

Malls of the Future - Post-Covid

Covid – 19, has totally shaken the way malls used to be built, operated and managed. Footfalls in malls have declined steadily, since the advent of the Covid – 19, due to safety and health fears. *Will this fear stop the consumers from going to the malls?* In short term, yes, in long term NO! *Will the malls shut down?* Not really... then what? The malls are a confluence point for the consumers, hence the Malls of the Future will have to be re-invented, rather than just following the age-old way of developing them with being only shopping centric. Malls will now have to offer the consumer, beyond shopping. No longer are consumers primarily visiting a mall for shopping. Today, the consumer is not looking at only shopping as a reason to go to a mall, they are expecting that the malls, should be able to offer options beyond shopping, as the new normal has changed the expectations of the consumers.

While we are not sure how long will this scenario continue, mall developers will surely have to re-invent and re-engineer their malls with safety and hygiene as the prime priority and by offering a complete experience to the customers. To ensure that the malls are not left behind, mall developers, have no choice but to create more reasons for consumers to come to the malls than just for shopping, as shopping can be done anywhere. They need to consider the overall experience and engagement that will keep the consumer come back to malls again and again.

“**The Malls of the Future will have to be planned much beyond shopping; they have to be an epicenter for Entertainment, Enjoyment, Experience, Engagement, Experiment, Enthralling, Eatertainment, Edutainment, and many more.**”



Susil Dugarwal - Chief Mall Mechanic Beyond Squarefeet

(A Mall Advisory and Mall Management Company)

Susil has been part of the Retail and Mall Industry for over 3 decades, he has been involved in the development and management of more than 75 Malls in India, Iran, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman & Qatar.

The Malls of the Future will have to be planned much beyond shopping; they have to be an epicenter for Entertainment, Enjoyment, Experience, Engagement, Experiment, Enthralling, Eatertainment, Edutainment, and many more. The Malls of the post covid will have to offer the consumers an all-inclusive experience and should be able to engage with the consumers for over 4-6 hours. The category mix of the malls will have to change drastically, based on the shift of the shopping trends by the consumer, post covid. Health, Hygiene and Safety will overtake all other priorities by the consumers. Malls that offer a perfect balance of category mix, experience and ambience shall be preferred by the consumers in the new normal.

Malls of the future will also have to be technology-friendly, which shall help the malls to transform mall usability as a means of improving customer satisfaction. Technology, for instance, can be used to address various concerns shoppers face at the mall like finding parking, store wayfinding, ease of navigation within the mall, etc. Having a health check center or emergency health support will play a key role in building the consumer's confidence.

Shopping in malls is changing rapidly, even faster than high streets. Hence, mall developers can seize this opportunity and spruce-up their malls, and re-invent or re-orient them, in such a manner that it is not only a future-ready, but also able to take more disruptions, such as covid. Technology and health safety will play a key role in the mall enhancement in the post covid period.



Credits: Photo provided by Forsan Central Mall
Line Investments & Property LLC