



WALK THE MALL

Mall owners throw open vacant spaces for early morning walk and jogging in a bid to build community patronage and customer loyalty

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MALLS occupy the costliest retail spaces in each city and they remain open for 12 to 14 hours. What about utilising this precious retail space during the early morning hours of the day? Mall walking provides people a vacant space for their early morning walking and jogging, while helping malls build community patronage.

For the community it provides a pothole-free, clean space to do their routine morning walk. Availability of washrooms and controlled temperature are added advantages. But for the proactive mall-owner, it is a cost-effective and sustainable mode of community engagement.

In the intense competitive city environment, where two or three malls share the same catchment area, building loyalty among the community has become very important. Malls conduct activities around special occasions and festivals to attract the customer. Activities like

self-defence workshops, cooking sessions, IQ assessment workshops for children also are taken up to engage with the community.

"The stores in the mall open only by 10.30 or 11 in the morning. Mall walking helps us utilise the idle time fruitfully. There are over 50 people who come daily to our mall in Malad for their morning walk or jogging. The basic infrastructure like security and electricity will anyway be available at that time as the food outlets would be preparing for the day," said Kishore Bhatija, MD and CEO, Inorbit Malls.

According to Nishank Joshi, assistant vice president – marketing of property solutions company Pioneer Property Zone, mall walks build loyalty on a long-term basis and are more cost-effective compared to activities around festivals. "When Diwali festivities cost any mall around Rs 20 lakh to Rs 30 lakh, the cost of providing basic infrastructure for mall walks would be a couple of lakh rupees for the entire year. Community, experiential and consumption-

focused events for customer engagement have proved to have improved footfalls by 30 per cent and consumption by around 20 per cent in the long term," he said.

Around eight to 10 malls in the top cities have introduced the concept, which is popular in the western economies. "Mall walking has to be relevant to the catchment area. It works well in places where there is a dearth of quality open area for walking and jogging," added Joshi.

Currently, mall walking is used as a tool to build loyalty among the community. But once the government becomes more flexible on the mall timings, it can also be used for revenue-generating purposes. "Convenience is the order of the day. The food stalls can cater to the needs of the walkers and grocery stores also can open a little earlier to help walkers club exercise with shopping. More flexibility from the part of the government will help use the opportunity more fruitfully in the future," said Bhatija.

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