

Pop-up stores: The future of retail

If you take a walk in most malls today, chances are you may come across a fair bit of empty lots which have not been rented out. Rather than looking at these as a reflection of the state of things, we look at these empty lots as opportunities for mall owners to tap upon a trend that is fast taking over the retail scene.

We are, of course, talking specifically about pop-up stores. This type of retail format is fast becoming the new darling among retailers. But before we go on, what exactly are pop-up stores?

Traditionally, pop-up store refers to any type of retail space which is set up for a short duration with the intention of taking advantage of a seasonal demand or even a fast-growing retail fad.

Pop-up stores were commonly used by retailers during the holiday season but today they are more commonly used as a tool by brands to create a more meaningful connection between themselves and their customers.

As such, the concept has begun to take on a more experiential feel by allowing brands to provide product demonstrations, expert consultations and just as a way for the customer to sample the brand's range of products and all the while nudging the customer closer to making a purchasing decision with the brand.

In short, to have a pop-up store today, you need to ensure that it is fun, immersive and selfie worthy.

Would malls benefit from hosting pop-up stores?

The main question we would like to deal with is: Would malls benefit from hosting pop-up stores/spaces within their malls? Our answer is 'Yes' and here's why.

First off, malls which host pop-up stores would have an opportunity to revitalise spaces which are experiencing what we call a pause in rental.

If any space within a mall is seen as vacant for too long, shoppers will very quickly develop an impression that the mall is not doing too well.

Thus, hosting a pop-up store within the said space would be a great way to counter potential negative impressions from forming while engaging customers to interact with the pop-up stores.

Hosting such stores also brings fresh new retailers into the mall who would not otherwise consider operating in a mall.

This way, young entrepreneurs have a chance to expose their business/brand to a captive group of shoppers who will be introduced to brands which they most likely would not have encountered under normal circumstances.

The key here would be to ensure that these pop-up stores have an experiential element in their offerings and are not just there to meet purely commercial objectives.

For example, with Boba



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- Malls which host such stores would have an opportunity to revitalise unused space



by Pamy Wong and Timothy Liew

(bubble) tea concepts having a resurgence in the market right now, would it not be interesting to organise a Boba tea festival within the mall which features the different types of Boba tea retailers in the market brought together as sort of a celebration of all things Boba?

Having pop-up stores will also allow management to experiment with potential new and untested tenants that they are unsure of in terms of fit within the mall tenancy mix.

These new pop-up concepts would have a chance to determine if the mall would be a fit for them whilst allowing the management to determine how well shoppers would respond to these concepts.

With the exception of branded pop-up stores/concepts, most pop-ups tend to be run by local entrepreneurs with little or no capability to afford a presence in a shopping mall.

By having these small opera-

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tors set up a pop-up store within the mall, management can be seen as promoting and supporting local entrepreneurs by exposing them to the people who frequent the mall and would act as a sort of an advocate by giving these smaller entrepreneurs a voice and a space in the retail market.

What goes into creating the perfect pop-up space?

Before embarking on filling your mall with pop-up stores in untenanted lots, we believe certain considerations need to be looked into.

First and foremost, the location of the stores must not be an afterthought.

What this means is that the space in question should be easily accessible to shoppers and not tucked away in a corner of the mall which no one knows exists or would be difficult to get to.

Secondly, mall management needs to set up basic amenities within the space such as lighting, ventilation and power and internet connection.

It is important to note that these set-ups need not be elaborate and should be as simple as possible.

This will allow the pop-ups to be easily set up and dismantled once the event is over or if the space is rented out to a tenant and the pop-up concept needs to be moved to another location

within the mall.

Lastly, it is important for the mall management to have a theme for the pop-up concept as this will go a long way in getting the right type of pop-up store to come into the space as well as shaping an experience for the shoppers visiting the pop-up event.

Since Malaysia is also home to many different festivals and celebrations, it is our suggestion that pop-up stores be set up during the quieter times of the year when there may not be much going on as this will allow the mall to easily advertise the pop-up event and generate interest among shoppers.

All things considered, pop-up stores/spaces are here to stay as brands continue to look for opportunities to forge closer ties with their customers through new experimental experiences and young entrepreneurs continue to look for new chances to showcase their brands to the world.

We strongly believe that the mall has a relevant and immensely important role to play here as a connector between brands or entrepreneurs with the communities where the mall is located. **FocusM**

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