

# MALL ENVIRONMENTS

## THE ESSENTIAL SIX COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

**R**etail habits change all the time, as customers get more demanding, technology advances and as social paradigms shift. Within these ever evolving scenarios so do organised retail formats need to constantly develop and adapt over time. Let us delve deeper on some of the pertinent factors to ensure the success of brick-and-mortar retailers in dynamic retail scenario because on their success depends the survival of today's mall.

### Knowing Your Catchment

From scale and size, type of format and to who's your tenant, it is quite simple but it's not going to work if you don't understand what it is you need to provide where. Understanding the market, the demographic and responding to the competition is fundamental in ensuring your centre's success. So getting the right retail consultants to offer you early help in developing your brief is vital to ensuring early success.

### The Right Tenant Mix

It's all in the mix!!!! Whilst there are norms and rules to the mix and size of tenants that many retail designers and consultants can advise upon, India needs more variety and international players to get on board. Today, more than ever, a fresh new tenant can light up the dimmest of centres, be it a new anchor tenant like IKEA with aggressive expansion plans to set up in India or a fine dining restaurant with lounge seating, walls of books and a performance space/stage.

### Being Original

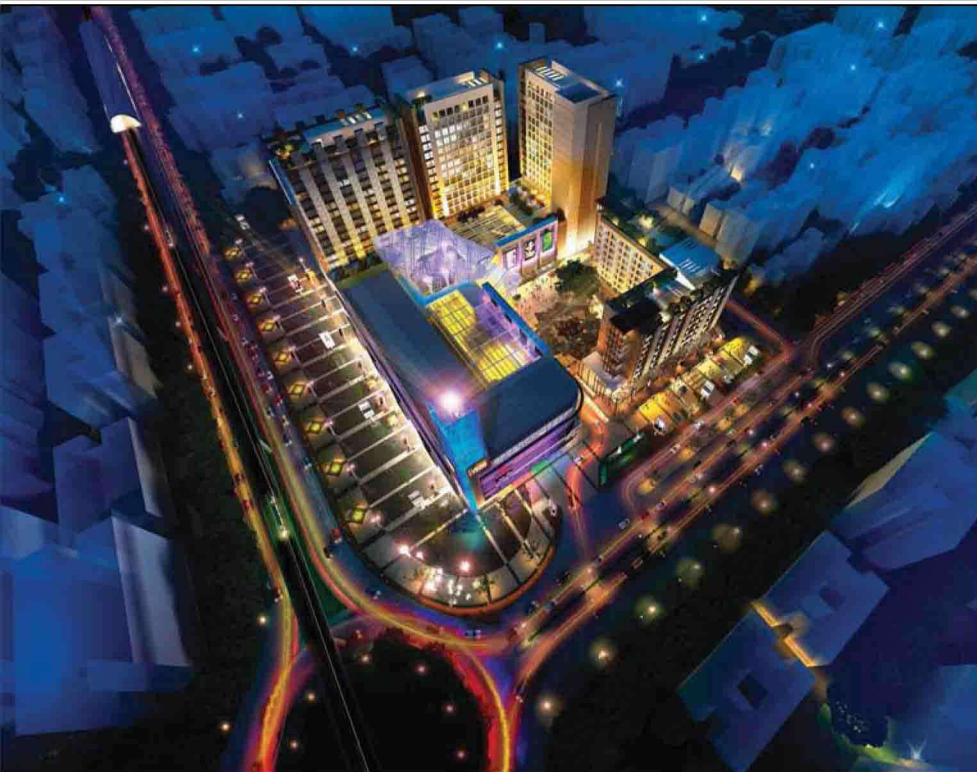
What's your pull? What is different about your mall? Its high tech interactive facade? The new open public plaza holding a range of events during the day and become a performance plaza at night? Or a place where people can gather and watch a film via bluetooth on the big screen? Is the retail supplementary to an even bigger type of offering...?



**As the competition in brick-and-mortar retail format is becoming tougher and tougher with each passing day, mall ambience and design have become two of the key driving factors to attract the shopper. Consumers are more likely to engage if they enjoy the mall ambience and can easily find what they are looking for. When the design becomes the differentiator for a mall, it can create an edge for them in today's competitive retail scenario.**

By Zubin Cooper





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A centre of performing arts for example or the largest aquarium in the city.

The must is to think out of the box and find new exciting ways to incentivise people to shop and linger longer. We need to think of malls as lifestyle centres, that form an integral part of our town centres and daily activities. Instead of boring long facades, we need a building with active edges that creates and animates the streets.

Let's bring back the idea of a standalone cinema that become an immediate much loved destination and icon for the City, such as the much loved picture houses of Mumbai -- Regal and Eros.

#### Mixed Use Developments

Let them become a living breathing part of our cities, woven into the very fabric offering a variety of different asset classes and activities. Creating a destination and an ethos of work, live and play. Where entertainment centres, cultural activities, residential buildings,

office buildings, community and banqueting facilities become a part of our everyday walk, adding to the quality and richness of our daily experiences.

#### The Experience

Beyond the type of tenant, or the size of an anchor. The most important question to ask ourselves is what type of user experience are we creating. Not only from the aesthetics of the interior, but also the need to create a development that offers the consumer a varied and unique experience. The quality of the exterior and interior lighting, the nature of the public realm, the design and placement of the environmental graphics and way finding elements are all designed elements by specialist consultants that when managed well can add great value to user experience.

The recognition of people wanting to move around quickly with good supporting infrastructure and offering

qualitative public spaces supported by a rich offer in tenant mix adds to creating the sense of life-style.

#### Adress the Digital Age

Let's embrace technology and make this digital experience one that fascinates and creates unique moving breathing facades. Facades that we can connect with and interact with.

We have heard so much of the 'omnichannel experience' defined as a multichannel sales approach that provides the customer with an integrated shopping experience. However, if the user experience isn't integrated and seamless it will become a hindrance and a fad as oppose to something that will enhance our shopping experience. So mobile marketing, great web sites and social media platforms need to work together. Creating a strong, easy to use and reliable technology that also integrates 'brick and mortar stores.' A good example of this is from the UK fashion retailer Oasis. You enter the store, you are given an iPad, you find your product, and pay for it with your iPad acting as a cash register. And if the product is out of stock, the staff will ensure it is shipped to your home in good time.

The average Indian consumer today, might have more money to spend but is much more sophisticated than he was a decade ago. To guaranteeing good footfalls and sales we have to start designing centres that look beyond the depth of a shop, the size or width of the mall and the width of the upper mall passage. We need to challenge the very nature of what it is we are creating when opportunity presents itself. The mall in its entirety needs to be seen as the City's anchor, a destination for all to congregate. And to bring the people there we need to start thinking beyond just creating a soulless big box with dead elevations, but a building which forms part of our city fabric offering rich and varied user experiences. **IR**

#### About the author:

Zubin Cooper is CEO of Bentel Associates

