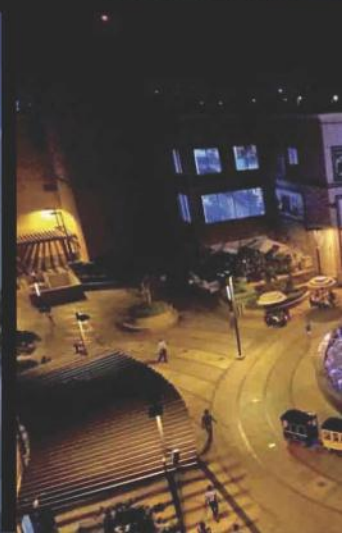




# THE FINEST SHOPPING CENTRES IN INDIA





*Such is the growing mall culture in India that 34 new shopping malls, covering 13.6 million sq. ft. area, are expected to come up in top eight cities by the year 2020...*

– By IMAGES RETAIL BUREAU

**N**o mall today can afford to operate in isolation and just be a ‘shopping’ destination. Shopping centres today are transforming into community spaces bringing to the discerning consumer the best of brands, food, and entertainment. They’re hubs where people go to rejuvenate, socialise and entertain.

Talk to any person living in a city, a small town and they would all give you a plethora of reasons why they love to visit malls. And although malls have not yet penetrated remote, rural pockets of India, people living in these areas are aware of them and eagerly await the day one opens in the vicinity.

Without a doubt, these centres have changed the way India shops so much so that consumers are even hitting malls to buy household basics today. From a customer perspective, frequent traveling can be exhausting. It can get worse in the festival or the holiday season, when crowds throng dirty markets, when finding parking space can be a struggle and haggling for discounts a near nightmare.

In such a situation, shopping centres give the consumer an edge. They not only provide everything basic and upscale under one roof, but also take care of convenience. Shopping is time taking process. Mall developers and owners ensure that costumers are relaxed, engaged and generally.

Today shopping centres have options available for food, entertainment, gaming zones for kids as well as adults, and leisure apart from a plethora of retail choices to for an uninterrupted experience. Large format stores in malls further provide consumers with all they need – from branded clothes to grocery, electronics to footwear, Malls house restaurants, movies theatres and even spas.

Shopping in the scorching heat or the blistering cold has now been replaced by the option of a climate controlled environment. Millennials view visiting malls as a status symbol, college going teens choose malls for entertainment, couples consider it for a romantic tête-à-tête. Malls are also becoming regular after office hangout places or even during office workspaces – with the new generation frequenting coffee shops and preferring to work there on their laptops, rather than their staid old offices.

In keeping with the evolving tastes of consumers, mall developers are fast warming up to the idea of Omnichannel retail to stay relevant in this digital age.

### SECRET TO SUCCESS

The Indian shopping centre industry has been under continuous dynamic transformation since 2000. In the year 2001, there were only three malls in India. The number increased to 343 by 2007. As of 2017, India has more than 600 operational malls and going by the report of Cushman & Wakefield, the International property consultancy firm. Such is the growing mall culture in India that 34 new shopping malls, covering 13.6 million sq. ft. area, are expected to come up in top eight cities by the year 2020.

Despite this, the mall industry in India is very tough place to be in. Almost every mall aspires to deliver similar kind of facilities to consumers and expects enormous footfalls and business in return. However, only a few achieve the target successfully. The success of the shopping malls depends on certain factors:



**LOCATION AND**

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Malls need to be located in a prime shopping area, which is accessible by quality public transport and frequented by cabs. The time of reaching a mall from the furthest area in a city should be minimum in peak hours.

**VALUE:** Providing value-added services in the mall premises is a show stopper apart from the regular EOSS.

**BRAND MIX:** A healthy brand mix – the best of international and national names in the mall are a sure shot way to bring in and retain consumers. Pop-up stores and restaurants and well-planned events simply add to the excitement.

**EXPERIENCE:** A great ambience, quality of window displays, shop décor, friendliness and competence of clerks and service staff, dining and accommodation

options also help increase footfalls.

Today, the mall culture in India has evolved into something more than just a simple shopping trip. Shopping centres across the globe are now focusing on prime entertainment, with actual shopping taking a backseat. There are malls offering over-the-top features including indoor ski-hills, indoor theme parks, water parks, zoos, science centres, shooting ranges and even an underground shark tunnel.

NCR's Mall of India has an indoor ski-range – Ski India, The Great India Place has a water park and one of the best kids play zone in town – Worlds of Wonder and Kidzania. The Grand Venice Mall in greater Noida offers gondola rides. The Mall of America in Minnesota has an indoor amusement

park, complete with a roller coaster an underground aquarium, a water park and a gun range. The Venetian Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas also has gondolas that ferry consumers from one designer store to another. The Berjaya Times Square shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur, has an extraordinary 48-storey complex house with a theme park, 3D cinema as well as a hotel.

The conclusion? No mall today can depend only on shopping as its prime source of bringing in revenue and footfalls. Just shopping is no more a crowd-puller. Malls need to transform into community spaces to stay relevant to the discerning customer.

Here's a lowdown on what the best malls in India have done right to attract consumers and make them stay.

**BUILDING A BRAND: THE JOURNEY & THE CHALLENGES**

To be successful, shopping malls in India need to become brands. And like all famous brands – national or international – malls need to position themselves strategically, zero in on a target audience and then work towards building amenities that will attract these people.

There are many malls in India which have followed this philosophy to become successful brands in their own right. One of these is Pacific Mall.

Pacific Mall is a part of Pacific India, a reputed business group with presence in real estate, hospitality and education verticals. The group's flagship mall in Tagore Garden is a 6 lakh sq. ft. premium shopping, entertainment and leisure



“The mall regularly interacts with the customers and conducts research and interactive surveys to ensure that the data analysed can be utilised with valuable customer insights to help us prioritise on brand mix and areas of focus and investment.”

– **Abhishek Bansal**,  
Executive Director,  
Pacific India.

destination hosting more than 140 national and international brands in the country.

“We are a one-stop lifestyle destination for the complete family offering a bouquet of global brand experience under one roof gainfully engaging the people of Delhi NCR. The mall regularly interacts with the customers and conducts research and interactive surveys to ensure that the data analysed can be utilised with valuable customer insights to help us prioritise on brand mix and areas of focus and investment,” says Abhishek Bansal, Executive Director, Pacific India.

Another shopping centre which has fiercely worked towards creating its own identity is Viviana Mall.

“Today, Viviana Mall is recognised as one of the leading malls in India. The challenges and difficulties,

we faced was related to the location. Thane had a stigma attached that majority of the population that belongs to the middle class who never aspired for international brands and the shopping pattern is conservative. At the same time, many were of the view that the distance between Mumbai and Thane would restrict footfalls only from Thane. Sheth Developers & realtors Ltd. wanted to break this stigma. They wanted to build a mall which is based on the needs and requirements of the people residing in and around the Thane region and did so successfully,” says Rima Pradhan, Sr. Vice President, Marketing at Viviana Mall.

One mall which took a different path – and came out successful – is the Grand Venice Mall in Greater



“We have successfully established DLF Promenade as the most admired fashion destination and DLF Mall of India as the largest mall in India today. DLF Place Saket has also carved an identity for itself with more and more brands finding space in it and rapidly growing footfalls on a daily basis.”

– **Pushpa Bector**,  
Executive Vice-President  
& Business Head, DLF  
Shopping Malls.



“The Oberoi Garden City with its world class residential, commercial and hospitality projects gives the mall an added advantage, by supplying a steady stream of affluent and aspirational consumers. Oberoi Mall enjoys nearly a 70 percent market share of footfalls and retail sales amongst the shopping centers located on Western Express Highway.”

– **Anupam T**,  
Vice President, Oberoi Mall

Noida. The mall is a tourist destination with a Venetian concept, something that had never been explored in India before. Inspired by the city of Venice, with a distinctly European feel, The Grand Venice Mall is spread across a whopping 3.2 million sq. ft.

“This journey has been dream come true for us. We worked on The Grand Venice eight years ago. Making the architects, technologists and labours understand the concept was really difficult, which is why the mall took almost 3X more time to be built than usual. We also needed to make sure visitors were secure and taken well care of when they came to the mall. As a result, the mall design is extremely complex. We still are facing a few

difficulties when we work on both the real estate and the technology side of the mall, but we are on our way to realizing a goal – that of being a mega tourist destination,” says Queency Bhasin, CEO of The Grand Venice Mall.

The journey for the DLF Group too has been a challenging one, but extremely rewarding at the same time, with all its malls – DLF Promenade, DLF Mall of India, DLF Cyberhub, DLF Place Saket and DLF City Centre, Chandigarh – doing exceptionally well.

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“With over 300 stores representing an exhaustive mix of international, national and regional premium brands, Phoenix MarketCity offers the most comprehensive and compelling lifestyle shopping experience in Bengaluru. The mall hosts several theme-based events and large scale musical concerts where best in class music bands and popular Bollywood singers perform.”

– **Gajendra Singh Rathore**, Director, Phoenix MarketCity

rapidly growing footfalls on a daily basis. DLF Cyber Hub is a unique F&B destination that offers the best world cuisines in the heart of Gurgaon,” explains Pushpa Bector, Executive Vice-President & Business Head, DLF Shopping Malls.

“GST and demonetisation have been the major challenges but the impact of the same vanished soon after their implication. From a technology standpoint, there have been no significant challenges as we have been moving ahead of the curve using innovative technology to elevate the customer convenience quotient,” she adds.

United Arab Emirates-based LuLu Group, known

for running a retail chain of over 120 hyper markets in the middle East, is planning to expand rapidly in India. And to expedite the process, the brand is using technology in its best form.

Business Head, LuLu Mall, Shibu Philips says, “We are using new technology to pre-cast the buildings of our new mall. This will help hasten the process of constructing the mall. By using this technology, we expect our mall to be ready in 24 months straight.”

He further adds, “Apart from this, with respect to loyalty, we are using technologies like geo-fencing, beacon technology and ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition). We identify our customer the moment he/she enters the mall as this technology helps in recognising number plates of cars and keeping track of customers. Presently, we have loyalty details of 1.5 lakh customers and we know what they shop for in our mall at the micro-level. Now, we have started interacting with them and ensuring that they get all timely information about our mall.”

Another case in point is Phoenix MarketCity, Bengaluru, a marquee development in retail real estate space that opened in 2011 and has established itself as a lifestyle and entertainment destination, operating with full occupancy. It has grown more than 15-20 percent in terms of sales as well as bottom line. The mall has established itself as an urban lifestyle consumption destination, which offers a holistic and premium experience for retail, entertainment and movies, and F&B.

“With over 300 stores representing an exhaustive



mix of international, national and regional premium brands, Phoenix MarketCity offers the most comprehensive and compelling lifestyle shopping experience in Bengaluru. The mall hosts several theme-based events and large scale musical concerts where best in class music bands and popular Bollywood singers perform,” says Gajendra Singh Rathore, Center Director, Phoenix MarketCity.

Ishanya Mall, a venture of Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (DFPCL) came in to being a decade ago with an objective of making the joy of home making come alive. The mall offers an atypical experience when compared to a conventional mall.

“Ishanya is one of our prestigious projects, which is

quite the first among equals in terms of the project vision, physicality and customer experience. We want our customers to make home-making a joyful experience. Being a pioneering theme, the concept visualisation and composition of various related segments have taken time to settle down amidst the target audience. Striking the right balance between two diverse target groups of B2B and B2C has been at the core of the business model and finding the sweet spot is interestingly complex,” says Mahesh M, CEO Ishanya Mall.

And then there is Quest Mall, introduced with the anticipation of a change in consumer attitude. The mall brought with itself a complete retail revolution in eastern India.



“The mall sizing has to be right; you cannot size it too small or too large. There has to be an in-depth study into infrastructure, the buying power of the consumers and their preferences, thus making a mall relevant to a particular market.”

– Naviin Ibhrampurkar,  
Head of Marketing &  
Corporate Communication  
Inorbit

“We had hoped for, and seen a complete change in the way consumers behave and spend now. They stretch themselves to pay a premium for international brands, something we are happy to see,” explicates Sanjeev Mehra, Vice President – Quest Properties India Limited.

The mall wants to stay connected to the Millennials and is trying to differentiate itself by adopting digital technologies, staying active on social media platforms including Facebook, where they have more than 100,000 organic followers – mobile apps and a dynamic website.

“We strongly believe digital is the way forward,” says Mehra.

Inorbit, one of the Mumbai iconic malls, has come a long way thanks to the unwavering support of its patrons. “Change is the only constant in today’s dynamic world and in our 13<sup>th</sup> year we revamped ourselves with an attractive

array of fashion, lifestyle, food and entertainment options. To be successful you have to continuously gauge the consumer sentiment and act to provide the best shopping experience. Real estate has its own set of challenges, one of them was renovating the mall without shutting operations and affecting business,” says Naviin Ibhrampurkar – Head of Marketing & Corporate Communication Inorbit Malls (India). “

Planning of the renovation, phase wise is the biggest of the lot. It requires meticulous arrangements and coordination amongst multiple teams. We launched our app this year with innovative shopping features like the ability to reserve a product online and picking it up from the mall and a same-day shopping bag delivery service,” he adds.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Mall managements in general encompass the process of conceptualisation, positioning, zoning, deciding the tenant mix, promotional activities and marketing of the mall as well as facility and finance management as the keystones of success.

All these put together ensure that the mall targets the right audience, and garners the correct responses from them not only to make the mall a successful place, but also to ensure that retailers and consumers gain the most.

Inorbit Mall’s Ibhrampurkar says: “The strategy for a mall to become successful involves a gamut of things – location, the design and circulation, size, tenant mix – all that creates a product. There is no one simple formula to succeed because

you are creating a product which has to be relevant to the neighborhood and the economic prosperity of the micro market. Eventually, a good mall is one that provides comfort, excitement and a refreshing experience to the consumer. A good product can succeed anywhere and same goes for Tier II & III cities. The mall sizing has to be right; you cannot size it too small or too large. There has to be an in-depth study into infrastructure, the buying power of the consumers and their preferences, thus making a mall relevant to a particular market.”

Bansal concurs saying, “Location, retail tenant mix and project viability are the important factors that plays a major role in determining the success of the mall.”

“It is the bond between the mall and its customers and retailers that determines the degree of success. Since its inception, Viviana Mall has been making a conscious effort to upgrade their offering and has pioneered in setting high benchmarks in the retail real estate market of India to create better synergies with customers as well as retailers,” adds Pradhan.

“The most important thing is to address the needs of the majority of the catchment area around a mall. A lot of expertise is required for this – the way a mall is designed, the displays, the brands and shops. Visitors to the mall should be able to see the maximum number of shops from any point in the mall, shop fronts should be exposed well, and merchandise needs to be attractively displayed to encourage sales. Careful planning of the centre to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to consumers is

what will bring in an effective flow of footfalls,” she states.

Bector adds, “An ideal brand and product mix is sacrosanct in determining the success of a mall. Additionally, elements like hospitality, location, convenience and safety play a significant role. Malls are increasingly becoming experiential centers and hence, there is considerable emphasis given to F&B and entertainment when planning a mall. Our endeavor is to always give our customer the best experience; therefore, we deeply focus on providing great hospitality and safety.”

Says Mehra, “For Quest, its zoning which sets us apart from the rest. Positioning comes next. We have positioned ourselves as an aspirational shopping center which caters to every segment of the society. Apart from this catchment area, luxury



**Mohammad Ali,**  
COO – Retail, Prestige  
Group:

Location always has a positive impact on mall revenues and plays a major role but beyond that there are several important factors as well like-

- Design – how comfortable it is for the people to spend more time
- Ambience
- Brand’s collection and brand placement
- Kind of brands that can convince people to come to malls
- Parking facilities



“For Quest, its zoning which sets us apart from the rest. Posing comes next. We have positioned ourselves as an aspirational shopping center which caters to every segment of the society. Apart from this catchment area, luxury brands, F&B, cinema theatres are the other elements which determine the success of the mall.”

– **Sanjeev Mehra,**  
Vice President, Quest  
Properties India Limited

brands, F&B, cinema theatres are the other elements which determine the success of the mall.”

Talking about his experiences running Ishanya, Mahesh M says, “Shopping experiences are created by multiple and meaningful engagement methods. The three categories offered are curate, a set of unique moments that translate into memories of joy and fulfilment. The sheer layout, indoor-outdoor ambience, elements such as the clock-tower or the wishing well, an amphitheatre that plays host to high quality events in music, dance, theatre, an art gallery that has a continuous stream of shows and workshops – all of these add to the memory nodes through both head and heart responses. Our unique



“Omnichannel retailing is a market reality and it has to be embraced, but I feel that Indian customers take time to get accustomed to something new. It may take them two to three years to get used to this new fad.”

– **Anil Malhotra,**  
Executive Director,  
Elante Mall

services platform Myfitbkh short for a well-maintained and coordinated bedroom, hall, kitchen (or the home in sum) is another case in point to provide elevated experiences to our customers. To me, the key elements driving success are three pronged – context, content and communication.”

Anupam T, Vice President, Oberoi Mall, Mumbai, is of the opinion that a good product mix, location with great design supported with outstanding operations and cutting-edge marketing defines the success of the mall. “Activation and events play a key role to enhance the mall experience,” he adds.

### INNOVATION & CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

Beyond the type of tenant, or the size of an anchor, the most important question to ask from a developer’s point of view is what type of a user experience is being created for consumers. From interiors and aesthetics of the interior, and also the need

to create a development that offers the consumer a varied and unique experience. According to Rohit George, Managing Director, Virtuous Retail South Asia, 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 by specialist consultants that when managed well, can add great value to user experience.

“At some level we are a curator of experiences from the point of view of the consumer – essentially how the consumer thinks about our product. We make sure that everything is new, innovative. We will not take design which is in Surat and

replicate it in Bengaluru or Chennai. A lot of our product is based on history and essentially just what connects the community and the city to our project,” he says, adding, “We need to think of malls as lifestyle centres that form an integral part of our town centres and daily activities. The important thing is to think out-of-the-box and find new exciting ways to incentivise people to shop and linger.”

A mall’s evolution is a continuous process. Shopping centers need to continuously keep upgrading their tenant mix in order to provide the community the latest in fashion and lifestyle and making reservations for other finer aspects like food and entertainment.



## Oberoi Mall's Unique Consumer Focus

- Flagship Event – Women's Wednesday, is a major attraction.
- Intellectual Events – Light up Luck (Diwali Festival), Jingle All The Way (Christmas Event), Denim Calling (Denim Festival) among others
- Privilege Loyalty Program – Club Uno has a database of over 10,000 delighted members

## Phoenix Market City: Rising Above Competition

- A courtyard for hosting events including live concerts and shopping festivals.
- Phoenix Gift Card
- Using technology and innovation for customer satisfaction – touchscreen floor plans, innovative direction signages, themed décor, art and ambience upgradation

## LuLu Mall: Loyalty Above Rest

- LuLu's loyalty program has helped to establish a direct relationship with customers, which goes beyond their visits to the mall, says Shibu Philips
- Shoppers can use their smartphone to scan purchase receipts in exchange for points that can be redeemed against gift vouchers
- Every time you spend your money within the mall – from spending money to park your car or to watch a movie, you will earn loyalty points, which is as good as money within the mall
- Close to 25 percent of the mall sales are reflected in the loyalty bill submissions. But the customer base forms a much larger percentage

"Pacific Mall has been aggressive in creating specialised marketing events. The quality of marketing activities is different and unique. We focus on a lot of international performances like Queen's Wednesday, live performances every other Saturday, Musical Fridays at the Plaza. We are also a favourite host for Auto Arcade every year. The mall has created many larger than life replica's, such as the Qutub Minar on Independence Day, the Taj Mahal on Valentine's Day and Eiffel Tower for Christmas celebrations," says Bansal.

The mall also offers various convenience services to shoppers including ticket booking, currency exchange, bill payments, tailoring services, phone repair, travel services etc. which helps it fortify its bond with customers.

Viviana Mall, too, has been very quick in adapting latest technologies and developments popular in mall development. "Advancement in technology has become a global phenomenon. Innovation and customer centricity is the need of the hour. The demands and requirements of customers is changing every second. We are widely known for being the first to introduce practices that were never thought of by an Indian player before. We were the first one to be known as visually impaired friendly mall, first to install 900 KVA rooftop solar power plant and have a 4DX technology enabled multiplex - Cinopolis. We were also the first to give an experience of an open dribble court within the premises of the mall," says Pradhan.

According to Mahesh M of Ishanya Mall, innovation



“We have over 300 days of events. This year, we have consciously tried to move away from events and activities which are noisy – give patrons a noise-free zone. We have already pulled off a few digital led ideas at Ahmedabad One and there are many more in the pipeline.”

– **Jayen Naik**,  
Vice President (Mall of Amritsar and Ahmedabad One), Nexus Malls

is an initiative to convert a customer's pain into customer's gain – and hence customer centricity is like the holy grail.

"Customer engagement is achieved in the realm of products by sheer range and depth and uniqueness, through carefully thought-through services such as home maintenance, renovation and interior design apart from product selection support, coupled with an array of events from short weekend spurts to longer shows and expos. We leveraged our different venues from indoor spaces to the art gallery to the Amphitheatre. International story telling competitions, design exhibitions, corporate futsal and cricket tournaments, children's plays, live concerts by internationally renowned maestros, dance workshops are among many of the engagement tools. Knowledge



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CEO, Ishanya

workshops help in aiding customer awareness and interest. Various media from digital to social, print to outdoor are deployed to promote these events, sale periods and brand launches. While all of the above may be done in parts and pieces by all market players, we could probably say that our approach is to earn respect from our customers as against awe- you know, large footfall numbers, big celebrities, high profile events etc. are important, yet what makes the customers come again and again is when they have respect for you rather than awe. Differentiation is in the thinking and the doing automatically follows," he says.

Bector concurs, adding that customers today are demanding and look for that



innovative edge which will make them keep coming back to a certain mall.

“Keeping the customer sentiment in mind, we are constantly innovating and coming up with customer engaging events to multiply footfall. Events like Sugar Rush, Burgers & Cocktails Festival, Night Owl Festival, Sufi *sama*, *khaana bajana*, Japan Cultural Fest, etc are some of the examples in this direction. All the events have done well, and some have even been huge successes. We focus on providing a holistic pleasing experience entailing not just great shopping but impactful events,” says she.

Mehra says that the challenge is to keep the consumers engaged by bringing in new concepts which would have acceptability amongst both shoppers and retailers.

“We put up regular surprises for our customers. Our Midnight Sale (MSQ) is an extremely popular concept and is one example of how we generated a record number of footfalls in our mall. We transform the ground floor into a night club to celebrate special occasions or festivals. Innovation, surprise and fun are the keys to keep us ahead of the crowd,” he says.

### LOCATION STRATEGY

Location plays an important role in the success of mall. Getting a prime location is the first criteria to the success of a mall. An ideal location would be one with a good catchment area, without other malls around. Research on the affordability levels of the people who live in the area and the kind of shopping and entertainment alternatives they have is also a must, before a developer decides to build a mall.



“You need to be where your target audience is and if the location is not so then the need to be well connected, accessible and reachable becomes a prerogative. A prime location makes a lot of difference to the brand growth and sales. Luckily, we are not only well placed but well connected as well, both by public and private transport,” says Bansal.

According to Ali, demographic and psychographic study of the catchment is very important. “If driving distance is going to be more than an hour for some key areas to be connected so it will work against the success of a mall. Whether the catchment is high spending/brand lovers/shopping experience lovers or not is always worth considering,” he explains.

“There are multiple factors that a mall developer evaluates before investing in a property. These factors have also been constantly evolving and prioritization primarily depends on the region they will be catering to and the catchment and demographics. Some key factors a developer will definitely look at are the disposable income level, ability to spend, propensity to spend, the attitude towards spending v/s hours for spending. A few other



factors include the ability of catchment to grow in terms of size over a period of time once the mall has come in and infrastructure – roads and metro stations,” Ali adds.

According to Viviana’s Pradhan, “The churn of customers from Mumbai, and its suburbs Thane and Kalyan, has increased and so have their choices. Viviana Mall has created an epicenter when it comes to offerings in shopping, entertainment, dining and recreation to these areas. We consistently upgrade our tenant mix, create marketing campaigns, enhance our customer and retailer outreach programs to ensure that we are ahead to match changing trends.”

With nearly 100 malls in operation across the region, Delhi-NCR is the default ‘mall capital’ of the country. No other Indian city comes anywhere close to its undisputed position. In 2015-

16, Delhi-NCR influenced about 60 percent of the pan-India supply and demand for retail real estate – and this scenario is unlikely to change in time to come.

“Location is an advantage, Elante has been successful in positioning itself as a ‘preferred and happening shopping destination’ on account of other factors like strong customer connect and right tenant mix,” states Anil Malhotra, Executive Director, Elante Mall.

“Location will always be a prime concern for consumers and we are cognizant of that. Therefore, all our malls are located in the heart of the city with easy connectivity, through metros, cabs or simply driving oneself. We have two in Delhi itself, which cater to different catchment areas. Customers prefer going to a mall, which is closer to them and hence, our shopping centres are located

where the customers are,” as per Bector.

Inorbit Mall has an interesting inception story. In the early 2000s, Malad witnessed a process of gentrification and Inorbit saw this micro-market as a potential place to invest and it has turned out to be a great choice of location. “This catchment has developed rapidly in the past 10 years. Today even the government is adding more infrastructure to this location and it is promoted as ‘Mumbai’s fastest growing locality’. Our strategy is to invest in similar locations which are value aided and easily accessible,”

says Ibhrampurkar.

Location and access are the two complementary yet dichotomous words. If one is able to reach a place comfortably and conveniently, location is superseded by access. Keeping this in mind, Ishanya Mall’s approach has always been to promote accessibility, easy drive time, destination concept, and marrying the strength of the locality with the access.

“Any destination typically works on assessment of potential, ability to draw the right customers and surrounding infrastructure and their growth-

sustainability potential. As Ishanya is located in East Pune, which has grown in retail market size, social strata and purchasing potential, we wish to cover a wider ambit, covering the city and its limits and a bit beyond too, based on strength of content and communication,” says Mahesh M.

Quest’s Mehra meanwhile, believes in tapping open spaces in the centre of the city. “We target properties with roads on all four sides and the sole reason behind this is accessibility,” he claims.

Anupam T explains why Oberoi Mall is strategically located in Goregaon, East on the Western Express Highway, as a part of the Oberoi Garden City Project. He says, “The Oberoi Garden City with its world class residential, commercial and hospitality projects gives the mall an added advantage, by supplying a steady stream of affluent and aspirational consumers. Oberoi Mall enjoys nearly a 70 percent market share of footfalls and retail sales amongst the shopping centers located on Western Express Highway.”

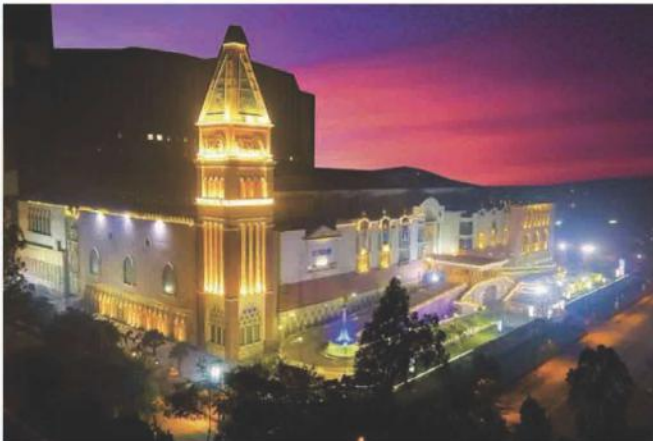
Phoenix MarketCity’s location was envisaged to have the following in the immediate neighborhood – a commercial area surrounding major IT Parks, high-end residential gated communities, hotels, and schools, thus attracting the desired profile of customers. “Our development is now surrounded with premium residential layouts and commercial offices which forms a huge captive catchment for mall,” states Rathore.

“We like to be placed in the middle of a rich residential catchment. We were primarily touted as a neighbourhood city center so that the entire residential catchment within a 3 km radius would be able to use our facilities,” says Jayen Naik, Vice President (Mall of Amritsar and Ahmedabad One), Nexus Malls.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ZONING

Zoning refers to the division of mall space into zones for the placement of various retailers. A mall is dependent on the success of its tenants, which translates to the financial feasibility of the tenant in the mall. Right tenant mix and optimum retailer placement after a diligent zoning exercise can help retailers attract all types of consumers.

“A zoning exercise, if done properly, helps in building a separate image in the minds of the visitors. This also helps influence shoppers’ mall preferences and frequency of visits, which is critical considering the robust upcoming supply of shopping centres. Targeting both pre-planned shoppers and impulse visitors is critical if the shopping centre is to achieve higher conversions



and thereby, higher sales for its tenants,” explains Bansal.

Right adjacencies play an important role for brands to perform better and sometimes the performance of a brand improves if it's located in the right place and around similar brands. Ibrahampurkar explains this with the help of an example: “At Inorbit, The Body Shop, which had been operating from the first floor of Malad for almost 13 years was relocated to the ground floor along with other similar cosmetic brands like MAC, Bobbi Brown, NYX and Kiehls to make it a part of the cosmetic zone. All this led to absolute sales increasing

for the brand with a trading density increase of nearly 45 percent.”

Pushpa Bector adds to this saying, “The zoning of a mall is an added convenience service that plays a key role in becoming a one stop destination for the customers. DLF Mall of India is the first mall in the country that is fully zoned. The ground and first floors house the international and national brands, the second floor focuses on ethnic wear followed by the family world on the third floor and F&B and entertainment spread across the fourth, fifth and sixth floors. Zoning of the mall has helped in structuring the offerings effectively and

customers are able to find different within the same category easily.”

It's imperative for malls to put a lot of emphasis on mall positioning, zoning, customer walk flow management tenant mix, mall layout, promotions/marketing, and facility management.

Since most consumers are always pressed for time, Viviana has provided easy digital touch screens at all entry points and on all floors, so consumers can easily locate any brand in the mall without any assistance.

Benu Sehgal, Head – Retail and Marketing, Ambience Mall, says, “We have already started restructuring the zoning of the malls. We are planning to allocate 40 percent to food and entertainment, 8-9 percent to beauty and the rest will go to fashion and anchors.”

Sanjeev Mehra says since Quest has been extremely selective of the brands they have inducted, zoning is even more important for them.

“Zoning at Quest is based on the aspirational slide. Sandwiched between two luxury levels – (Ground floor – Luxury to Bridge

Luxury and Fifth Floor – Casual Fine Dining) is the first Floor – International Premium, Second Floor – Indian Premium, and Third Floor – Ethnic and Kids Wear. Entertainment and F&B are on the Fourth Floor as the anchors which aid in bringing more footfalls – especially since we are the only ones who have a Michelin star restaurant in Kolkata,” he says.

At Oberoi Mall, too, sections are categorized very effectively, Anupam T explains. The ground floor is given to high fashion, beauty, wellness and accessories with stores like Zara, Lifestyle, GAP, Forever New, The Bodyshop, Swarovski, Clarks, Kama Ayurveda, Jack & Jones, VeroModa. The first floor offers a mix of men's and unisex fashion combined with accessories and electronics, while the second floor is dedicated to women's and kid's fashion along with home durables. The third floor has Food and Entertainment sections.

Ishanya Mall is spread over 10 acres of land and boasts of six arcades. Each arcade in turn has its own identity, completely different from others in construction and design, anchored by a leading market player and supported by a set of mini-anchors. F&B is divided into both sides of the campus, with Blue Frog anchoring the North-east side and Pubtown anchoring the South-west side. Entertainment options are zoned closer to the F&B and the Amphi theatre – which is a cultural hub, occupies pride of place being equidistant from both wings of the campus, enabling customers to access either side quite comfortably.

“Despite the diversity, all different arcades work



together towards a single goal which is enhancing the lifestyle of our customer," says Mahesh M.

### THE RIGHT BRANDS

Bringing in the right brands can sometimes prove to be a nightmare for malls. There are many national and regional brands who prefer to open their stores in high streets because they know their customers. Such is not the case fortunately with international brands who like malls since they need a platform to push themselves up in front of a select crowd and in a place which guarantees footfalls.

"We have wonderful properties which are very unique because of their positioning and location. However, as far as brand mix is concerned, we have raised the bar of both the malls. We are also looking to increase the entertainment factor in both the malls," says Benu Sehgal.

Pradhan however feels that brands cannot avoid malls, especially in a country like India, where malls need to be in a location that their target audience frequents the most.

"Also, customers are not just looking for a shopping place, but also destination which affords them other activities at the same time. Malls offer a wide variety of options to customers, which in turn helps them to make their buying decisions easier," she says.

Bansal added that malls afford a more family experience while a high street is more convenient for individual shopping.

"With cinemas, entertainment activities, F&B, events etc., malls have become centres of family outings apart from shopping.



“We have already started restructuring the zoning of the malls. We are planning to allocate 40 per cent to food and entertainment, 8-9 per cent to beauty and the rest will go to fashion and anchors.”

– **Benu Sehgal,**  
Head – Retail and  
Marketing, Ambience Mall

They offer consumers the convenience of parking – which is very difficult on a high street. Impulse buying is higher in a mall than on a high street. Most malls have anchor tenants who take up large spaces and who also attract a lot of customers. Hyper-markets or departmental stores too find it easy to operate from malls for the relatively lower cost of rentals and the availability of large sizes which are impossible to get on high streets," he explains.

"Most brands prefer to have a right balance between high streets and malls, for obvious reasons of eyeballs from malls and higher conversions from high streets (and of course brand presence across mall and street shopper segments). Commercial implications guide such decisions. We with a differentiated experience and destination being key drivers across the three categories as our architecture lends itself to an outdoor street



“It is important to understand what brand mix works for a city. Mall developers should also explore other avenues which are important and necessary for a wholesome shopping and social space experience.”

– **Rohit George,**  
MD, Virtuous Retail South  
Asia

coupled with advantages of a mall with parking space, security, aggregation. We offer brands and retailers the best of both worlds-high street and mall," says Mahesh M on the choice brands have between opening a store in a mall versus opening one in a high street.

"Brands in the mall need to be aggressive enough to catch up with the existing technology and compete with the competition. Every customer looks for newness and the brands which provide this newness are successful. Lifestyle brands like AND and Global Desi work better inside a mall format. The same goes for fast fashion, which is gaining huge acceptability in India," says Quest's Sanjeev Mehra.

### INTERNATIONAL VS NATIONAL

Bringing in the right kind of tenant mix is a big task for a majority of developers and retail companies. There are some mall developers who

go in for only luxury brands, some tap international brands while others focus on regional / homegrown brands. To build the right kind of brand mix, mall developers need a fair idea of the audience they are catering to. Only after thorough research should they start planning a retail mix.

"The right tenant mix, space allocation, knowledge of catchment and an intelligent approach to customer shopping preferences, backed by quality knowledge and market research, is imperative. It is important to adopt and be up-to-date about trends and changing dynamics and influencers today," says Bansal.

"Both international as well as domestic brands have their own importance. All have a unique brand proposition which helps them co-exist in a mall. Space allocation depends on the requirement by the brand and its demand. There are instances where a homegrown brand has occupied more space than an international brand," adds Pradhan.

Bector agrees with her saying that DLF malls make sure they provide a wide number of both international and national brands to their consumers. "Both the categories are doing well in our malls. For instance, national brands like Chumbak, Desi Pop, and Fabindia are doing well and occupy considerable space in the mall."

Quest's Mehra concurs saying that his mall features a lot of homegrown brands and many of them are performing better than international brands.

"These homegrown brands have a strong emotional connect with customers. For an instance, The Little Shop

is doing way better than many of the international kids' brands in our mall. In the F&B segment as well, we have brands like China South, and Masala Kitchen which are home developed with franchise partners and are performing extremely well."

Highlighting the balance between the design, branding and zoning, George says, "It is important to understand what brand mix works for a city. Mall developers should also explore other avenues which are important and necessary for a wholesome shopping and social space experience. In the case of Virtuous Retail, we are in the business of creating experiences. At every step we are a master retailer. We bring the right experiences to people. Every place is not about the right retail mix."

Inorbit doesn't really differentiate between homegrown versus international, but prefers to give space to performance-oriented brands. "We look at consumer behavior and changing preferences to identify the right brands which will add to the memorable shopping experience. There are cases of international brands failing and alternately there are homegrown brands that have adopted right strategies and succeeded. The adidas store at our mall decided to introduce their new format and opened a bigger store with their new experiential concept. Many brands with increases in their fashion assortment need more space for example AND and Fabindia moved to bigger stores in our mall," says Ibrahampurkar.

At Oberoi Mall, too, there are various national and international brands sharing



similar sizes, locations and consumption as the management believes in choosing performance and customer delight over names. "For a mall to attract footfalls, it is very important to have the right mix of brands. Central, Lifestyle, AND, Global Desi compete in the same space with Zara, Marks and Spencer, and GAP. F&B brands like Maharaja Bhog, Farzi Café, and BBC operate in the same space as Burger King, Taco Bell and McDonalds," says Anupam T.

"What we have tried to embrace is a global mix, with players from varied roots of Pune, Jaipur, Mumbai and Delhi and global brands sharing space and co-existing with the common objective of enhancing home lifestyles of our customers," adds Mahesh M.

However, Rathore has a slightly different point of view. "International brands have wider expansion plans when compared to homegrown brands. Hence, their affinity towards malls is well justified. Having homegrown brands in a mall helps in expanding the array of choices to customers, and drives additional footfalls," he says.

#### **BUZZWORD: OMNICHANNEL**

Competition between online and brick-and-mortar retailers has blurred, with e-tailers opening physical stores and their competition adopting e-commerce. The new destination for retail is Omnichannel and malls have to adopt it too, in order to stay relevant in this digital age.

The future of retail is Omnichannel. This trend towards an Omnichannel strategy will enable retailers to re-think their business strategy in order to tap the best of both worlds and maximise on footfalls.

"Over the years, customer preferences have undergone a metamorphosis, influenced by a global influx of brands, growing economy, increase in customer spending and demand for the latest trends in fashion, fitness, dining and lifestyle. Over the years Pacific Mall has become synonymous with entertainment, fine dining and the latest collection of brands and trends in fashion and lifestyle. We have increased our focus on creating niche campaigns and events for our customers based on their feedback and preferences," says Bansal.

Talking about the Omnichannel initiatives that Ambience Malls will be taking, Benu Sehgal says, "My customer is very busy. Although we would not like to impinge onto his/her privacy but if he/she wants then we would like to reach out to them even in their offices and homes and tell them that the product they were looking for at the mall during their last visit is now available and at this price point. This is where our Omnichannel play comes in."

DLF's Pushpa Bector gives a differing point of view, saying, "In our view, malls need to embrace technology and become increasingly more digital. However, they don't need to take the traditional Omnichannel approach. At DLF Shopping Malls, we are moving towards a phygital experience for the customer, which in our view is the right path to tread."

Convenience and ease of purchase have become key decision-making factors for retail consumers and Omnichannel provides consumers with varied options to achieve this objective.

"We have a very strong

Omnichannel strategy and we have a very solid reason behind creating Omnichannel retailing – to get current retailers to trade up, increase sales and enhancing consumer experience. Implementing an Omnichannel plan and introducing new technology aids both of these, and we are well on the path to Omnipresence,” says George.

Rima Pradhan of Viviana adds that going forward Omnichannelisation would certainly be the need of the hour, but to do that, malls need to first effectively

understand consumer behavior.

“Display advertising, social media, e-mail, mobile marketing, all need to be integrated in a way that the communication and the messaging remains intact. Going Omnichannel has huge benefits for a mall. Malls can tap the best of both worlds and maximise footfalls, but owners and developers first need to strategize depending on the target group,” she states.

Sanjeev Mehra says that while Quest has not yet taken any steps towards

Omnichannelisation, it is his firm belief that mall developers need to adopt this technology to stay relevant.

“We have kept in mind that the brands that we are bringing in are aggressive enough to meet the expectation of the customers at the brand level. Most of our brands have digital platforms inside the stores itself to give the customers options to choose and order from these platforms and take the advantage of the technology at its best,” he says.

We believe in learning from everyone and identifying growth drivers. There are so many things we can pick from the e-commerce model to elevate consumer experience. We have introduced convenience services like the ability to reserve a product online, on our app, and pick it up from the mall or even have the mall deliver it to your doorstep. Our additional services like dropping customer’s shopping bags to their home gives them a hassle-free shopping experience. We have tied up with prominent cab operators

to offer comfortable rides back home with exclusive offers,” says Ibrahampurkar.

Malls need an Omnichannel strategy that will help them compete in the age of Omnichannel retailing and build a sustainable advantage.

The interplay of multiple channels and touch points is indeed quite complex, as complex as today’s consumer behaviour. One must recognise that the consumer buying journey no longer follows the conventional route which marketers had so well captured, but is much more prone to switching, ambivalent and abandonment of a channel. As a student of Omnichannel retail, I can personally probably add that Omnichannelisation of malls is a must do, but a must do only if you want to genuinely add value to the consumer experience, and not just something to tick off the technology list,” says Mahesh M.

“Shopping malls are still experimenting with this medium. With more customers using multiple modes- online and physical, being Omnichannel is naturally a value add. Just like an online store is looking for a physical presence, we are evaluating and exploring the Omnichannel route. We hope to move on this very soon,” adds Anupam T.

**IMPORTANCE OF F&B ZONES**

No mall today can afford to stand tall with just a bouquet of brands. Shopping, food and entertainment go hand-in-hand and malls are pulling up their socks and ensuring that they offer the best of all three worlds to keep the consumers coming in.



Mall developers today are fast realizing that F&B gives a superfluous edge to their malls. The time spent in the mall is directly proportional to the revenue generated by a mall and a food court plus various standalone F&B options are platforms which ensure consumers spend more time in the premises.

“We firmly believe that F&B as a category with the right mix of casual and fine dine does wonders for us, not only in terms of enhancing footfalls, but more importantly in helping us add another rich layer of experience to our consumers. We have a contrarian view on food courts, given our product and category mix. Each of our categories be it Home or F&B or entertainment are experience-led and hence our F&B is not a hygiene filler or a footfall puller, but a major stream of offerings and revenue,” explains Mahesh M.

“Over the years we have doubled the space of F&B from 7 to 14 restaurants and cafés as we anticipate greater demand for F&B experiences,” adds Ibrahimpurkar.

We have always believed that F&B are major drivers of unique as well as repeat visits, which creates a stickiness to the mall. We have an 850-seater food court and a total of 21 food stores, which

generate a daily consumption of roughly 10,000 visitors per day which comes to about 40 percent of daily mall footfall,” says Anupam T.

“Food and beverages have evolved from being retail’s poor cousin to the sector with the dominating edge. Food is a major footfall driver, and food courts give single customers and entire families the option of partaking of a variegated choice of cuisine. As such, they are often a primary reason for people to visit malls in the first place. Since they are usually on the top floor, customers are required to pass all floors below to access them. This increases the opportunities for impulse shopping. Food courts also boost overall sales because they offer panoramic views of what is available at the lower levels, thereby raising aspirational levels,” says Bansal.

Talking about the category, DLF’s Bector states, “Over the years food courts and F&B outlets have emerged as one of the key factors in generating footfalls as they create stickiness. The evolving food palate of Indian customers is always on a look out for trying new international cuisines. While some look for an elaborate seating set up to spend quality time with their friends and

family, others prefer quick on the go delectable bites. F&B accounts for almost 20 percent of the space in the malls.”

“Having great F&B options results in customers spending more time in the mall and undertaking additional activities even if these were not initially planned. It’s the gastronomic destination that attracts both foodies as well as shopaholics,” adds Pradhan.

Sanjeev Mehra adds that no mall in India can be successful without good food and entertainment offerings. “People think with their stomachs especially in India. Children also love stopping at food joints with their parents in tow. Therefore, it is imperative that the popularity of the mall is anchored by the best food and entertainment offering for all age groups.”

### WHY FECs?

The idea of adding major Family Entertainment Centres (FEC) has in malls been gaining popularity rapidly over the last few years. Several new malls have been constructed around the country, with substantial square footage allocated to FECs. They substantially extend a mall’s draw, lengthen shopper stay and even increase revenue for other tenants.

“Shopping malls are maximising on digital technology and enhancing customer engagement to stimulate footfalls besides boosting sales as these factors form a vital aspect of their business strategy. They are providing customers with a wide array of national and global brands, besides enabling them to enjoy with





their family and friends. Apart from big box retail we are also moving towards play zones and engaging events, like celebrations, special campaigns, shows, summer workshops music concert etc," says Bansal.

Pradhan differs a bit saying that instead of being an FEC, malls should aim to be community centres. "Malls need multiplexes, and gaming zones to heighten customer delight. We have a megaplex, Cinepolis with 14 screens and India's first 4Dx theatre. Along with it we also have a FEC - FunCity. Right from bumper cars and twilight bowling to 32 arcade games and entertainment for toddlers, the play zone sets a new standard for family entertainment. The London bus inside our mall has become a major attraction," she says.

Bector agrees saying, "A customer's visit to the mall is not limited to shopping just today; rather they view it as a way of spending quality time with their family and friends. We have accounted

multiple entertainment channels to ensure the desired holistic experience a customer is looking for. We have incorporated a separate entertainment hub for kids such as Funcity; for people across age groups there is Ski India, movie theatres, etc. An ideal combination of food, hospitality, entertainment touch points and of course shopping helps in creating the holistic experience that will drive a customer to the mall."

However, Ishanya Mall's Mahesh M has a completely different point of view. He says, "FEC actually doesn't apply on us, since we are not a typical neighbourhood mall with a hyper, fashion, food court and gaming zone, which seem to be the basic necessities of an FEC. We are a meaningful destination for the mindful consumer, a destination for different occasions from work to life and hopefully will be seen by our customers as a place that helps them to discover themselves and go through multiple experiences during every visit."

The fact of the matter is that new retail/restaurant/entertainment hybrids are capturing an increasing share of families' limited disposable out-of-home leisure time and their retail spending. Malls have re-invented the wheel and embraced entertainment as an important driver to churn the fate of their centres."

"Omnichannel retailing is a market reality and it has to be embraced, but I feel that Indian customers take time to get accustomed to something new. It may take them two to three years to get used to this new fad," added Malhotra of Elante.

Mehra concurs saying that Quest Mall is no longer a shopping center. "We have become an experience center now where the entire family and group love to spend time together. And to cater to the interest of all age-group, apart from F&B and entertainment, we have also created an exhibition space called the loft which is a permanent area for pop-ups art and culture."

### MALL HOSPITALITY & HOW IT GENERATES FOOTFALLS

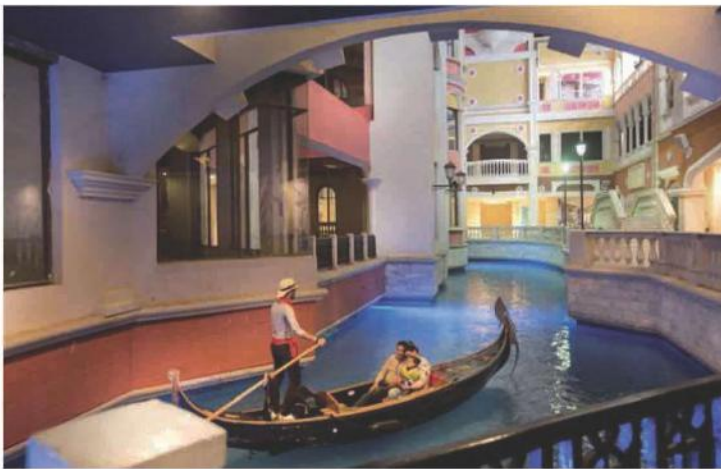
Modern retail is estimated at 14 percent of the total market, which is pegged at ₹142,237 and is expected to grow at healthy rate. Retail expansion grew by over 50 percent in terms of number of retail outlets and retail space with same outlets revenue growth being 20 percent.

But if retail in India is to succeed, shopping centres need to do more than just provide a significant amount of entertainment and F&B. With changing customers and evolving lifestyles, shopping centres need to change too and one way to continue to attract consumers is exceptional hospitality.

"Returning customers are the foundation of any successful business, hence the malls have to be on their toes and work ways to encourage and maintain customer loyalty. At Pacific, we have an International Mall Management company managing the mall and the first priority is to ensure Pacific mall is utmost customer friendly. In C1 (Customer First) program the emphasis is to continuously train and groom on roll and out sourced staff to establish high standards in customer interaction and experience and extending unparalleled shopping experience. We offer a host of services to our customers like Travel Agency, Salon, Car Spa, Kid's Play Area, ATMs, Baby care Rooms, Pram Services, Mobile Power Bank Service, Infirmary, Tailoring Services, etc," says Bansal.

"Unlike unstructured high street shopping, malls focus on grooming of staff, training and extending the best hospitality to a customer. Special attention is given to etiquettes which make the consumer happy at the entry points of the mall. On weekends, our staff is dressed up in yellow and blue T-shirts (Inorbit colours) to welcome customers and pep up the weekend mood. Services like parking & valet facility, Free Wi-Fi, clean and maintained washrooms, Drinking Water stations, Phone charging stations, Baby Care room, Wheel Chairs and Concierge services for bill payments, ticket booking etc are few services that we offer and always look to adding more to it. Recently we did tie-ups with Ola and Uber cabs to offer custom services at the mall," states Ibhrampurkar.





“Our zip line is one of the first in the country and this adventure has never been a part of any mall before; we also promote art, theatre, music learning to the aspiring by having stalwarts train them”

– Quency Bhasin, CEO, The Grand Venice Mall

“We pride ourselves on being able to offer a high-quality experience at any of our DLF Shopping Malls. We have ex-hoteliere at the helm of each property, ensuring a high level of operations is maintained. Every customer touch point from the parking to rest rooms and concierge services are designed to ensure the utmost level of service. If a customer feels attachment to a mall basis how he/she is treated at every interaction point, then they will be a customer for life. We have a host of services across our malls like free Wi-Fi, valet, baby changing and baby feeding rooms, currency exchange, pharmacy, first aid, differently abled assistance, wheelchairs, prams, tailoring

services, dry cleaning, driver’s lounge, car wash services, child safety bands, etc,” states Bector with just the right touch of pride.

“Hospitality play a major role in the entire service industry. Apart from a well-trained support staff, we also offer laundry service, Car Spa, Key maker, Mobile repair, Shoe laundry, etc. that helps customers. We also have XRCVC – Viviana resource centre for training visually impaired, Pankh training centre for training disabled persons, free manure distribution, Handicap washroom, Braille menu cards, Audio tactile labels, etc. that helps us to create awareness toward social as well as environmental causes,” says Pradhan.

Mahesh M too lists out the hospitality services his mall offers. “Hospitality truly is a key aspect of running an experience led destination. In fact, our leadership team in Operations and customer service are people with rich background of the hospitality industry. While the usual services are available, the personal touch makes the difference. From offering wet

tissues when people come on a summer afternoon to pocket size raincoats during the monsoon, we try to pro-actively offer a superior service. Baggage free shopping and opportunities to be part of our culture club are other services that we offer. Our home specialist services ranging from home maintenance to home improvement and home design are again delight builders from a customer perspective. We believe that differentiated services help us in retaining existing customers and hence we build patrons rather than footfalls.”

“Hospitality has emerged as a lucrative category to keep the mall bustling. With an intent to leverage on the higher revenues generated by this segment, malls are leasing out prime ground floor spaces to bring new F&B brands within their fold. We are making it a destination for convenience needs, lifestyle shoppers, tourists, youth and children. Our zip line is one of the first in the country and this adventure has never been a part of any mall before; we also promote art, theatre, music learning to the aspiring by having stalwarts train them,” says Quency Bhasin of The Grand Venice Mall.

“The hospitality that each and every patron gets is no less than the five-star facilities that one enjoy in the best hotels, for an instance we have made it a point to never compromise on our housekeeping standards even if it costs us a fortune,” says Mehra, who’s Quest Mall is known to one of the foremost luxury destinations in Kolkata.

### Key Attractions of The Grand Venice Mall

- Dodges Palace
- Water bodies
- Two canals complete with gondola rides
- Tourist attractions like Fountain de’ Trevi, the Statue of Julius Caesar and the clock tower – all reminiscent of Italian architecture and its glory.
- The inside is a replica of Venice city architecture, including the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa.

## PHYGITAL EXPERIENCE, PERSONALISATION & INTELLIGENT TECH

Phygital and personalisation are the latest catchphrases for mall developers. The premise is that the physical experience of shopping is blurring into digital, where every shop is “smart” and will interact with customers.

“Shopping experience has become sophisticated with the advancement of web technologies. Not only are individual brands putting more focus on e-commerce and mobile, but we’re also now seeing shopping centers adapt to the digital customer. Being a premium shopping and leisure destination with very high footfall, the experience that a customer has once he or she enters the gate is of prime importance to us. We have invested in state of the art security management service and surveillance systems and they are one of the biggest enablers for us in maintaining our performance and meeting customer expectations,” says Bansal.

“Our nation is in the transformational phase when it comes to cash; from physical to phygital and then

leading to digital economy. We, at our end have embraced these advancements,” says Viviana’s Pradhan.

“With the re-launch of DLF Cyber Hub, we ushered in the era of ‘phygital’ experiences for our customers within the DLF shopping malls portfolio. Huber – DLF Cyberhub’s virtual concierge is a prime example of this. You can talk to Huber to find out where the next Sufi night/ladies night/etc will be and at which location; you can reserve a table; check out the menu; find the perfect place which is right for the customers right at your fingertips and at your convenience. Over time Huber gets to know you and can make personalised recommendations just for you,” adds Bector.

Ibhrampurkar recalls a customer survey done by Inorbit Mall which showed that people did not like being interrupted during their shopping time in malls. The other thing they learnt from the survey was that customers prefer personalisation at the retailer level.

“We have to tread a tightrope to maintain this balance. We have introduced

several convenience services like bag park stations, gift wrapping and same day delivery. Shoppers Stop at Inorbit has taken the plunge and installed Magic Mirrors – virtual dressing rooms. Through these mediums there is huge opportunity in terms of digitizing the store and providing endless options for the customers to try fashion virtually,” he explains.

“Technology is an enabler which must be a means to the end rather than the end itself and more importantly lend itself to sharing knowledge instead of just being a mall guide. We understand that the simultaneous interplay of the various channels, be it physical or digital is the new normal. Being a unique physical retail space and India’s largest destination in home & interiors and now getting big on food & entertainment as well, we want to ensure we get it right not just as a gimmick or the cliched ‘app route’, but as a meaningful solution that enriches our customer experience, enhances our retailers’ confidence and finally enables us to be better service providers based on business intelligence that we will gather. Our Myfitbhk website and app helps the customer design his own room in just a few clicks and minutes,” says Ishanya Mall’s Mahesh M.

Gajendra Rathore adds, “Phoenix MarketCity has all digital directories at multiple locations for helping patrons navigate the mall. Our website is interactive, user friendly giving all information that a customer would desire. We are very active on the social media platforms and there is always a huge traffic and customer engagement on real time.”

## PHYGITAL EXPERIENCE

### PACIFIC MALL

- Cloud based applications to empower teams to help them deliver higher productivity & efficiency.
- This includes services like Real time CSI & RSI Mgmt. System, Fit-out Mgmt. application, Automated Daily Sales Report (ADSR), Leasing & SOH Inventory Mgmt., Retailer Analytics System and customer analytics, Task & Snag Mgmt. application to name a few.

### VIVIANA MALL

- A point of sale (POS) system installed at all retail outlets in the mall
- Trained visually impaired individuals on how to do cashless transactions at the mall’s XRCVC - Viviana Resource Centre
- Most retailers in the malls have tied up with leading banks and wallets to encourage electronic transactions by providing discounts

### DLF MALLS

- Launched Huber – DLF Cyberhub’s virtual concierge

### ISHANYA MALL

- MYFITBHK website and app helps the customer design his own room in just a few clicks and minutes

### PHOENIX MARKETCITY

- Booking cabs
- Restaurant reservation
- Bill payments
- 24x7 fully loaded ambulance
- High tech security systems
- Night vision IP based CCTV cameras
- Facility to make parking payments through digital wallets



## OTHER INITIATIVES TO KEEP CONSUMERS COMING

A mall is home to some of the top brands not only nationally, but internationally. It has to keep innovating to bring in consumers, attract a larger client base and retain these customers even in the face of competition.

“Shopping is all about a great ambience and a good experience. Apart from the best brands in fashion, Inorbit hosts several consumer connect events and activities throughout the year. Overall, we host more than 250 events in a year. Community connect initiatives like Pink Power, Family and Kids centric events like The International Clown Festival and *Baccha* Bollywood have evolved as the most popular initiatives. We celebrate special occasions and festivals in grandeur by creating larger than life décor and installations to increase customer delight. It is imperative that we give consumers a WOW feeling when they come to shop, be it for a special occasion or a regular weekday,” says Ibhrampurkar.

Bansal says Pacific Mall is also doing a lot to ensure consumers are loyal. “We have a fresh mix of brands retail & F&B (Superdry, GAP, Armani Exchange, Mango, Dune Hamleys, Nike Kicks Lounge, Asics, Metro Shoes, Baggit and Arrow Sports). We focus on multi-cuisine and fine dining new outlets include Chili’s, Café Delhi Heights, Beer Café, Castle’s Barbeque, Khan Chacha, Cafe Hawkers and Street Foods of India by Punjab Grill and Sugar & Spice and we provide exceptional shipping experience through customer engagements. We also initiate

innovative services and quality marketing events and promotions, which are relevant customer activities. We do all of this so that we can connect with our customers emotionally.”

Meanwhile at Ishanya mall, since the core proposition is Home & Interiors – augmented by experiential fine dining and differentiated entertainment – the aim is to try and bring mutual customer segments to the destination.

“Apart from the home offerings spread across 200,000 sq.ft. of space and fine dine offering spread across 100,000 sq.ft., we curate a whole lot of offerings catering to design thinking, workshops, art, music, theatre and dance shows that bring the culturally deep-rooted Pune-ites to our mall,” says Mahesh M.

Oberoi Mall on the other hand works at implementing two things – a great brand mix and a fabulous customer experience. “Our retail mix is planned in a way that there’s something for everyone. We have an exciting mix of fashion & accessories, F&B and entertainment (which comprises of 35 percent of the mall area). We also host premium events to keep our customers engaged. Customer delight is achieved by focusing on finer experiences like a bright and lit parking slot, cleaner washrooms, clean food court and a smile to greet every customer,” says Anupam T.

And enhancing the overall experience for the entire family is Phoenix MarketCity’s key focus area.

“We are expanding our entertainment areas, adding varied F&B options. We have recently invested to enhance the sensorial experience by

adding fragrance architecture, and have upgraded our mall interiors. We have even invested in art and decoration to make the mall more welcoming,” adds Rathore.

“We have over 300 days of events. This year, we have consciously tried to move away from events and activities which are noisy – give patrons a noise-free zone. We have already pulled off a few digital led ideas at Ahmedabad One and there are many more in the pipeline,” adds Naik of Ahmedabad One.

Viviana Mall’s Rima Pradhan says the mall devises its marketing programs in a manner that can help us in reaching its target audience and encouraging them to participate in events in order to create a formal and informal point of connect between them.

“We have different themes

and activities lined for the entire week through our initiative called ‘Celebrate Everyday’. One of the unique initiatives that the team effectively manages is the dedicated rickshaw stand – an idea to provide comfort to our customers. To address the problem of women safety, a dedicated lane for women is created in which women rickshaw drivers help women customers reach their required destination in a GPS-enabled special orange rickshaws that are loaded with other safety tools,” she adds.

DLF Shopping Malls too craft a robust marketing calendar round the year. Given the target audience, the activities vary across the malls that make the customer keep coming back and experience something new with every visit.

“Throughout the month there is a programmable



events calendar that is executed across the properties along with promotional hooks to drive sales and conversions. This backed with a digital amplification ensures consumers know what's happening at a destination near them," explains Bector.

Quest Mall too aspires to constantly innovate. The mall has come up with unique ways to surprise their patrons and be on top of their game.

"We host a Midnight Sale every year and we transform the ground floor into a night club on special occasions. Right now, the mall is decorated in all its Christmas glory to attract people. Last year on Christmas, we had carol singers with a guitarist and a pianist. We have also created an exhibition space called The Loft, which is a permanent area for pop-ups art and culture," says Sanjeev Mehra.

### WHAT THE FUTURE OF RETAIL HOLDS FOR MALLS OF TOMORROW

India's e-commerce sector is expected to touch US\$ 28 billion by FY 2019-20 on account of an increase in the number of buyers and stable annual spends per consumer, according to a Kotak Institutional Equities report.

"A gradual increase in shopper base, coupled with steady increase in online spends can help the Indian e-tailers reach gross merchandise value of US\$ 28 billion by FY 2020. We assume buyer penetration to improve to 18 percent by FY 2020 from 12 percent in FY 2016, with annual average online spend to increase by 10-15 percent year-on-year over the forecast period," the report states.



The report observes that e-commerce will continue to find more takers, particularly as organised retail penetration remains limited in Tier II and III cities.

So, will shopping malls will lose their sheen in the future since consumers will seek shopping solace through clicks over bricks?

Generally, the success rate of malls varies, usually depending on factors like design and layout, the mall's brand positioning, location and how well they cater to the needs of their target segments. Also, whether or not they have been able to evolve into family destinations rather than just remaining shopping centres is important.

Mall owners these days are striving hard to provide shoppers with an unparalleled shopping experience and say while they are open to new technology, they are certainly not scared of e-commerce.

Bector strongly feels technology will continue to be the game changer, and "As a leading player in the malls arena DLF will capitalise on this trend and continue to innovate in the interest of

Millennials and other target groups."

"In recent years, the sector witnessed two distinct channels gains prominence mainly brick-and-mortar and e-commerce. Though growing smart phone penetration and burgeoning online retail platforms have created diversions, offline retail is here to stay. The trend towards an Omnichannel strategy will enable retailers to re-think their business strategy in order to tap the best of both worlds and maximise on footfalls giving the perfect customer experience," adds Bansal.

"Being a sunrise sector, the mall space has grown rapidly in the last 10 years or so. Malls have established themselves as a must-visit destination for families and friends. They have enhanced not only the shopping experience but also the employment, trade and infrastructure development in all locations where they are present, so in my opinion, the future is very bright. This is just the beginning of the mall era," says Malhotra.

"With malls converting into experience centres, malls of tomorrow will have more of entertainment

to keep patrons engaged. Retail is all about aspiration, which ensures that the malls are here to stay and be an important part of the lifestyle of the people," says Mehra.

Ibhrampurkar feels Indian retail is still in its nascent stages. "There are not more than 8-9 good performing malls in Mumbai where there is potential for 20, and even lesser penetration in other metro cities. We believe there is potential for more malls to open in the country."

"The future of retail is challenging and exciting. Challenging due to the exponentially changing trends on one end, the dramatically evolving consumer behaviour on the other and merging them both won't be that easy. Exciting because of the complexities involved, yet the tools that we develop, the thoughts that we envision and the actions that we embark on, will surely help us to ride the wave of complexities and create a new era of shopping- for all three stakeholders- the consumer, the retailer and we the mall operators. We aim to be part of this journey not as a passenger, but leaders," concludes Mahesh M. **IR**

*With inputs from Sandeep Kumar, Surabhi Khosla & Charu Lamba*