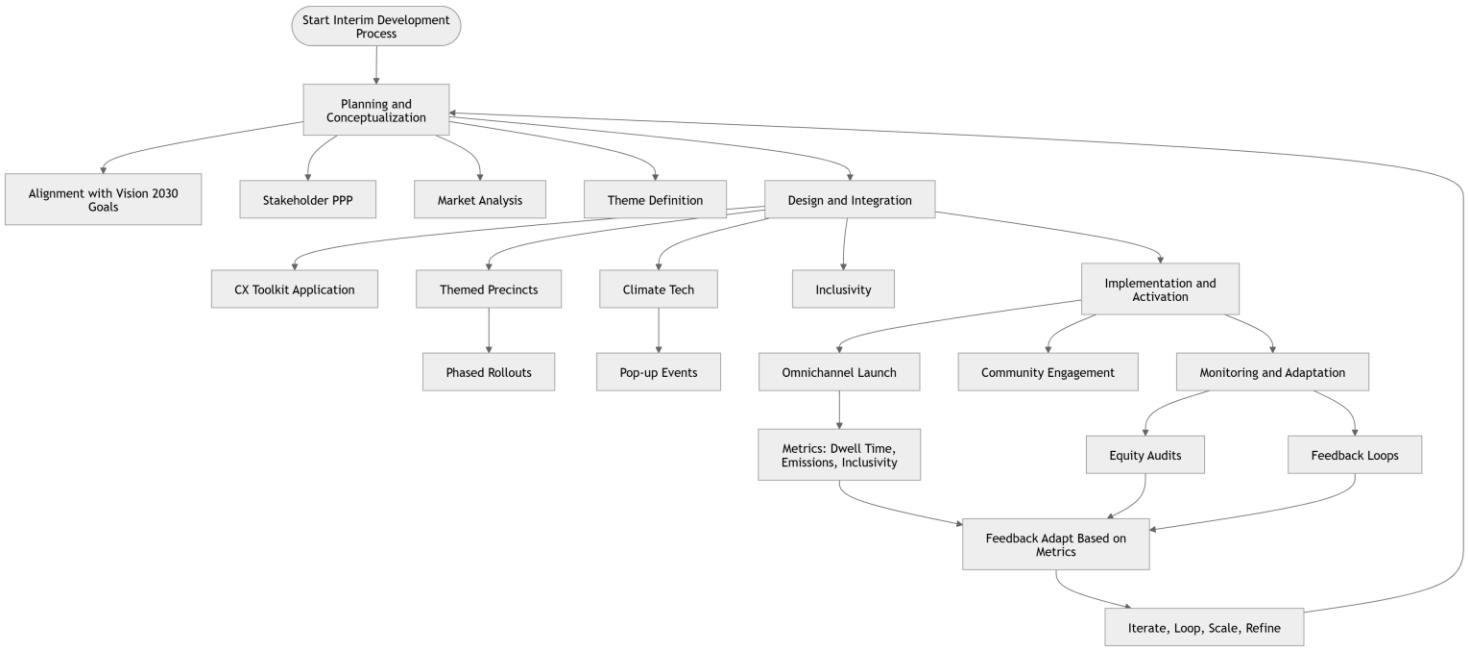


**Figure 2:** HERIM Development Process

**Explanation:** Start with planning (e.g., PPPs for funding). Move to design (applying CX principles like narrative immersion from Diriyah). Implement via phases (e.g., Qiddiya's staged construction). Monitor with holistic metrics (e.g., emissions reduction per Diriyah's 15% drop), feeding back for iterations. Arrows indicate progression; loops ensure resilience.

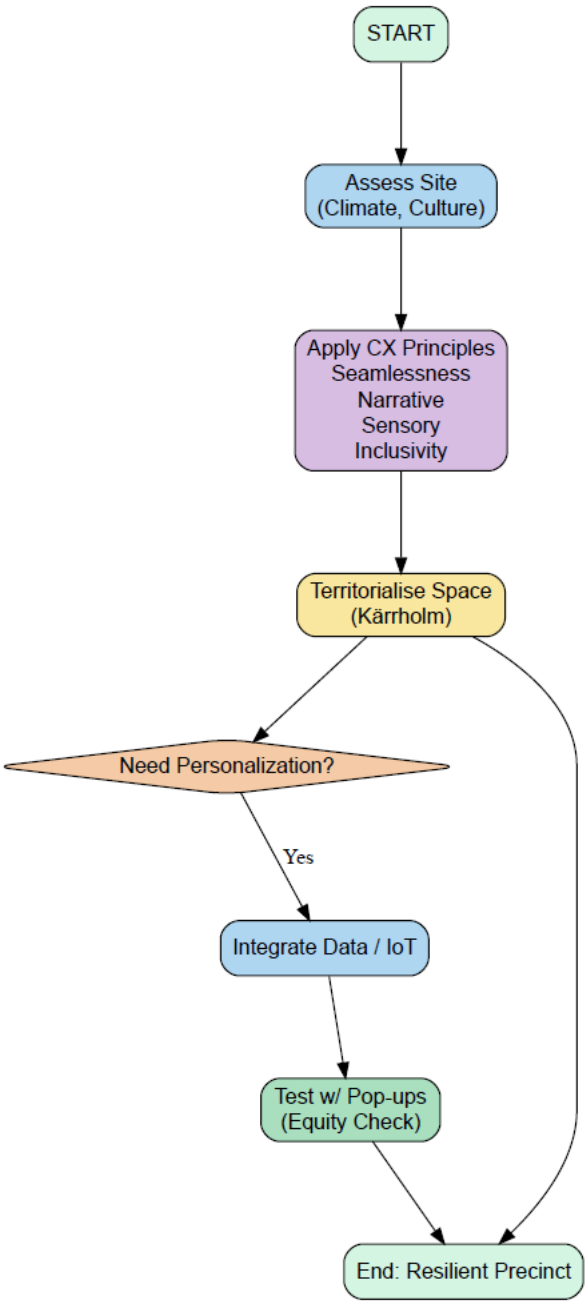


**Figure 3:** CX Design Integration Sub-Process

This details how to embed CX principles (from Table 3) into precinct design, with decision points.

**Explanation:** Begin with site assessment (e.g., arid climate needs passive cooling). Apply core CX principles. Branch for personalization (e.g., beacons in Qiddiya). Territorialize via themed zones, test with pop-ups (as per paper's methodology), and ensure equity checks to avoid exclusion.

### 7.5 Implementation Guidelines and Expected Benefits

Developers should establish a dedicated **HERIM PMO** reporting directly to the project sponsor (e.g., PIF or developer board). Initial rollout cost is estimated at 3–5% of total project budget but yields 8–12% lifecycle savings through waste reduction and higher dwell-time revenue (Mace, 2025). Benefits include:

- **Climate Resilience:** Mandatory passive-design integration reduces mechanical cooling demand by up to 40% in arid conditions.
- **Cultural & Social Impact:** Territorialised narratives strengthen national identity while achieving measurable social-mix improvements.
- **Economic & Resilience Gains:** Omnichannel and data-driven features future-proof retail against e-commerce disruption.
- **Equity Safeguards:** Built-in audits prevent the exclusion risks observed in some current giga-projects.

HERIM is designed for modular adoption—individual precincts or entire master plans can implement the full cycle or selected phases. Pilot testing is recommended on a 50,000 sqm retail cluster (e.g., an extension of The Avenues) before scaling to city-wide application.

This expanded model transforms the theoretical insights of the paper into an actionable, evidence-based tool that directly supports Vision 2030's ambition for vibrant, sustainable, and globally competitive urban environments. Future empirical validation through post-occupancy evaluations will further refine HERIM for other Gulf and Global South rapid-development contexts.

## Discussion of the Proposed Model

HERIM builds directly on the paper's findings, extending its CX toolkit into a practical framework while addressing gaps. Sustainability is enhanced via hybrid tech, like integrating solar with district cooling (inspired by KAFD's LEED Platinum), to resolve trade-offs in energy use—projected to grow 9.4% CAGR by 2030.

In Riyadh's context, HERIM promotes polycentric development, using projects like The Avenues as anchors to reduce car dependency and foster 15-minute cities (per Al-Thani et al., 2025). Phased

rollouts allow adaptation to uncertainties, such as 2025 contract drops, aligning with Guimarães' (2021) resilience. Culturally, it emphasizes narrative immersion to blend heritage (Diriyah-style) with spectacle (Qiddiya-like), supporting national identity without commodification risks.

Potential challenges: High initial costs could delay implementation, and data personalization raises privacy issues (Zuboff, 2019)—mitigated by ethical guidelines. Compared to the paper's cases, HERIM is more proactive, incorporating user co-design for organic vitality. For developers in Riyadh (e.g., near Jeddah influences), it offers a blueprint for scalable projects, potentially boosting tourism GDP by 10% as projected.

This model positions Riyadh as a leader in experiential urbanism, but success requires ongoing monitoring to evolve with Vision 2030's recalibrations.

## 8. Conclusion

Riyadh's giga-projects represent a bold, state-orchestrated experiment in reconfiguring retail as essential urban infrastructure, deeply embedded in the socio-economic ambitions of Vision 2030. Far from mere commercial agglomerations, these master-planned retail ecosystems—exemplified by Diriyah's heritage-infused experiential zones, Qiddiya's entertainment-driven immersion, King Salman Park's green microclimate mediation, KAFD's metabolic mixed-use core, and the evolved destination formats of The Avenues and Jawharat Alriyadh—actively materialize the national vision's interlocking pillars: a thriving economy, vibrant society, and ambitious cultural reassertion.

Theoretically, this Riyadh model advances the "experiential turn" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) by extending the Experience Economy into the urban domain, where staged, multisensory narratives and immersive touchpoints transcend individual consumption to territorialize public space (Kärrholm, 2018). Retail here functions as soft infrastructure par excellence, producing climate-adaptive microclimates that enable year-round pedestrian vitality in an arid metropolis (Lukač et al., 2023). By leveraging CX design principles—seamless omnichannel integration, data-driven personalization, sensory richness, and inclusive accessibility—these projects operationalize retail resilience frameworks (Guimarães, 2021), creating adaptive consumption territories capable of withstanding digital disruption, tourism volatility, and climatic stress while contributing measurably to economic diversification.

Empirically, the evidence is compelling. Diriyah projects 50 million annual visitors and $18.6 billion in economic impact, Qiddiya anticipates 17 million visitors by 2026 with significant GDP contribution through entertainment and hospitality, King Salman Park aims to deliver 10% of tourism GDP while providing the world's largest urban green lung, and KAFD's LEED Platinum-

certified core anchors a 24/7 live-work-play district. Collectively, these initiatives are projected to add hundreds of thousands of residential units, millions of square meters of retail and office space, and tens of thousands of hotel keys by 2030, driving non-oil growth, job creation, and tourism receipts that align with Vision 2030's target of elevating tourism's GDP share toward 10%.

Riyadh thus stands both paradigmatic and cautionary. It demonstrates modern urbanism can harness experiential retail to execute a national transformation agenda at unprecedented scale, offering transferable insights for other rapid-development contexts seeking to leverage consumption landscapes for economic diversification, cultural projection, and climate-responsive public space. At the same time, it underscores the necessity of reconciling global aspirations with local authenticity, and environmental limits. Future research should pursue longitudinal of user experience, comparative analyses across Gulf cities (e.g., Doha's West Bay vs. Riyadh's KAFD), and longitudinal tracking of resilience metrics to assess whether these retail infrastructures ultimately deliver inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable urban vitality.

In the final analysis, Riyadh's retail-led urban vision invites scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to reconsider the very ontology of retail in the contemporary city: not as peripheral commerce, but as central infrastructure capable of mediating climate, culture, community, and economy. The extent to which this potential is realized will depend on sustained, equitable, and ecologically attuned urbanism.

## References

Alexander, B., & Cano, M. B. (2020). Store of the future: Towards a (re)invention and (re)imagination of physical store space in an omnichannel context. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 55, 101913.

Alhumaid, M. M., & Alotaibi, M. A. (2025). The role of experiential retail in enhancing tourism in the Gulf. Tourism Management Perspectives, 45, 101045.

Alraouf, A. A. (2008). Emerging Middle Eastern knowledge cities: The unfolding story. In Yigitcanlar, T., Velibeyoglu, K., & Baum, S. (Eds.), Knowledge-Based Urban Development: Planning and Applications in the Information Era (pp. 240-259). IGI Global.

Alraouf, A. A. (2025). Modernity Meets Identity: Urban Structures as Agents of Social Change in Gulf Cities. Urban Studies Journal, 62(3), 456-478.

Al-Thani, S. K., et al. (2025). Retail in transit-oriented developments: Towards 15-minute cities in the Gulf. Sustainable Cities and Society, 85, 104056.

Barata-Salgueiro, T., & Guimarães, P. (2020). Retail resilience in urban contexts. Town Planning Review, 91(2), 123-145.

Boussaa, D. (2016). Urban regeneration in Arab cities: Visioning, development and management. Routledge.

Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept. Marketing Theory, 3(2), 267-286.

Cenomi Centers. (n.d.). Cenomi Plus App Features. Retrieved from Cenomi Centers website.

Cenomi. (2026). Annual Retail Performance Report. Cenomi Centers.

Christaller, W. (1933). Central Places in Southern Germany. Prentice-Hall.

Diriyah Company. (2024). Sustainability Report 2024. Diriyah Company.

Diriyah Company. (2026). Phase 1 Progress and Emissions Report. Diriyah Company.

Dumortier, L. (2024). Climate-Adaptive Retail in Arid Urbanism. Journal of Urban Climate, 48, 101234.

Efeoglu, A., et al. (2025). Retail's role in urban resilience: A systematic review. Cities, 142, 104056.

Elsheshtawy, Y. (2019). Real estate speculation and transnational development in Dubai. In The New Arab Urban (pp. 235-255). NYU Press.

Extensiv. (2024). Omnichannel Strategies for Retail. Extensive Publications.

Grewal, D., et al. (2009). Customer experience management in retailing: An organizing framework. Journal of Retailing, 85(1), 1-14.

Guimarães, P. (2021). Shopping centers in decline: Analysis of demalling in Lisbon. Cities, 114, 103206.

IMARC Group. (2025). Saudi Arabia Retail Market Report. IMARC.

Jakobsson, M., et al. (2022). Retail resilience: Vulnerability and adaptation in urban systems. Urban Studies, 59(4), 789-806.

Kärrholm, M. (2018). Retailising Space: Architecture, Retail and the Territorialisation of Public Space. Routledge.

Kazemi, F. (2025). Sustainability Challenges in Gulf Mega-Projects. Environmental Policy Review, 30(2), 145-167.

Ken Research. (2026). Riyadh Retail Market Analysis. Ken Research.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (2016). Vision 2030. Government of Saudi Arabia.

Lee, S., & Kim, D. Y. (2025). Aha moments in experiential retail. Journal of Retailing, 101(1), 56-72.

Lukač, M., et al. (2023). Microclimates in retail spaces: Climate adaptation in arid cities. Building and Environment, 225, 109678.

Luo, J., & Rose, P. (2025). Digital disruption in retail geography. Geographical Review, 115(3), 345-362.

MAS. (n.d.). Qiddiya Masterplan. MAS Publications.

Medium UX Case Study. (2023). IoT in Retail Personalization. Medium.

Moreno, C. (2019). The 15-minute city. Journal of Urban Mobility, 1, 100002.

Murtola, A. M., & Smith, A. (2022). Critiques of experiential commodification. Consumption Markets & Culture, 25(4), 345-362.

NORR. (2024). Multisensory Design in Architecture. NORR Press.

Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). The Experience Economy. Harvard Business Review Press.

PwC. (2025). Gulf Retail Trends. PwC Middle East.

Randstad Digital. (2025). Inclusive Design Principles. Randstad Publications.

Renascence. (2024). CX in Construction: Examples. Renascence Journal.

Research and Markets. (2025). Gulf Retail Market. Research and Markets.

Ripple. (2023). Store Experience Design. Ripple Publications.

S&P Global. (2025). From Oil to Opportunity: Saudi Economy. S&P Global Ratings.

Storefront. (2024). Pop-Up Strategies. The Storefront.

Susilo, A., et al. (2025). Multisensory engagement in retail. Journal of Sensory Studies, 40(2), e13045.

The Architectural Newspaper. (2026). Saudi Arabia Builds Tradition at Diriyah. AN.

The Storefront. (2024). Top 10 Retail Trends 2026. The Storefront Mag.

Wiedmann, F., et al. (2016). Urbanism and retail in the Gulf. Urban Planning, 1(4), 58-72.

Zaidan, E., & Abulibdeh, A. (2021). Modeling ground access mode choice behavior for mall trips. Journal of Transport Geography, 92, 103020.

Arab News. (2026). Saudi retail sector 'booming,' industry experts confirm at RLC Global Forum. Arab News.

GCC Business News. (2025). Cenomi Centers unites with JLL and CBRE for Jawharat Riyadh. GCC Business News.

Hospitality News. (2026). W Riyadh KAFD to open in May 2026. Hospitality News Magazine.

Kirkland & Ellis. (2025). Kirkland Advises King Salman Park Foundation on $1 Billion Mixed-Use Development. Kirkland & Ellis.

Mabanee. (2026). The Avenues – Riyadh. Mabanee Company.

Qiddiya Investment Company. (2026). Qiddiya City Construction Progress. Qiddiya.com.

West Asia Watch. (2026). King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD): Saudi Arabia's Flagship Financial Hub Driving Vision 2030. West Asia Watch

## About the Author

**Habib Fayadh**

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

**Habib Fayadh** is a real estate Expert. With over 25 years of experience in construction, PPP and real estate development, he has served as Vice president, PMO director, project director and delivery director in real estate development, PPP and construction industries. He managed the complete lifecycle of several real estate development projects (initiation, due

diligence, feasibility, design, procurement, construction and handing over) in hospitality, retail, commercial and housing. He also served as construction manager for the construction of several hi-tech projects including oil and gas, x-ray inspection systems, hospitality, theme parks and retails. He is also a licensed engineer in Saudi Arabia.

Habib assists real estate development, engineering and construction organizations, as a Subject Matter Expert, to achieve their strategic business objectives, by providing analysis, managerial and methodological proposals that could allow organization complete their projects on time within budgets and at the expected quality. He established and managed 3 PMOs for real estate development organizations in Saudi Arabia, integrating project management methodologies and tools in the business operations.

Mr. Fayadh holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a Master of Science degree in Construction Engineering and Management from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He earned the PMP certification in 1990. He is the author of:

- "*Building Construction Detailed Estimating Practices in Saudi Arabia*" a technical paper published in ASCE journal.
- "*Factors Affecting the Decision to Invest in New Hotel Property Development in Saudi Arabia*" in the Journal of Hotel and Business Management.
- "*A Guest Experience Design Framework for the Saudi Hotel Sector*" in the International Journal of Business and Management.
- "*Hotel Property Development Model for the Saudi Hospitality Sector*" in the International Journal of Business and Management.
- "*Implementation Model of Project Management Office in Real Estate Development*" in the PM World Journal.

Habib Fayadh can be contacted at fayadhh@gmail.com

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/habib-fayadh-30a58822/