



HAVING a car park is super important for a shopping mall. In the world of competitive shopping malls, shoppers must have a place to park their cars. It actually helps as a great start to the shopping trip and makes it better, especially when shoppers visit a popular mall during peak shopping times like weekends and public holidays. In simple terms, to have a successful mall, you need a good, safe and efficient car park.

When we talk about a shopping mall's car park being cool, we are not just talking about how it looks or the temperature within the car park. The colour, decorations or even if it is bright pink or blue does not really influence whether people like the car park or not. It is more about how safe it feels when you are driving and walking around. Back in the old days, they used to design parking lots with just enough light, about 50 lux, for shoppers to drive and find their cars. But nowadays, some malls have way brighter parking lots, like 150 to 300 lux. Some new malls have even used shiny paint that's fancier (and pricier) than the regular kind to make the place brighter and easier to take care of.

But making the car park look nice is one thing. It also needs easy access. The access from outside the mall to the parking area needs to be well-defined with clear signages and that is something developers often forget. Think about all the people using the car park: Shoppers, delivery folks, e-hailing drivers, visitors and workers. They are all searching for their designated spots and the quicker they find them, the happier they will be doing what they came for - more importantly, shopping or patronising the F&B outlets.

Of course, having a cool car park, in terms of temperature, is also important because an overheated one results in an extremely uncomfortable and unhealthy environment. Unfortunately, we live with tropical temperatures which can climb up to almost 40°C on hot days so car parks are fitted out with exhaust fans to draw out the heat and car exhaust emissions as well as replenish with fresh air at the end of the day.

Cool extras

Shopping malls like to stand out and a cool car park can be one of the

Taking shopping mall car parks to a new level

Going cashless

Hastened by the pandemic, cashless systems now have taken over conventional manually managed parking bays. In 2019, Sunway Pyramid started using cameras to recognise license plates and accepted online payments which helped people pay anywhere before they leave. Going ticketless is great because now you do not need to keep track of a parking ticket. This fixes problems like lost tickets or not having the right change to pay at the payment machines. Using these new technologies also meant the mall owners do not need as many payment machines, saving money on setup and upkeep.

Fancy parking comes at a cost, though. Besides the land costs and costs of funds, building just one parking space starts at an average of RM30,000. If you want all the bells and whistles, it is even more, especially when you dig deeper for basements to build more parking space. If a mall has 5,000 parking spaces, it costs around RM150mil to provide them and that is not even counting the rest of the mall. But here's the twist: Malaysians expect parking to be affordable or even free, even though some of the best parking lots in the world are right here in Malaysia. The cost of parking outside Malaysia is much more, so remember, every time you are using a mall's parking, it is world-class.

What's next?

Some people wonder if having an LRT or MRT connection to malls will mean fewer folks drive there. But five decades of Malaysia Shopping Mall history tells us that Malaysians prefer driving to malls. It is a big part of the fun. We love hopping in our cars, heading to the mall with our loved ones and spending time there—our third favourite place after home and work and an essential of the Malaysia weekend lifestyle.



Mall perspectives

YL LUM
Honorary Secretary



ways they do it. When something special becomes popular, everyone starts doing it. For instance, using fancy epoxy flooring in the car park, which used to be a luxury but is now just what is expected by patrons.

One of the newer high-tech trends is the available parking lot indicator lights and counting system. This has been around for over a decade and it helps drivers find spots faster. In 2014, IOI City Mall introduced a vehicle-finding kiosk, making it possible for people to find their cars in a huge parking area with over 13,000 spaces. Other cool stuff that is now common includes panic buttons and parking spots just for ladies, pregnant women, families and those who need extra help.

Some shopping mall car parks do provide extras like valet parking while others provide buggy shuttle services, especially in large car parks, a very useful amenity when shoppers end up with many items or oversized packages. Going one step further, some malls even do provide security escort services for patrons to their vehicles, upon their request.

With the advent of Electric Vehicles (EVs), and moving with the times, malls have already taken the next step to provide EV charging stations for their shoppers and patrons. More EVs will be inevitable and will rapidly become the main mode of propulsion in due course, so shopping malls look forward to working with the authorities to accommodate this trend with practical regulations.

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average cost of
one parking space