IBN BATTUTA MALL: EDUTAINING THE WORLD? CHAE HO LEE

ABSTRACT

Nakheel, a Dubai World Company has created the world's largest themed mall based on the narrative of Ibn Battuta, a 14th century Muslim explorer whose world travels are well documented. The Ibn Battuta Mall is located in the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and utilizes a communication strategy called edutainment: a neologistic portmanteau whose goals are to educate and entertain an audience. Through the use of diffusion theory and its five innovation attributes, this paper recognizes that the architects and designers of the Ibn Battuta Mall have placed edutainment goals into the context of a mall expressing a predominantly Arab and Muslim identity. This paper argues that the mall has failed to achieve many of its educational goals and has replaced historical fact and authenticity in favor of expressing a message of opulence and social prestige, which defines the mall as a place of commerce rather than a stimulating learning environment.

Exhibition design grew in meaningful complexity and social significance between 1950 to late 1970 partly due to the seminal work of Charles Ormand Eames (1907-1978) and Ray Kaiser Eames (1912-1988). Ray and Charles Eames produced exhibitions that began with displays for designed objects: Good Design at the Chicago Merchandise Mart (1950) and continued into thematic exhibitions such as The Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India (1955) and The World of Franklin and Jefferson (1975-1977). The Eames also created the longest running, permanent, corporate sponsored exhibition: Mathematica: A World of Numbers and Beyond commissioned by IBM (1961). Through text, image, illustrations and interactive displays the Eames communicated complex historical, cultural and scientific ideas in a captivating manner. Pat Kirkham writes, "Despite the fact that the exhibitions were packed with information, artifacts, and images, a great deal of care was taken to make them accessible. This was done not by diluting or oversimplifying the content but by making learning interesting and fun" (Kirkham, 1995, 263).

The Eames' intentions to create both educational and engaging exhibitions has been captured by a new catch phrase "Edutainment," a neologistic portmanteau combining the words education and enter-tainment, defined as an attempt to educate and amuse. Edutainment is used to describe a new viewing experience for museum visitors. Edutainment designers are identified as intermediaries between curators, corporate sponsors and media savvy audiences. Peter Hall in a *New York Times* article focused, on the new "dazzling" museum claims: "The edutainment boom has, in turn, given rise to a new gen-eration of exhibition designers, the tech-smart, theatrically minded visionaries and pragmatists who specialize in bringing objects, ideas and even corporate philosophies to life" (Hall, 2001). Museums have also entered into retail and commercial spaces in order to increase revenue and attract larger audiences. Helmut K. Anheier and Stefan Toepler note, "The main thrust of commercial activity has been on retailing and merchandising, as museums not only increased store space but also moved offsite to shopping centers and malls" (Aheier and Toepler, 1998, 239). Malls and shopping centers have become new venues for the collections of museums and educational exhibi-tions (McLean, 1997, 117), merging the edutainment goals of a museum with the commercial goals of a mall.

This paper focuses on the largest and most significant edutainment project located in a shopping complex: the Ibn Battuta Mall in the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Nakheel, a Dubai World Company, has created the world's largest themed mall and the most visited mall in Dubai with over ten million visitors a year (Makintosh, 2008), based on the journey of the adventurer and scholar, Ibn Battuta (1304-c.1369). Ibn Battuta was born in 1304 and at the age of twenty-one traveled three times the distance of Marco Polo and documented his travels in one of the longest and most notable travelogues ever written. The historian Albert Hourani argues that in comparison with other forms of travel writing, Ibn Battuta's stories "…were the most far-reaching, and conveyed a sense of the extension of the world of Islam and the variety of human societies within it" (Hourani, 1991, 201).

MTE (Marketing Themed Environments) based in Dubai is the consultancy team responsible for the design and art direction of the Ibn Battuta Mall. Ludo Verheyen, director of MTE Studios in a press release stated,

> *Our goal in the case of our client Ibn Battuta Mall is to combine entertainment with education, whereby the Mall becomes the first 'Edutainment' Mall in the World. The introduction of 'edutainment' in Malls is quickly evolving into a new trend, making a regular shopping experience a more interesting and exciting one" (Stensgaard, 2008).*

Verheyen's statement reveals a new communication strategy for malls and introduces designers to a far more commercial environment for their work outside of traditional museums and exhibition spaces.

This article examines and evaluates many of the design decisions made by the architects, exhibition designers and individuals responsible for the visual presentation of the Ibn Battuta Mall. Diffusion theory, primarily the work of Everett M. Rogers (Rogers, 2003) will be used to define the use of edutainment goals in a Middle Eastern mall as an innovation: "…idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, 12). This article will apply Rogers's descriptions of the five attributes of an innovation (Rogers, 2003, 219-266) to evaluate whether or not edutainment in this mall will lead to adoption: "…a decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available" (Rogers, 2003, 21). The architects and designers of the Ibn Battuta Mall have inserted ideas and information into the familiar context of a mall, taking on the roles of historians and curators of a shopping complex that also serves as a museum and place of

entertainment. Linking edutainment goals to this mall are ultimately an attempt to express an Arab and Muslim identity for the citizens of the United Arab Emirates; communicating this as well to residents of the country and visitors to the mall. The use of historically familiar and ornate designed elements in the mall supports the adoption of the shopping complex, but consumption of the "retailscape" does not lead to the attainment of historical knowledge and cultural understanding. Opulence and novelty have replaced historical fact and authenticity in the mall. Designers of edutainment projects such as the Ibn Battuta Mall should embrace a larger role in the design process; one that requires a high level of cultural sensitivity, the need for historical accuracy and a critical examination of how visual and information resources are applied.

DIFFUSION THEORY

There are many communication theories that may be used to define and evaluate edutainment. These theories include: persuasion theory (O'Keefe, 2002), the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975, 1980), social learning theory (Rotter, 1954), (Bandura, 1977, 1986) and diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion theory was developed by a number of disciplines and explains "…the flow of information, ideas, practices, products, and services within and across cultures and subcultures, or markets and market segments" (Gatignon and Robertson, 1985, 849). This article will focus primarily on diffusion theory because of its historical significance to educational research and the evaluative importance of edutainment as an innovation.

Educational diffusion studies can be traced back to the 1920s to the work of Dr. Paul Mort at Columbia University's Teacher College. Mort studied the innovative benefits associated with local school control of financial decisions (Mort, 1953, 1957). After Mort's death educational diffusion studies fell into decline, but rose in significance during the 1970s as a result of the diffusion research conducted by Paul Berman and Milbrey W. McLaughlin (Berman and McLaughlin, 1974, 1975, 1978). Berman and McLaughlin conducted research that evaluated federally supported education programs and their dissemination of innovations on a local, state and federal level. Current diffusion research in education has focused on the spread of educational innovations on an international scale such as the global spread of kindergartens (Wollons, 2000).

This article frames the goals of edutainment in a shopping complex located in the Middle East as an innovation. Rogers claims that the "newness" of an innovation is not just inclusive of "new knowledge" but also "may be expressed in terms of knowledge, persuasion, or a decision to adopt" (Rogers, 2003, 12). Ibn Batttuta Mall promotes the idea that the mall is "...revolutionizing the retail and entertainment experience in Dubai" (http://www.ibnbattutamall.com) by educating and entertaining patrons in the mall while they shop in its themed courts. The Ibn Battuta Mall is separated into six thematic zones that are referred to as courts by the mall's architects and designers. The courts represent some of the countries or regions Ibn Battuta explored: China, India, Persia, Egypt, Tunisia and Andalusia. The themed courts of the mall are the primary means in which Ibn Battuta's narrative the Rihla (Travel) is communicated to potential innovation adopters. Millie Creighton claims, "...not only consumer goods, but promotional catalogues and even the physical space of store layouts constitute cultural objects. These establish a physical reality heavily imbued with symbolic meaning" (Creighton, 1994, 1). The architecture, visual presentations and displays in the Ibn Battuta Mall are a new attempt to promote and enhance the educational and entertainment experience for visitors to a mall.

THE FIVE INNOVATION ATTRIBUTES

There are five innovation attributes used by diffusion researchers to determine the adoption of an innovation. Rogers defines adoption as "...the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of a social system" (Rogers 2003, 476). The five innovation attributes associated with adoption include: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability (Rogers, 2003, 229-266). These five conceptually distinct attributes are a standardized classification system that has been used in diffusion research for over fifty years with a great deal of success in predicting the adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 2003, 223). Innovation attributes and their perception by adopters were found in research such as the work on adoption of solar energy systems by Duncan G. Labay and Thomas C. Kinnear (Labay and Kinnear, 1981) to be stronger predictors of "innovativeness" (Rogers, 2003, 22) than demographic information. The innovation attributes of the mall's edutainment strategy may predict the adoption of edutainment as a communication strategy by local citizens, residents and visitors to the mall. The following sections of this paper define the five adoption attributes and apply them towards an analysis of the adoption of edutainment in the Ibn Battuta Mall.

RELATIVE ADVANTAGE: GLOBAL PRESTIGE

The assumed advantage of edutainment goals in the mall is that educational and entertainment opportunities will enhance a shopping experience. Diffusion theory posits: "…relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes" (Rogers, 2003, 15). Relative advantage is often measured by gains in economic profit or social prestige by the targeted audience. Ibn Battuta was one of the first and most extensively documented global tourists the world has ever known, and through his narrative, patrons of the mall have the opportunity to be exposed to a cosmopolitan identity and complex forms of consumerism. According to Crispin Thurlow and Adam Jaworski, "…globalization is, in effect, a sales pitch and the 'global citizen' is both role-model and myth which, in the service of global capital, are designed to encourage spending and consumption" (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2003, 601). The themed courts of the Ibn Battuta Mall are distilled to populist and contemporary notions of world cultures in order to communicate a readily marketable message of luxury and opulence. The relative advantage of edutainment goals in the mall is the prestige that patrons of the mall may gain by going to an edutainment mall rather than other malls in Dubai and the region.

Dubai is an extremely competitive consumer environment for retailers with over thirty malls that house between 150-1200 stores in a geographic area under 1,600 square miles. Large scale shopping environments in Dubai include: Deira City Centre one of the most popular malls in the United Arab Emirates with over 1.2 million square feet of retail space, and the largest mall in world, Dubai mall, part of the Burj Dubai, a 20 billion dollar project, covering over 12.1 million square feet of retail space. Other themed shopping complexes also exist in Dubai, these include: Mercato Mall a shopping complex that heavily borrows architectural styles from European countries such as Italy, Spain and France, and Wafi City a themed mall based on the architectural features of ancient Egypt with glass pyramid roofs and hieroglyphic motifs throughout the mall. The Ibn Battuta Mall is currently the only mall in the UAE and in the region that has based its visual identity, architecture and marketing strategy on a historical figure, promoting itself as the first edutainment mall in the world which also contains a permanent educational exhibition.

The Ibn Battuta Mall emphasizes the prestigious nature of its architecture and visual presentations in order to increase its distinctiveness from other malls. The Andalusia court's main court is inspired by the Alhambra: a palace fortress that was the residence of Muhammed V (r. 1354-1391), Sultan of Granada. The Alhambra

was envisioned as a paradise of lush gardens and highly decorated courtyards filled with colorful carpets and opulent furnishings. Ibn Battuta did not encounter this during his travels. The Tunisia court was inspired by the architecture and design of Moroccan royal palaces. Carved stucco and wood, glazed tiles and the heavy use of arabesque patterns on the walls, ceilings and columns throughout the court impose a level of wealth and luxury to the court's initial attempt to recreate a traditional African marketplace. The Egypt court's main court is depicted as a Mamluk palace hallway and the exterior of the court features ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and Pharonic gateways (*figure 1*) that are historically conflicting, but highly ornate imperial styles of architecture. The India court combines the most opulent and ornate aspects of Mughal architecture reserved for its emperors. White marble is replicated throughout the interior of the court and carved into ornate floral patterns, motifs and lattice screens. Bright red and gold paint accent the huge dome of the main court and the presence of decorative columns and balconies throughout the India court have transformed it into a palace within the mall. The Persia court's large dome features a recreation of a private palace chapel for the Safavid Shah Abbas I (1587-1629). The dome is decorated with gold and all surfaces are inlaid with mosaic tile and turquoise molding (*figure 2*), a majestic example of 16th rather than 14th century architecture in Iran. The interior of the China court is heavily based upon Qing dynasty (1644-1912) imperial architecture rather than the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) architecture Ibn Battuta encountered in the 14th century. The dominant colors used throughout the building, predominately red and gold as well as the heavily decorated surfaces on the coffered ceilings (*figure 3*), cloud-fungus designs on the ceiling beams (*figure 4*) and the dragon medallions based on Qing textiles on the walls of the building (*figure 5*) illustrate a Qing imperial style that would have been seen as poor taste by earlier Chinese dynasties (*see table 1*).

Table 1 Time frames of Ibn Battuta Mall main courts

Court	Dynastic Influence	Dates
Andalusia Court	Umayyad & Nasrid	661-1031, 1232-1492
Tunisia Court	Nasrid	1232-1492
Egypt Court	Mamluk	1250-1517
Persia Court	Safavid	1501-1736
India Court	Mughal	1526-1707
China Court	Qing	1644-1912

Figure 1
Egypt Court Entrance

Figure 3
China Court Coffered Ceiling

Ibn Battuta's travels occurred in the 14th century between 1325-1355 (Dunn, 1986, 1-4). The mall however, has chosen to highlight architectural designs and features that range from the 7th to the 20th century. The presence and cultural influences of Marinid (1215-1465), Hafsid (1229-1574), Tughluq (1321-1398) dynasties and the Mongol empire (1206-1370) have largely been ignored in the mall.

The mall depicts Ibn Battuta's narrative as an epic journey across lands of wealth and palaces of gold and marble overlooking periods of poverty and intense hardship contained in the original story. Mike Crang (1996, 143) warns, "...a focus on an eclectic mix of historical artifacts/replicas produces a surface of 'historicality' rather than an understanding of history." Most of the themed courts focus on dynasties and empires that ruled these regions regardless of their historical relationship to Ibn Battuta and his narrative. John Hannigan (1998, 99) notes, "...tourists, by and large, prefer romanticized and fictional representations of history and geography, even if these are distortions which are rife with postmodern currents of time-space compression." The themed courts point to visual references that promote a level of wealth and prestige that may be attractive to tourists, but are historically inaccurate in the context of Ibn Battuta's travels.
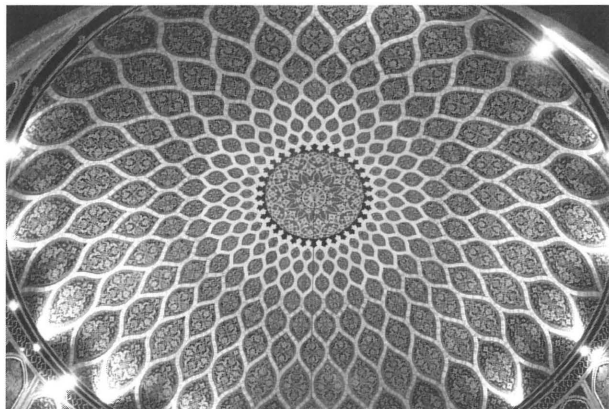
Figure 2
Persia Court Dome

Figure 4
China Court Ceiling Beams

Figure 5
China Court Wall Ornament

Compatibility is linked to the familiar. An innovation is blocked from adoption if it is incompatible to the culture in which it is presented. Diffusion theory posits: "…compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters" (Rogers, 2003, 15). In order to affirm an Arab and Muslim identity within the mall, the mall's developers have chosen to highlight architectural styles and motifs that illustrate the achievements of Arab and Muslim people and empires even though many of these architectural references negate Ibn Battuta's true origins as a Berber (indigenous northwest African tribe) and are anachronistic to the 14th century world he traveled in.

Ibn Battuta was not ethnically Arab, but was a North African from Tangier, Morocco descended from a Berber tribe known as the Lawata (Dunn, 1986, 19). Morocco, however, is not featured as one of the themed courts in the mall. The themed courts in the mall highlight countries and cultures that illustrate the significance and impact of Arab and Islamic culture on the rest of the world. The main court of Andalusia is inspired by several architectural features present in the Alhambra (1338-1390), also in Granada and the Great Mosque of Cordoba (784-786, 961-976, 987) in Cordoba, Spain. The gilded foliage designs on the columns of the main court appear to be inspired by the mihrab (a niche set into qibla wall indicating the direction of Mecca) of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. The central feature of the main court, the Lion Fountain, is based on the fountain in the Palace of the Lions in the Alhambra depicting marble lions carrying water basins on their backs *(figure 6)*. The Great Mosque of Cordoba is attributed to the Umayyad dynasty (661-1031) and the Alhambra to the Nasrid dynasty (1232-1492). Combining Umayyad and Nasrid architectural motifs and structures in the Andalusia court reflect thousands of years of Muslim rule and influence in Spain, connecting a European country with the narrative of Ibn Battuta.

Figure 6
Andalusia Main Court

Figure 7
Egypt Main Court

Figure 8
Persia Court Main Court

The interior of the Egypt Court borrows heavily from the Islamic architecture prevalent in Egypt during the Mamluk Dynasty (1250-1517). The visual focal point of the main court is a large hallway with a heavy wood-framed ceiling *(figure 7)*. The ceiling is a recreation of the most recognizable feature of Ibn Tulun's Great Mosque (870-879) in Cairo. The Mamluk dynasty was a military slave caste that often defeated the crusaders and turned back Mongol invasions. By borrowing Mamluk architectural references as the central feature within the court rather than the ancient Egyptian motifs found on the outside and along the walls of the court, the mall developers have created an overt message of historical Islamic resistance from foreign powers and invasions within the Arab and Muslim world.

The Persia court's main feature is a large dome *(figure 8)* with hand painted tiles with arabesque style ornamentation that is a close approximation of the dome of the Shaykh Lutfallah Mosque (1603-1619) in Isfahan. The Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) has been described as the greatest Islamic empire to rule Iran and the Shaykh Lutffallah Mosque and its dome an indicative example of Safavid single shell dome constructions. The Persian court dome fits into an Islamic architectural form fully realized during the 17th rather than the 14th century architecture of the Mongol Ilkhanates (1256-1335).

The India court is a deconstructed and reconstructed assemblage of Mughal (1526-1707) architecture most prevalently used in the 16th and 17th century. The India court's exterior with its red stone walls, white trimming and balustrades and pointed arches *(figure 9)* was inspired by the tomb of Humayun (1562-1570). The Taj Mahal (1632-1648) was also a point of reference for the India court's white domes and four corner pavilions. The replicated low relief carvings, multi-cusped arches and patterned stone-screen windows in the interior of the main court was inspired by the Pearl Mosque (1659-1660) at the Red Fort in Delhi *(figure 10)*. By focusing on Mughal monuments such as the Taj Mahal and Pearl Mosque, the India Court establishes an Islamic identity that overshadows the sites that Ibn Battuta might have seen during his visit to the court of Sultan Muhammad Tughluq (1300-1351) in 1323.

What is remarkable about the placement of the Ibn Battuta Mall in the city and Emirate of Dubai is the fact that the United Arab Emirates is not present in Ibn Battuta's original narrative. The UAE did not exist as a country until 1972 and Frauke Heard-Bey (2004, 239) notes, "Dubai started as an insignificant fishing village probably some time during the 18th century." Distorting and claiming the architectural legacy of significant Muslim dynasties in other parts of the world is an attempt to raise Dubai's historic and cultural profile. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1997, 13), "The ideology of nation, state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so." The local Emirate population is estimated to be between four to ten percent of the entire population of the United Arab Emirates (Elsheshtawy, 2008, 971). Minority groups such as the Emirates must work with communication strategies that maintain and promote an Arab, Muslim and national identity. The architects and designers of the Ibn Battuta Mall were required to create a shopping complex that focused on an identity that highlighted Arab achievement and the unifying effects of the Islamic faith and shari'a law in the context of the modern city of Dubai, however, merged and manipulated architectural histories and visual presentations in the mall question the authenticity of the information encountered by its visitors.

Figure 9
India Court Exterior

COMPLEXITY: SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED LEARNING

Complexity is not as significant an attribute to the adoption of an innovation as relative advantage or compatibility but may positively or negatively affect its rate of adoption. Complexity requires ease in perception and utility. Although many of the educational exhibits within the mall are read in English and Arabic much of the exhibition lacks a social component vital to learning environments. Rogers claims: "The complexity of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system is negatively related to its rate of adoption" (Rogers 2003, 257). Socially

constructed learning is a key aspect of complexity as an innovation attribute and an indicator of adoption (Rogers, 2003, 257). The mall features a permanent exhibition entitled "1000 Years of Knowledge Rediscovered" *(figure 11)* which focuses on Islamic contributions in science and technology. The name of the exhibition and the term 'rediscovered' in the title indicates a sense that knowledge has been lost and now uncovered for visitors. The task of rediscovery has been completed for viewers and the exhibition and displays do little to challenge viewers through group discussion or forms of mentorship. The knowledge individuals gain from the educational exhibits in the mall are not a socially constructed learning experience, lowering the adoption of educational imperatives in the mall.

The Ibn Battuta exhibition consists of over twenty-seven artifacts and displays based on historical inventions, discoveries and innovations by Islamic scholars that can be seen in different locations throughout the mall. The main part of the permanent exhibition is housed in the Egypt court and features the journey of Ibn Battuta presented in large scale colored maps, text and image displays *(figure 12)*. Most of the exhibition contains displays that take an approach that presents artifacts such as khanjars (daggers), chess sets, abacuses, musical instruments, ship models and even spices as valuable objects that need to be preserved and protected under layers of thick glass. Although displays such as an armillary sphere *(figure 13)*, astrolabe and a few monitor displays allow viewers to touch and explore objects and visual information, most of the permanent displays in the exhibition are read in a static manner and offer little interactive opportunities to an audience.

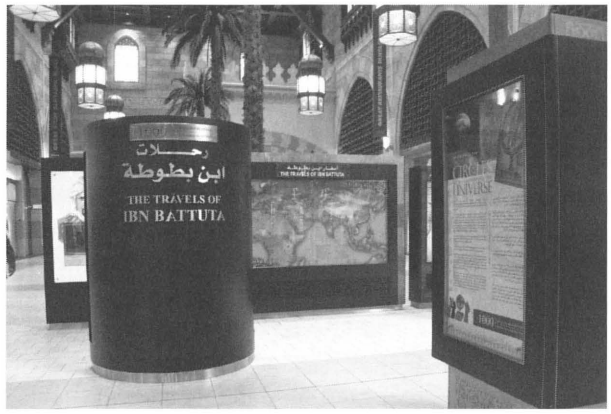Figure 10
India Main Court
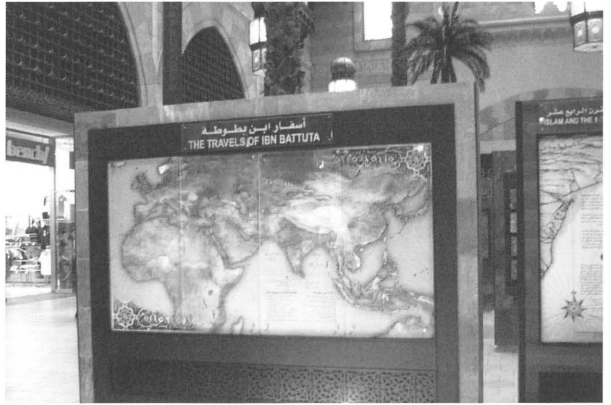
Figure 11
Ibn Battuta Exhibition

Figure 12
Map Of Ibn Battuta's Travels

Figure 13
Armillary Display

Socially constructed learning experiences are essential in public educational environments. Zühal Okan (2003) argues that social interaction during the learning process "...serves a variety of crucial functions, such as provision of feedback, instruction, correction and so forth." The large scale, architectural elements in the Ibn Battuta Mall are more spectacle than opportunities for group discussion. Little or no informational signage exists that describe the relationship of the architecture and design motifs in thematic courts to Ibn Battuta's narrative. Shopkeepers meet and greet patrons to their stores in the mall, answering questions and providing information and cues to potential consumers. The Ibn Battuta Mall, however, does not offer routine guided tours of its educational exhibits, and the individuals stationed in the information booths in recent encounters have more information about where to buy certain items and where to eat rather than anything that historically pertains to Ibn Battuta and his story. Visual information should not be the only way in which information is presented to potential innovation adopters. Social interaction improves educational experiences for audiences and needs to be incorporated in the design of learning environments.

TRIALABILITY: RETAIL ZONING

Trialability is an innovation attribute dependent on the application of smaller units of experience and their personal application. The Ibn Battuta Mall is divided into thematic courts as well as retail zones that meet the attribute requirement of the division of experiences into smaller units. Diffusion theory posits: "trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis" (Rogers, 2003, 16). The mall's retail zones, however, establish a conflicting and arbitrary connection to the thematic coding of the courts; a customizable viewing experience is restricted by the lack of coding in educational information and progression through the educational exhibitions in the mall.

The retail space is divided into four zones: entertainment and leisure; major department stores; "up-market" brands and lifestyles; and family and convenience. The retail zones are illustrated as a separate conceptual environment from the thematic courts in map signage and brochures throughout the mall. The shops and food services that make up the retail zones in the mall rarely have a thematic or cultural connection to the themed courts. For example, a Starbucks is the central feature under the Safavid dome of the Persia court, a Géant hypermarket encompasses most of the Tunisia Court and rows of electronic shops surround the lion fountain in the Andalusia Court. The educational exhibits in the mall are also scattered across the themed courts of the mall, often with little

relationship to the themed courts they are placed in. For instance, the "House of Wisdom" *(figure 14)* is a kiosk that depicts the life and works of Islamic scientists and scholars, such as Ibn Al Haytham and the Banu Musa brothers. The kiosk is located between the Andalusia and Tunisia courts and has no geographic or cultural relationship to the Muslim scientist and Iraqi scholars. Ibn Al Haytham (965-c.1040) the "father of modern optics" was born in Iran and lived and worked in Egypt. The Banu Musa brothers are associated with the original House of Wisdom library and translation center in Baghdad.

The separate mapping and placement of the thematic courts, retail zones and educational exhibits in the mall indicate a separate experience for potential adopters of edutainment goals in the mall. The retail zones appear as an imposed layer of consumer driven information. Edutainment goals in the mall cannot be obtained if the educational, entertainment and consumer goals in the mall are never experienced at the same time or in connection with each other.

Figure 14
Hall Of Wisdom

OBSERVABILITY: WHERE ARE THE EXHIBITS?

Observability is an innovation attribute that has often been applied to technological innovations. An innovation must often be seen working in order to improve its adoption. Diffusion theory posits: "...observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others" (Rogers, 2003, 16). The physical scale and outer facades of the mall are extremely large and ornate fulfilling the visual requirements of this attribute, however, the exhibition spaces that provide educational information and displays are overwhelmed by the space and marketing information dedicated to retail, entertainment and dining options in the mall.

The mall encompasses over 1.2 million square feet (27 acres) of retail space with over 275 retail outlets, 50 restaurants and food outlets and 21 cinema screens stretching over 1300 meters, almost a mile in length. However, the scale of the educational exhibits in the mall take up less than a fraction of the remaining space within the mall. If all the educational exhibits in the mall were gathered together they would barely fill the main China court. Signage for the exhibitions in the mall are overwhelmed by banners and sale signs spread throughout the mall that market newly established real estate developments and products such as cell phones (*figure 15*). The maps throughout the mall also indicate stores, coffee shops and restaurants, but provide no information about the location or placement of the educational exhibits. The impressive scale and decorative aspects of the mall do not provide enough information to improve the adoption of educational goals in the mall. Educational exhibits and information in the mall should have a greater presence and accessibility for visitors to the mall in order to make educational opportunities more observable and of use to potential adopters.

Figure 15
Signage In Egypt Court

CONCLUSION: EVALUATING EDUTAINMENT GOALS

In a recent speech on June 4, 2009 made at Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, U.S. President Barack Obama (2009) noted the significant contributions Islam made to the world:

> *It was Islam—at places like Al-Azhar University—that carried*
> *the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way*
> *for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation*
> *in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our*
> *magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and*
> *printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can*
> *be healed.*

CONCLUSION: EVALUATING EDUTAINMENT GOALS

President Obama's recognition of Islam's scientific and cultural achievements in his speech served many purposes. His words were made as a gesture of respect and to establish such a relationship between the United States and the Islamic world. The President also spoke of the great benefits obtained from "innovation in Muslim communities." New ideas continue to proliferate in the Islamic world, and designers working in cities such as Dubai are quickly adopting new ways in which to utilize communication strategies such as edutainment. Many exhibition designers have tried to reach the same level of success in educating and engaging audiences that Ray and Charles Eames were able to convey in their exhibitions, but they have very mixed results.

Educational and entertaining environments in which global narratives such as the story of Ibn Battuta can be explored appear to be an innovative and intriguing manner in which to understand how the world is linked through a common and shared history. Communicating thousands of years of history, scientific and cultural development in a retail environment is a daunting task—edutainment goals in the Ibn Battuta Mall have failed to strike a balance between education and entertainment goals. An analysis of the goals of edutainment in the mall through the application of diffusion theory and its innovation attributes, demonstrates educational goals that have been compromised by political and commercial imperatives. The creation of a themed retail environment whose goal is to educate and entertain are added to the mall as an element of prestige for mall patrons, expressing opulence and luxury as a method to engage viewers in the themed courts. The themed retail environments, however, have led towards consumptive rather than learning behaviors. The mall also attempts to establish an Arab and Islamic identity for the shopping complex, underwritten by anachronistic and manipulated histories, altering and displacing Ibn Battutas original narrative. Guests to the mall are presented with a number of exhibitions and displays that allow them to access information about Ibn Battuta and other Islamic scholars and scientists, but these exhibitions and displays are ultimately static and do not create opportunities for socially constructed learning. The seperation of areas in the mall into themed courts with shopping, leisure and entertainment zones, creates an environment in which learning becomes fragmented and de-contextualized. The scale of the mall is impressive, however, the retail and entertainment options for viewers overwhelms the educational opportunities in the mall.

Edutainment strategies within the Ibn Battuta Mall are incompatible with the goals of engaging and educating an audience because authenticity and learning are compromised in order to attract greater audiences and push political and commercial goals above educating the public. Edutainment in this mall is better defined as a marketing strategy rather than a means in which to educate and entertain visitors to the mall. Designers must understand the way in which new ideas are adopted and that historic and cultural design projects require a careful questioning of accuracy and intent.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Chae Ho Lee teaches graphic design at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He lived in the Middle East for over six years while teaching at leading academic institutions there. His work spans advertising, exhibition, identity, publication and web design. He has worked for a number of prestigious advertising agencies and design studios in the Pacific Rim, New York City and Dubai. Lee was the design director for the Asia Society, an international NGO that promotes knowledge, dialogue and development in the fields of Asian policy, business, education, arts and culture. He received his MFA with honors from the Rhode Island School of Design (1999) and is currently working on a number of writing and online projects.