Façades on the move: A case study of Viva Tower in Bahrain.

Fatem Al-Dhaen, Mariam Al-Noaimi, Yosra Haji, Fay Al-Khalifa, Mohammed Al-Koheji

University of Bahrain, Department of Architecture and Interior Design

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Abstract (300 words):

Architecture has always been influenced by rapid technologies, from the computer-aided architectural drafting programs to 3D printing, virtual reality technologies and the moving images on building facades using interactive lighting. This paper will discuss how media, technologies, and architecture are today being integrated and how this integration affects the urban life in Bahrain.

Interactive and changeable building facades have been used for a long time now to encourage a stronger connection between the inhabitants of the city and its built environment. They have also been used for marketing purposes to draw attention to a particular brand. In Bahrain, Viva - one of the few large telecommunication companies in the country- which has a respectable market share houses it's headquartered in a skyscraper on the main highway in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. The building is placed in a very dominant location; it is argued that one could never miss it. The tower stands as a landmark in the area, and the façade of the building is used as one large advertising medium to send messages to the passers-by.
This research employs Viva’s tower as a case study to investigate the effects of using the building façade as marketing mediums on the urban life. The investigation included a number of semi-structured interviews with Viva’s employees to measure the influence of the technology on the performance of the tower, Viva’s customer’s satisfaction, number of sales and its impact on the quality of spaces in the tower. Also, the investigation included a survey administered to the public to measure their appreciation of the employed technology. The research examines both the positive and negative impacts of the utilization of the building façade and sheds light on the appropriateness of the technology in the local context.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Ms. Fatema Al-Dhaen is a fourth-year architecture student at the University of Bahrain. She is interested in organic and digital architecture. Her passion for technologies made her learn several computer programs at an early age. Ms. Al-Dhaen is particularly captivated by the interrelationship between architecture and media. This is constantly being reflected in her designs as she always chooses to celebrate the means of today’s technologies in her architectural solutions.

Ms. Maryam Al-Noaimi is a fourth-year Architecture student at the University of Bahrain. She is currently the Vice President of AIAS-UoB (The American Institute of Architecture Students Chapter in The University of Bahrain). Also, Ms. Al-Noaimi is employed in a research project that investigates visual discomfort and architecture led by Dr. Fay Al Khalifa. Ms. Mariam has represented architecture students in the Engineering Professions Exhibition organized by the Bahrain Society of Architecture in 2017. She also actively helped in organizing the International Youth Conference in 2017 at The University of Bahrain. Ms. Alnoaimi’s was employed at the Ministry of Works for training; the job allowed her to participate in the design of a building in Rashed Equestrian and Horse Racing Club, which developed her professional skills and allowed her to become more aware of the market challenges. Ms. Mariam believes that Architecture is the medium by which she can improve the local community. She aspires to give back to the society with her profession in the future.

Ms. Yosra Haji is a fourth-year Architecture student at the University of Bahrain. She is interested in the effect of Contemporary Sustainable Architecture on the future generation. Ms. Haji aspires to improve the society and the environment through Architecture. She participated in a modeling workshop sponsored by Sh. Khalid bin Hamad Al-Khalifa in The Youth City 2030. The experience allowed her to develop her modeling skills a lot. She also participated in a design competition in Senegal and came up with a multi-religious place for the community of Tanaf; this taught her how to adapt to the environment and the constraints of local cultures. Recently, Ms. Yosra
worked as a trainee in Re-touche Bahrain Engineering Company. Her work at the Interior and Landscape Design Department in the firm widened her horizon and developed her innovation. She learned how to merge greenery with architectural spaces sensibly. Yosra is working at the time being with the design group in Gulf House Engineering. The job allows her to work on many local projects such as Marasi Al-Bahrain and Jareer Bookstore in Bahrain, as well as some projects in the GCC like private residential Villas in Sharjah and Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Al-Khalifa is a researcher with a Masters degree in Conservation and Regeneration and a Ph.D. in Landscape, which is, focused on the interrelationship between Cultural Change and Urban Sustainability, particularly in the Arabian Gulf Context. Her research aspires to contribute to the understanding of sustainable urbanism within the context of transformed cultures, urban islands, and urban archipelagos. She was part of a team that won the Golden Lion award in the Venice Biennially in 2010, and she was awarded RIBA’s president’s award for research in 2012. Dr. Al-Khalifa is also interested in the importance of sustainability in real estate, as an asset class, the dynamics of considering sustainability assessment tools in real estate development and the influence of visualization on the opinions and actions of decision makers. She has published two journal articles and two articles in conference proceedings. She also obtained two professional certificates; the ISM Certificate in Sales and Marketing Management and the NAIOP Advanced Certificate in Commercial Real Estate Development. Dr. Al-Khalifa is currently the lead researcher in a $22,000 research project that looks into visual discomfort and architecture from a tryptophobic perspective and is also leading several other research projects related to sustainable urbanism and real estate development.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Koheji has a PhD from Institute of Building Technology, University of Nottingham, UK, a Masters from The Welsh School of Architecture, University of Wales Cardiff, U.K. and a B.Sc. from College of Architecture and Planning, King Saud University, Riyadh, KSA, Saudi Arabia. He is an architect and teaches climate studies, acoustics, and illumination in the field of architecture. His research areas are in environmental Design.