



An emerging retail format, outdoor malls and the emphasis is on balancing shopping and allied recreational activities.

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The retail industry's mantra to take the customer experience to the next 'level' has resulted in several innovative stores and shopping centre formats, and an emerging trend relates to outdoor malls. And, these malls which offer a 'free shopping spirit' under the sky are en vogue in numerous cities of the USA. In India, too, Mondeal Retail Park in Ahmedabad, and built by Blocher Blocher India, is attempting to leverage this trend.

Angela Kreutz, CEO, Blocher Blocher India, pointed out to the USP of her mall which features 16 independent units, and each brand has its custom designed entrance. In addition, Kreutz, highlighted that an 'embedded' park landscape with water gardens offers an ideal ambience for families to de-stress and enjoy themselves.

Striking a similar view, Anuj Kejriwal, Local Director, Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), said, "This format conveys an 'organic' development and also provides a 'feel good' factor to shoppers."

#### **Retail mix strategy**

An outdoor mall is ideal for retail tenants that offer consumer brands and daily grocery products, and also wish to simultaneously "delight" customers.

Kejriwal of JLL also stressed on the importance of maintaining world-class standards at this retail format on a day-to-day basis.

A key factor that has contributed to the success of such formats overseas relates to the emphasis on outdoor activities, and experts also stressed on a similar trend developing in the country.

Sonal Shrivastav, Head of Design and Development at Pioneer Property Zone, a third-party real estate marketing firm for malls, highlighted that they have been associated with similar retail projects under development in Andhra Pradesh and the western region, and the response from domestic and international retailers along with consumers in the higher income bracket has been encouraging.

#### **Overcoming challenges**

The weather patterns in several parts of the country witnesses large changes during the year, and senior retail professionals doubted the viability of such malls over the long-term.

Yogeshwar Sharma, COO, Select Citywalk Mall, said, "I would suggest a combination of an indoor and outdoor mall, both for customer experience and day-to-day maintenance."

Nevertheless, the in-store customer experience is set to be transformed. 