

Elevating the mall experience from the ordinary to the extraordinary

 By [Heloise Mgcina](#)

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Malls have become environments where people go to engage with friends, connect with like-minded shoppers, seek out unique experiences, reaffirm values and interactively relate with brands on a personal level. Malls, therefore, need to adjust to meet the growing trends within these spaces, driven by a retail future that will absolutely be customer-centric.



Heloise Mgcina, marketing and communications executive at Liberty Two Degrees

Post-pandemic, several new trends have emerged that malls would do well to heed, as these point the way to more satisfied and loyal customers. These include augmented serendipity, integrated sustainability, and the mall as a place of service.

The case for serendipity

One of the key things that human beings tend to seek out is a form of serendipity – something unexpected that brightens a shopper's day, like a tasting tray or a free sample; this is something that any retailer can invest in. It is compelling for consumers to essentially stumble upon something, such as entertainment, that wasn't advertised. In a post-pandemic, post-lockdown world, such happy surprises are far more sought after than before.

Ultimately, shops and malls can look to augmented reality as a means of providing a more tactile experience to consumers. This doesn't necessarily mean virtual reality, but rather is a case of layering different sorts of tactile experiences into the physical environment.



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Going green

Sustainability, of course, is as important for us as it is for most customers today and we believe in a very integrated approach to achieving this, minimising the impact of our carbon footprint on the natural environment. In our malls, for example, we have implemented a 'No harmful plastic bag' policy across our portfolio to combat plastic pollution and partnered with our tenants in doing away with harmful plastics.

As sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the lives of customers, creating a circular economy in waste management and product production is imperative.

Place of service

The next level of service for retailers goes beyond merely what products they sell. It is not just the physical space or product that is being sold to a client, but also the amenities and other add-ons. These swing the consumer's loyalty decisions - where they will tie loyalty to a specific brand because they've experienced exceptional service.

In recent times, coffee shops have provided relief to remote workers seeking connectivity and power during blackouts, and if malls can do this, why not offer other options, for example, a 'homework station' where parents who are shopping can leave their kids to complete their after-school work?



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Create a total brand experience

In consumer-facing organisations, the key to success lies in how you are able to humanise the business instead of it merely being a product provider. In essence, businesses and the malls in which they reside need to consider how they can comprehensively and holistically create a total brand experience for each individual customer.

And when tied to an enduring legacy, positive impact and long-term loyalty, such experiences create memories that unlock emotions and lead to long-term happiness and advocacy. And so going into 2023, the challenge is to elevate these touchpoints out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary.

ABOUT HELOISE MGCINA

Heloise Mgcina is the head of marketing and communications for Liberty Two Degrees. With over 20 years of experience, she has worked in various industries, including telecom, professional services, banking, and property. Her marketing specialities include sponsorships, brand management, and digital marketing. She is also responsible for leading the company's transformation strategy and, more recently, its ESG reporting. She is a strategic thinker, with a passion for data-led insights that drive creative thinking and new strategies.

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