

India is all for innovation. But are we ready for it?

Post independence, India has witnessed some remarkable developments across different sectors. Post globalization, the development further gained momentum and the world started looking at us. Cometh the new millennium, cometh the retail revolution. The first wave of Indian retail and retail space was largely influenced by all western formats be it Hypermarkets or Shopping malls. One side where we greatly benefited in retail was by adopting best practices in retail Operations; we also paid a price in following it blindly in areas like buying, resulting in many retail names being lost in black holes over the last few years. The recession appeared to be the litmus taste not just for retail sector and wrote the obituary of a few very promising names as they were seen successful on surface but had no strong base to build on the sound retail business.

The same pattern of footfall, conversion and bill value was replicated every time. However, it came as a surprise to many as the pace of footfall initially on the launch of virtually every new concept and format introduced in Indian retail was non-sustainable. The buyers could not connect to the product offerings and price points keeping Indian lifestyle and family size / income in view; major focus was to make customers adopt western retail format, buying cycles and styles rather than formats, understanding, accepting, adopting and delivering on local aspirations. Otherwise there is no other reason as to why

we haven't seen exponential expected growth expected out of organized retail in India. India has always been a volume driven market.

If we take the case of the shopping mall, yes, in terms of drawings, MEP and parking there are excellent benchmarks that were created in the western world; but, I am a strong believer that many of our malls in India are far better in terms of design, usability, and appearance than many western malls which are old and aged.

If you compare the footfalls of a well designed, fully leased mall in India to that of a mall in the west, the former outplays the later comfortably. With architectural magnificence and burgeoning population of the aspirational youth, we have also learned with time as how important is parking facilities for two-wheelers over four wheelers, the importance of right blend of local, regional national and international brand depending of each catchment which at times are as big as some small countries in Europe.

And I am not talking about revolutionary change, but small things done differently. Like we have done at Treasure Island Mall Indore: a small, 3 lac sq. ft. GLA mall, fully leased with in-



Arif Sheikh
CEO & E.D.
EWDL

ternational brands like Adidas, Nike, Puma, Levis, Max; National brands Pantaloons/Big Bazar, Archies, Fab Mart, regional brands like Dennis Parker, Belleza and many more.

Local brands like Guru Ji with very strong focus on entertainment part keep drawing 20-30 K footfalls for last 6 years consistently resulting into decent business for all tents and no casualty in terms of vacancy. The Industry also rewarded the Mall

with every possible award, recent one at ISCF, the Most admired Mall, retailers choice award. Still after six years we have full parking not only mall but even at newly acquired parking lot on the weekends. In this small mall in a small city at times you can see more business and shopping bags than big mall in big city. So what all we have done? Let me share a few small initiatives taken by us:

1 Local language : We proudly accepted, not only cursory level that Hindi is local largely accepted and widely spoken language and we used this extensively on all communication with catchment and clients inside the mall at all touch points and we found them more engaged at this mall then other locations.



2 Shoppers Assistants / Grahak Seva: One of the most admired service introduced by Treasure Malls in India where 5-10 smart guest service staff in very bright color uniform move around in the mall and if they see any shopper carrying heavy shopping bag, they approach, greet and offer their services to drop these shopping bags to car, even they move around baby stroller or wheel chairs for senior citizens and physically challenges citizens.

3 Unique Ladies Washroom : These washrooms are really unique from fashion tips to home decorations tips are placed on clear, large fonts inside each washroom panel, stories of Leading female Indian achievers are displayed around, There are plenty of hooks around near washbasin for ladies to place their handbags, baby diaper changing platforms are also placed in these rooms and there is 24x7 assistant outside washroom who does provide constant assistant to

all users if there is any issue of cleaning to hardware. Just behind these Washroom assistants stand, We have baby feeding room so they (Mothers) are assured of no disturbance and feel secure.

4 Unique Branding Support: Since most of the malls in India have more or less same brands we do provide some relief in terms of lead message to grab attention of shoppers who are in the malls like for food court we have lead message like 'hungry kya, Food Court at 4th floor'.

5 Morning Walk: Unfortunately many cities are known for bad traffic and even senior citizens and ladies are very vulnerable while they are out for morning walk and hit and run cases are reported lately, So we provide Mall outer periphery for morning walk to senior citizens and ladies, where they can move around in the area which is totally sanitized and supervised by Mall security.

6 Marketing / No Selling: Rather than keep propagating area/ elevators, escalators and self-appreciation we adopted totally different platform for last leasing campaign for our upcoming mall, by connecting to audience in English on Bollywood popular hit dialogues like "mere pass Maa hai" this really got audience attention and after some time people started waiting for EWDL mailers.

7 Staff : Most of the real estate companies / mall developers on their way to professionalize the complete organization structure, EWDP took a lead here where perhaps among Indian developers first few where we have All, every vertical head IIM-graduate and each mall got Retail Degree holder and not only this, these retail professional were the toppers in their respective institute who work side by side of experienced mall managers providing unique combination of education/ experience of retail.

8 Retailers Committee: We have key anchors/brands committee which are chaired by rotation; they meet frequently and discuss scenario, issues, and solutions. This way we have created unique partnership module where retailers are actually empowered to take participation in all major decisions.

9 Training of Retailer's Staff: We do organize various training programmes for interested retail staff on Visual merchandising, selling skills, grooming and even conduct contest on customer service to encourage better business at our partner's outlet as well as take mall image on services to next level.