

MALL TALK

FEBRUARY 2026



Dear Members,

SCAI is conducting a short industry survey for 2025–26 to capture members' perspectives on evolving shopping centre strategies, leasing models, technology adoption, & customer experience.

The survey is concise and requires only tick-mark responses. To ensure complete confidentiality, responses are being collected anonymously through Google Forms.

Following is the link for the survey

<https://forms.gle/6YVRq9YhMNmSEgJp7>



We request all members to kindly participate and submit their responses by 6th February 2026





SHOPPING CENTRES
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Copyright @ Shopping Centres
Association of India, Mumbai
Issue 55, February 2026

EDITED & PUBLISHED BY:
Shopping Centres Association
of India
3/116, Pintoo House Marol
Co-Operative Industrial Estate,
Marol, Andheri (East), Mumbai
400059.

Website: www.scai.in
Email : info@scai.in

PUBLISHER:
Shopping Centres Association
of India
info@scai.in

DESIGN:



beatscracker@gmail.com
+91 91122 91108

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES:
editormt2008@gmail.com

REGISTERED OFFICE:
Shopping Centres Association
of India
S-61A, Okhla Phase II, New Delhi,
110020.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

HUMAN CONNECTION IS BECOMING THE STRONGEST FORM OF
BRAND LOYALTY

05



DEEP DIVE

GEN Z IN INDIAN MALLS: WHY THE YOUNGEST ADULT CONSUMER IS
REDEFINING PHYSICAL RETAIL

07



HAPPENINGS

THE MALL THAT CHANGED BANGKOK'S CENTRE OF GRAVITY

09



INFLUENCE TALK

VALENTINE'S DAY: LOVE, CULTURE, AND ITS GROWING INFLUENCE ON
SHOPPING MALLS

10



ANALYSIS

INTRUSION PROTECTION AND THREAT MITIGATION FOR YOUR MALL
ASSET – PART 3

11



INSIGHT

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF MALL & TRANSIT RETAIL MANAGEMENT:
THE SCOOPSENSE STORY

15



TRENDSTALK

WHY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE WILL DEFINE THE FUTURE OF
BUSINESS AND RETAIL

19



STRATEGY

MALL GIFT CARDS ARE NOT PROMOTIONS. THEY ARE PRE-SOLD FOOTFALL

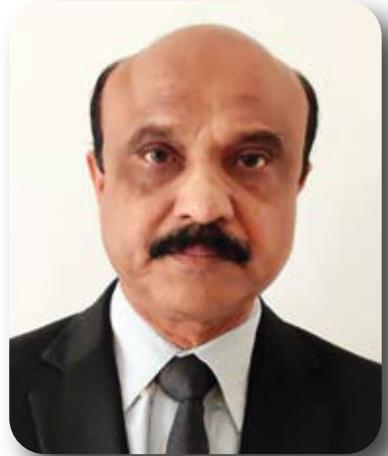
21



EVENT WATCH

REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION

23



Anjeet Kumar Srivastava
COO, SCAI

From Transaction to Transformation: The New Role of Shopping Centres

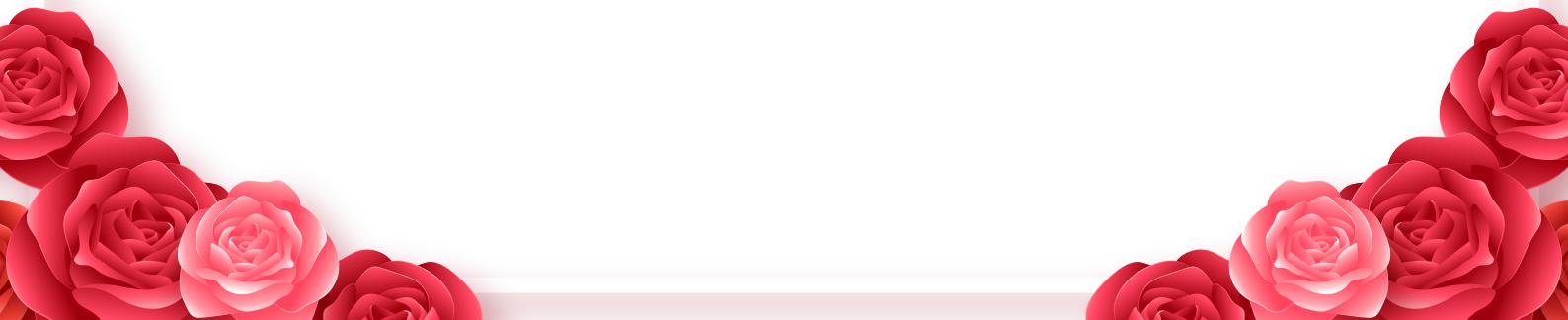
As we step into March, the retail landscape continues to shift at pace, pushing shopping centres far beyond their traditional role as transactional hubs. Today's malls are evolving into multifaceted lifestyle destinations where retail converges with entertainment, culture, dining, and community—places designed not just to sell, but to engage, inspire, and connect.

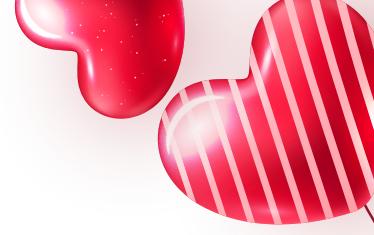
This evolution demands a future-forward mindset. Digital integration, AI-led personalisation, sustainability-driven design, and mixed-use development are no longer optional; they are foundational to relevance. Modern consumers seek immersion, ease, and emotional resonance. They want experiences that feel curated, spaces that reflect their values, and environments that encourage repeat visits and deeper brand affinity.

At the heart of this transformation lies a new challenge and opportunity: crafting destinations that balance innovation with authenticity, efficiency with experience, and commerce with community. From experiential retail formats and smart technologies to greener operations and flexible spaces, shopping centres must continuously adapt to shifting consumer behaviours.

Looking ahead, collaboration will be the defining force. Retailers, developers, brands, and technology partners must work in unison to shape destinations that are dynamic, resilient, and human-centric. The future of shopping centres is not about transactions—it is about belonging. Together, it is time to reimagine retail and create spaces built for longevity, relevance, and impact.

Anjeet Kumar





Human Connection Is Becoming the Strongest Form of Brand Loyalty

- By Swagatika Das,



A brand's visual identity is no longer decoration; it is a declaration, of intent, values, and empathy. A great brand doesn't just look good. It feels right. That instant sense of trust you get when you see a logo, colour, or layout that "just fits" is not an accident. It's the result of design that understands people. In a world overflowing with choices, aesthetics have become the first language of trust. Especially for conscious, nature-based, or purpose driven brands, the challenge today is to appear as authoritative as they are human.

Consumers are not only asking what a brand sells, but what it stands for. They are drawn to honesty, inclusivity, and warmth, and they can sense when those traits are genuine. A visual identity that mirrors these values becomes the bridge between belief and belonging. It tells people, "you are seen." Modern branding is moving from relevance to resonance, from being noticed to being felt.

Visual identity is composed of two intertwined dimensions: presence and personality. Presence is everything that makes a brand instantly recognizable, its mark, graphic system, layout style. Personality is the sense that the brand "has something to say," that it has beliefs, tone, voice, emotion. Together, they shape how someone perceives the brand before even a word is read.

When a brand commits to human-centred identity, it sees visual design as relational, not ornamental. Instead of dictating what people should believe, it coaxes people in. It reflects what they already lean toward and invites them to feel seen. Human-centered branding demands empathy, context, and cultural fluency. It focuses on how people live and think, not just on what aesthetics are trending. Brands that lean into this know that design must match the emotional temperature of their audience.

One example from the design world is how authenticity has risen as a trust lever in visual branding. Scopio, a creative platform, argues that authentic visuals build connection: using localized images, real human moments, and diverse aesthetics rather than staged "generic beauty." That shift helps people believe that a brand sees them, not an ideal.

Imagine two brands: one rooted in nature and wellness, the other in tech and reusability. The first relies on warm off-white tones, organic textures, and handwritten fonts that suggest care, but without honest ingredients or responsible packaging, its beauty stays surface deep. The second embraces cool palettes and modular layouts, yet without intuitive UX and clear communication, its precision feels sterile.





True trust arises when visuals and values move in harmony. A brand's identity earns credibility through coherence, when interface, packaging, motion, and photography all express empathy. Inconsistency breeds doubt, while thoughtful consistency signals reliability. Colour shapes emotion, but only when balanced with form and clarity. The aesthetic usability effect reminds us that people find well-designed experiences easier to trust because integrity, not polish, is what truly feels real.

In today's social media era, identity only works if it performs in motion, sub-frames, squares, stories, thumbnails. Brands must design visuals that scale down without losing meaning, that animate well, that can be felt even as iconography. Emotional branding communication models show how content frequency and resonance interact in social media ecosystems to build deeper emotional bonds with consumers.

Visuals alone can't carry trust; it's built when what a brand shows matches what it does. If a nature brand uses forest imagery but sources irresponsibly, the disconnect is clear. Visual identity becomes a promise that consumers expect brands to uphold, and the more consistently beliefs translate into actions, the more that promise feels real. Yet trust is fragile, and design must respect that. Ambitious changes without regard for user comfort can alienate audiences, while thoughtful, human-centred redesigns evolve gradually, with care, testing, and empathy for emotional transitions.



In designing resonance, narrative matters. Visual systems should embody stories. A visual identity can narrate a brand's origin, mission, or future direction, not in text, but in form. Narrative visual design in emotional consumption highlights how brands can weave symbolic elements into identity to deepen emotional connection.

When brands tell stories people can see themselves in, they create belonging. And belonging is the strongest bond of all. Brands that stand for shared purpose don't just gain customers; they earn advocates. These people don't buy into a product; they buy into an identity that mirrors their own values.

People don't trust what looks perfect; they trust what feels real. That is the power of a human-centred visual identity. It speaks softly yet confidently, saying, we see you and we're with you. Every design choice, no matter how small, becomes proof of intention. When a brand feels human, people stop evaluating it and start believing in it.



DEEP DIVE

GEN Z IN INDIAN MALLS

Why the Youngest Adult Consumer Is Redefining Physical Retail



India's Gen Z—today's youngest adult consumers aged 18 to 26—represent one of the most influential forces shaping the future of shopping malls. Often treated as a single, monolithic cohort, Gen Z is far more complex. Within this generation exist two distinct inter-generational groups: younger Gen Z, just stepping into adulthood, and older Gen Z, already forming careers, households, and long-term brand loyalties.

For Indian shopping malls and global brands alike, this distinction matters. Differences in values, aspirations, spending power, and cultural outlook directly influence how Gen Z engages with physical retail. Treating them as one audience—or applying global stereotypes without local context—risks disengagement, reduced dwell time, and missed growth opportunities.

From Shopping Centres to Social Destinations

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z does not visit malls only to shop. For many, malls function as social anchors—places to meet friends, express identity, and experience brands in real life. Younger Gen Z seeks discovery, entertainment, & affordable indulgence, while older Gen Z looks for brands that align with their values and evolving lifestyles.

This duality presents a unique opportunity for Indian malls to evolve from transactional spaces into culturally relevant, experience-led destinations that resonate with both local consumers and international brands.

What Gen Z Expects from the In-Store Experience

Research highlights five key expectations shaping how Gen Z engages with physical retail in India:

Values First, But Price Still Matters

An overwhelming 94% of Gen Z say they shop with values such as authenticity, transparency, and humility in mind. However, in a price-sensitive market like India, these ideals are often traded for value-for-money and convenience. Brands and malls that successfully bridge this gap—by making ethical choices visible and attainable—stand out.

Co-Creation Over Consumption

More than 70% of Gen Z want to engage with brands beyond social media. They want to be part of the brand journey—through customization zones, limited-edition drops, interactive store layouts, and mall-hosted collaborations. For global brands in India, this means balancing international brand DNA with local expression.

Community Is the New Anchor Tenant

Three out of five Gen Z shoppers say a key reason for visiting a mall is to experience a sense of community. Food courts, gaming zones, pop-up markets, open mic nights, sneaker drops, art installations, and creator-led events increasingly drive footfall more than traditional anchor stores.





Cultural Relevance Is Non-Negotiable

Sixty percent of Gen Z want products and visuals that reflect timely cultural moments—festivals, music, sports, street culture, and digital trends. Global brands that localize storytelling while maintaining global consistency earn greater trust and emotional connection.

Sustainability Must Be Designed, Not Declared

Nearly half of Gen Z say they trust sustainability claims more when reflected in the physical environment. In Indian malls, this translates into visible energy-efficient design, natural light, waste management initiatives, sustainable materials, and responsible food and fashion brands—making sustainability tangible rather than aspirational.

The Opportunity for Indian Malls and Global Brands

To build long-term loyalty with Gen Z, Indian shopping malls must shift from being purely retail-led to experience-led civic spaces. Community lounges, co-creation hubs, flexible event spaces, & digitally integrated wayfinding can turn malls into platforms for participation rather than mere consumption.

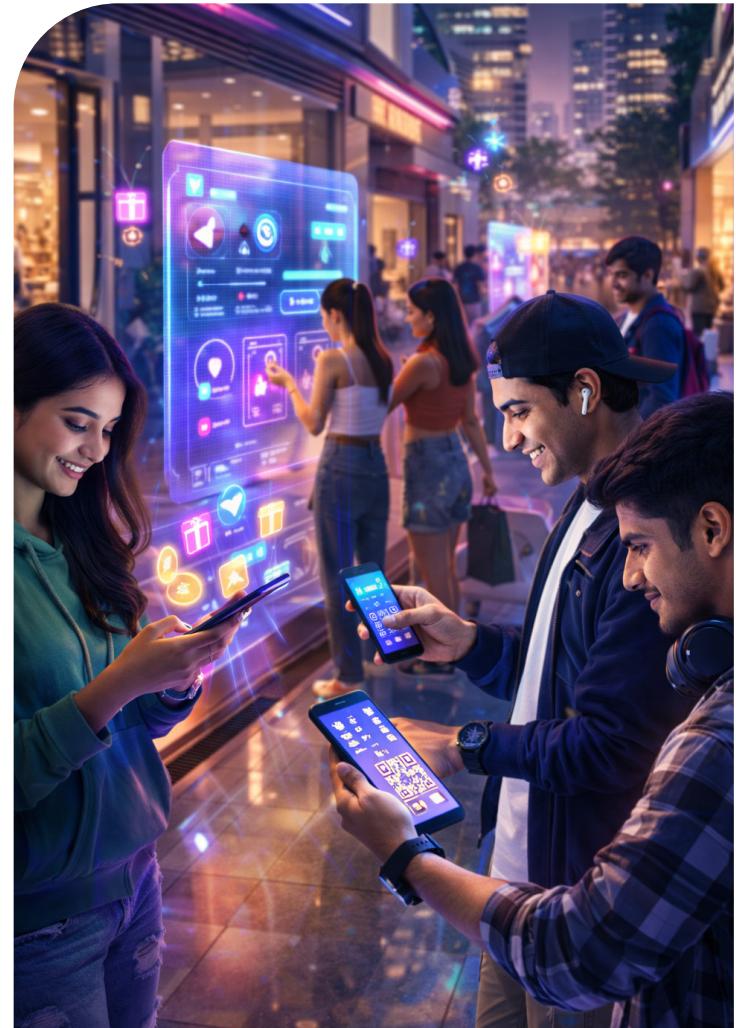


For global brands operating in India, success lies in relevance without dilution. Gen Z values global credibility, but only when it feels culturally aware and locally connected. Nostalgia, craftsmanship, and storytelling resonate strongly especially when paired with technology that educates, personalizes, and enhances the in-store experience.

Designing the Future of Loyalty

Gen Z does not reward brands and malls that simply follow trends. They invest their time, attention, and advocacy in spaces that reflect their values and invite them to participate. For Indian retail destinations, this means creating environments where sustainability is visible, creativity is encouraged, and community is central.

When malls and global brands position themselves as partners in Gen Z's aspirations rather than just sellers of products, they move from being places to shop to places that matter. And in doing so, they secure relevance, loyalty, and growth in one of the world's most dynamic consumer markets.





Siam Paragon at 20 (Opened on 9th December 2005): The Mall That Changed Bangkok's Centre of Gravity



In December 2005, when Siam Paragon opened at the crossroads of Rama I Road and Siam BTS Station, Bangkok didn't quite know what to make of it. The city had malls, many of them successful, busy and well loved. But nothing on this scale. Nothing this deliberate. Nothing that so confidently claimed the centre of the city and kept it.

Twenty years later, Siam Paragon isn't just still standing. It is still relevant. And that, in retail real estate, is the real achievement.

Spread across roughly 500,000 square metres of built-up area, Siam Paragon arrived with a tenant mix that immediately placed Bangkok alongside global retail capitals. Flagship luxury brands, international fashion houses, premium watch and jewellery labels many of them debuting in Thailand found a single, coherent address. The message was clear: this was not an experiment; it was a long-term statement.

But Paragon's ambition wasn't limited to what happened above ground.

Few malls in the world can claim an attraction like SEA LIFE Bangkok Ocean World – a full-scale underwater aquarium carved beneath a luxury retail centre, complete with ocean tunnels, sharks and penguins. It remains one of the largest underground aquariums globally and, even today, one of the most unexpected features you'll find in a city-centre mall.

For a generation of Bangkok residents, their first encounter with marine life didn't happen at the coast – it happened at Siam Paragon.

Add to this a world-class cinema complex, exhibition and event halls that host everything from cultural showcases to international brand launches, and a food landscape that ranges from gourmet dining to one of the city's most visited food halls. Paragon quickly became a place where visits stretched into hours, not minutes.

Location played its part – decisively. Directly integrated with Siam BTS Station, Paragon sits at one of the highest-footfall transit nodes in Thailand. Tourists, office-goers, students and families converge here daily, giving the centre a rhythm few malls can replicate. Over time, it became less a destination you planned for, and more a natural extension of the city's daily movement.

What makes Siam Paragon's 20-year journey remarkable is not just how it opened – but how it has endured. Retail tastes have changed. Brands have come and gone. Consumer habits have shifted dramatically since 2005. Yet Paragon has continuously refreshed itself without losing its core identity. It has remained premium without becoming inaccessible, large without feeling dated, and busy without losing a sense of order.

More quietly, Siam Paragon also changed expectations. After 2005, the bar for any major mall development in Thailand – and much of Southeast Asia – was reset. Scale mattered. Curation mattered. Anchors mattered. Food mattered. Entertainment mattered. And, most importantly, the mall had to earn repeat visits from very different audiences, every single day.

As Siam Paragon completes 20 years of operations, it deserves recognition not as a spectacle, but as a benchmark. Few centres manage to stay culturally relevant, commercially strong and emotionally familiar for two full decades.

Some malls age. A rare few mature.

Siam Paragon belongs firmly to the latter.



VALENTINE'S DAY:



LOVE, CULTURE, AND ITS GROWING INFLUENCE ON SHOPPING MALLS

Valentine's Day, celebrated every year on February 14, has grown far beyond a single day of romance into a globally recognized cultural celebration of love, connection, and emotional expression. What began as a story rooted in history and legend has evolved into a week-long celebration in many parts of the Western world, influencing lifestyles, social behavior, and how people choose to spend their time—especially younger generations.

The origins of Valentine's Day are commonly linked to Saint Valentine, a Roman priest believed to have performed secret marriages during a period when they were prohibited. Over time, the day became associated with romantic love through poetry, literature, and later popular culture. In Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and across Europe, this celebration has expanded into "Valentine Week," starting from Rose Day and moving through Propose Day, Chocolate Day, Teddy Day, Promise Day, Hug Day, and Kiss Day, culminating in Valentine's Day itself. Each day emphasizes a different form of emotional expression, extending the spirit of celebration across an entire week.

This extended celebration has gradually influenced global markets, including India and Asia, where younger generations have embraced Valentine Week as a fun, expressive, and social event. The importance of Valentine's Day today lies not just in romance but in connection—between couples, friends, and even individuals celebrating self-love.

In an era marked by digital communication and fast-paced living, the day offers a meaningful pause to celebrate relationships in tangible, memorable ways.

For Gen Z,

Valentine's Day and Valentine Week are less about formal traditions and more about shared experiences. This generation values inclusivity, creativity, and moments that can be lived, captured, and shared. Shopping malls naturally emerge as preferred destinations because they bring together fashion, food, entertainment, music, and social spaces under one roof. Modern malls are no longer just places to shop; they are environments where Gen Z gathers, socializes, and expresses identity. During Valentine Week, malls transform into vibrant experience zones with themed décor, interactive installations, live performances, couple-friendly activities, pop-up experiences, and Instagram-worthy selfie spots. These elements resonate strongly with Gen Z's desire for visual storytelling and social media engagement. The celebration becomes less about buying a single gift and more about spending quality time, creating memories, and being part of a collective festive atmosphere. Valentine's Day celebrations in malls also encourage longer visits and deeper engagement. Young visitors often come in groups or as couples to explore events, watch movies, dine together, and participate in activities. This reinforces the mall's role as a lifestyle and community hub rather than just a retail destination.

In conclusion, Valentine's Day shaped by its Western origins & expanded through Valentine Week has become a powerful cultural moment centered on emotion and experience.

For shopping malls, it offers an opportunity to connect with Gen Z through creativity, inclusivity, and shared celebration. As love continues to be expressed in new & ev.





Intrusion Protection And Threat Mitigation For Your Mall Asset – Part 3

– By Manoj K Agarwal, Founder and M.D. of Manoj K Agarwal Consultant Partner

In the current political environment, once again, safeguarding mall assets from potential intrusions, terrorist attacks or bomb threats has unfortunately come to the fore. As mentioned in my earlier two part of the 3 part series, these types of threats can be mitigated to a large extent by making the asset difficult to intrude into through simple measures that can be implemented on the ground. The 3-part article is more of a suggested guidelines rather than a SOP or a foolproof threat mitigation plan.

In Part – 1, I had covered the risks & issues and mitigation measures as regards access to site like possible gathering of intruder or a group of intruders a distance away from the mall, planting of a vehicle at high traffic locations external to the mall, vehicular intrusion into the site and intrusion from the periphery.

In Part – 2, I had covered the risks & issues and mitigation measures as regards access to the building" like building entry and exit controls including threat of vehicular intrusion, inward material and goods related threats, required surveillance measures and related manpower deployment.

In this 3rd final part of the article, I would be giving my suggestions & inputs on risks / issues pertaining to "Measures to be Taken Within the Building Premises"

Here, too, like mentioned in the previous 2 parts, liaison and regular interaction with concerned authorities is sacrosanct. Also, agencies like ATS (anti-terrorism squad), local police & intelligence etc. could be called upon to provide inputs, mitigation plans and at times to actually deal with a situation at hand. Here, too, an internal communication plan and SOP manual must be developed. Let's evaluate this in more detail along with suggested counter measures.

Risks / Issues regarding Measures to be Taken Within the Building Premises:

- a) Awareness / Alertness
- b) Communication
- c) Surveillance
- d) Team Role and Emergency Set Up

Awareness / Alertness: Embracing a culture where security is a core company value can mean the difference between preventing potential breaches and facing serious reputational and business disruption repercussions. Suggested mitigation measures including high alert situations could be as below:



- "Security is Everyone's Business", in keeping with the philosophy, it is important to outline what is the required things to look out for and report. As we know in the mall we have various people groups like mall staff, retail staff, customers, contractor staff, vendor staff etc. who may total up to a few thousand. Thus, it becomes important that the messaging and related training as regards both normal and high alert situations are seen in the context as given below:
- Abnormal Behavior & Movement: by this I mean that a person who is interacting and dealing with others such that it raises questions in one's mind e.g. the person is not responding to queries and / or is reluctant to speak. The body language could further indicate a defensive mindset and an inward focused demeanor. Of course, there is a fine line here and one may check via surveillance as regards the person's entry and movement within the building and its various parts. This monitoring becomes even more important in high alert situations.



- Unidentified Objects(UO): is point is self-explanatory as if any UO is seen during patrolling, moving in the mall or via CCTV surveillance, then, an escalation matrix must be there and a Supervisor level security person must inspect it from a suitable distance and could check if the bag seems rather heavy and if there are outline of wires seen on inspection or possibly even a ticking sound or a flashing light. As a precaution, it may be covered with a bomb blanket if it ticks most of the boxes mentioned above. A message maybe flashed via the walky-talky to all concerned describing the UO so as to check if there is any report of a person missing a bag of similar description. If need be, a message could be broadcasted via the PA system regarding the same. This becomes most crucial during high alert situations. If in a reasonable time no response is forthcoming, then , one may be forced to call the BDS team and comply with their instructions. One may need to be prepared for precautionary evacuation of the area if the BDS team deems it fit.
- Inappropriate Grouping: this pertains to observation as regards a group of similar profile of people wearing similar attire, all may have similar duffle or shoulder bags, may seem of same ethnicity and who are talking softly amongst themselves and frequently using a mobile and passing instructions amongst themselves. This may be fairly normal in usual circumstances, but incidents do not happen with prior warning as there is a need to be careful and one could track this further using CCTV or through physical monitoring from a distance.

Communication: is a very important factor as ultimately any information that is to be shared is on a person to person basis or by a leader / supervisor to a group of people. This communication may also be done over phone, mobile, or walkie talkie. Thus, clarity of message, preset codes, protocols to pass a message from one to the other becomes most significant. Also, this communication is done with the objective that action has to be taken by the recipient/s on immediate and possibly urgent basis. Here, the people must be informed in clear terms on what to look out for e.g. left behind object

and its type/size, people or a group of people behaving oddly, or those who are trying to go to back areas and staircases etc. The communication based on the situation needs to be passed to all present in the mall to report anything relevant. Hence, for this, readiness and conditioning of the various personnel must be there. This could be done through mock drills, training, simulations and role play. Also, customers and visitors may need to be warned or informed via notices and messages displayed at relevant and visible locations. Whilst communicating, it must be taken care that no panic sets in as panic would be rather counter-productive.

Along with the internal communication, external communication with concerned authorities is also important. Hence, ATS, BDS and the local police station are also important to be in touch with so that on one side they are informed and on the other side their suggestions on action to be taken is also considered. Here, it is suggested that regular mock drills are done together with the Fire Dept., Bomb Squad, ATS etc. Care must be taken that all visitors are suitably informed through notices suitably in advance so that they are aware that it's a mock drill and not an actual live situation so as to avoid panic and adverse press. In fact, if the conducting of a large scale mock drill is later shared as a press release, then the subsequent article boosts the mall's image as a safe and secure establishment that is conscious of the welfare and safety of all.

Surveillance Measures (internal): like the measure to be taken outside the building, it is essentially to monitor the entire mall premises internally. As mentioned in the 2 points above, it would be obvious that surveillance goes hand in hand with protection and security of the building.

- Here, too it is important that like the entries, CCTV cameras are properly placed at all crucial points like elevator and escalator lobbies, fire exit doors, staircases leading directly outside (along with hooter), internal customer corridors and back of the house corridors, all important back of the house areas as well as lift and escalator lobbies connecting the mall parking.
- In the CCTV room, like the key externally located cameras, some of these cameras monitoring the key internal areas may be grouped together too

on a particular screen so that a person can monitor all internal critical areas in a single glance.

- In high alert and red alert situations, it is important to deploy plain clothes security men, armed guards and sniffer dogs to provide better monitoring and a sense of security to customers and others present in the mall. In terms of internal patrolling, under normal circumstances, the patrolling is a statement of presence which is designed to check on routine incidents.
- Robust CCTV software can also raise an alert in case of any suspicious movement or if any unidentified object is left behind for more than an appropriate duration. This was rather error prone in the past but now with AI-driven solutions, this technology is becoming quite effective.
- During high alert situations, all people barring customers may be asked to display their IDs whilst in the mall for ease of identification and movement control.

Team's Role & Emergency Set-up: the security and QRT team are crucial for internal surveillance, communication and cross checking situations happening on the ground. Thus, they must be well-trained to handle emergencies and complex situations. So, the training of these team members on SOPs, emergency handling, first aid, handling intruder situations are very important. In addition, these team members must be trained and aware of:

- They must have access to mall floor plans when needed.
- An internal command centre must be pre-identified and must ideally be away from the main building and have a direct access without having to enter the main building. It may be worth if the ATS, Police and Fire Dept. are consulted while freezing the command center location.
- It is important that the staff who are going to handle emergent situations are trained to be calm so that they can take decisions with proper thought without any panic.
- In case of any bomb (hoax) in premises or similar calls, the EPABX personnel must know what to ask, what background sounds to look for and strategies to maximize the duration of such calls. If the area or location is prone to such threats then call

recording facility may inbuilt into the EPABX software

In conclusion,

- Effective security and protection, requires merging traditionally siloed systems including CCTV surveillance, access control, alarms, SOP integration and manpower into a single, centralized monitoring system to streamline emergency handling and incident response.
- Top malls establishments focus on proactive risk assessment and analytics to forecast potential threats before they materialize, moving away from reactive and exception reporting. Annual or quarterly risk reviews must be done using real-time assessment tools.
- While surveillance technology provides 24/7 coverage, a visible human security presence remains the primary psychological deterrent and is essential for decision-making (at times complex) and suitable emergency response.
- Security training is no longer an optional "extra" but a core business requirement for operational resilience, legal & physical safety, and risk management. With 90% of security breaches involving human error, training serves as the primary mechanism to transform employees from being simple team members in to a "human firewall".
- Modern mall surveillance no longer simply records footage; it utilizes (AI-based) video analytics to interpret behavior, detect anomalies (such as loitering or perimeter breaches), and manage incidents in real-time.
- SOPs have evolved from static manuals to digitized, integrated workflows. In a unified security system, an incident such as an unauthorized entry attempt etc., automatically triggers the relevant SOP, presenting the personnel with a step-by-step response protocol via their hand held devices.

Lastly, a quote by the Late Ratan Tata for you to ponder on: "I don't believe in leaving things to luck. I believe in hard work and preparation."



Written by Manoj K. Agarwal, Founder & Managing Director of Manoj K. Agarwal Consultant Partner, a boutique consultancy established in 2021. Backed by over 40 years of retail real estate experience, the firm offers end-to-end advisory services from concept and design to strategy and operations specializing in shopping centre and hospitality development across India, with a focus on creating commercially successful retail destinations.

BUILDING LIFECYCLE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

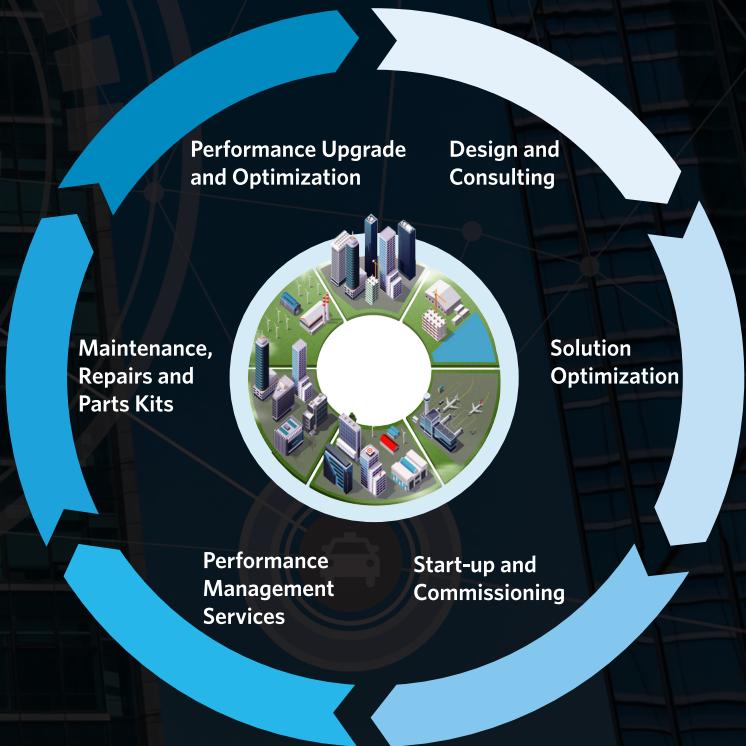
Armstrong can help improve performance of mechanical systems and reduce costs throughout the entire lifecycle of a building.

\$5/sq.ft. in savings on construction costs

Operation cost reduction: 40 cents/sq.ft.

100% occupant comfort with no idle assets

50% lower capital costs for repair and replacement



For more information visit us at:
ArmstrongFluidTechnology.com or
call : +91 (0) 80 6510 3555

EMAIL US AT:
indisales@armstrongfluidtechnology.com



Building the Future of Mall & Transit Retail Management: The ScoopSense Story - By the Founder, ScoopSense



India's retail real estate ecosystem is no longer defined only by square footage and tenant count. Today, malls and transit hubs are living ecosystems—where footfall, sales, energy, events, tenant health, customer sentiment, and technology intersect every single day.

When we started ScoopSense, our ambition was clear: to give mall managers clarity in complexity. Not just reports, not just dashboards—but a single, seamless platform that helps them understand, predict, and act.

Over the years, this vision has evolved into an end-to-end, indigenous solution that now powers mall operations across India—covering the complete tenant lifecycle from leasing and fit-out to operations, facility management, sales tracking, billing, marketing, and audits.

From Managing Buildings to Managing Experiences



One of the biggest shifts we've witnessed is this: **malls are no longer just retail destinations—they are experience hubs.**

While digital shopping has redefined convenience and speed, physical retail continues to matter when it offers something digital cannot: human connection, discovery, entertainment, and community.

This shift places immense pressure on mall teams. Success today depends on answering questions like:

- Which events actually drive revenue, not just footfall?
- Which tenants are silently struggling?
- Where are operational costs leaking?
- How do customer complaints turn into real-time action?

These are not questions solved by static spreadsheets.

They require intelligence.

Completing the Ecosystem: Operations Meets Intelligence

For years, facility and operational management remained the missing piece in truly unified mall management. With the launch of ScoopSense Audits, that gap was finally closed.

Mall teams now operate on one tightly integrated ecosystem where:

- Leasing connects seamlessly with fit-out timelines





- Sales data informs financial forecasting
- Audits trigger operational actions
- Marketing, events, and gift vouchers link back to performance

The result is simple but powerful: **no more disconnected systems, no more blind spots.**

A Landmark Expansion: Entering Transit Retail



This year marked a defining milestone for ScoopSense as we expanded beyond malls into Transit Retail—one of India's most complex and exciting frontiers.

We are proud to be deploying our full suite at the HSR Transit Hub at Sabarmati, part of India's first high-speed rail corridor connecting Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Transit-oriented developments bring together:

- Massive and unpredictable footfall
- Retail, office spaces, and hospitality
- High-security infrastructure
- Zero tolerance for operational lapses

Working closely with the project team accelerated our learning curve dramatically. It reinforced a core belief: the future of retail management lies in anticipation, not reaction.

When a Mall Starts Thinking

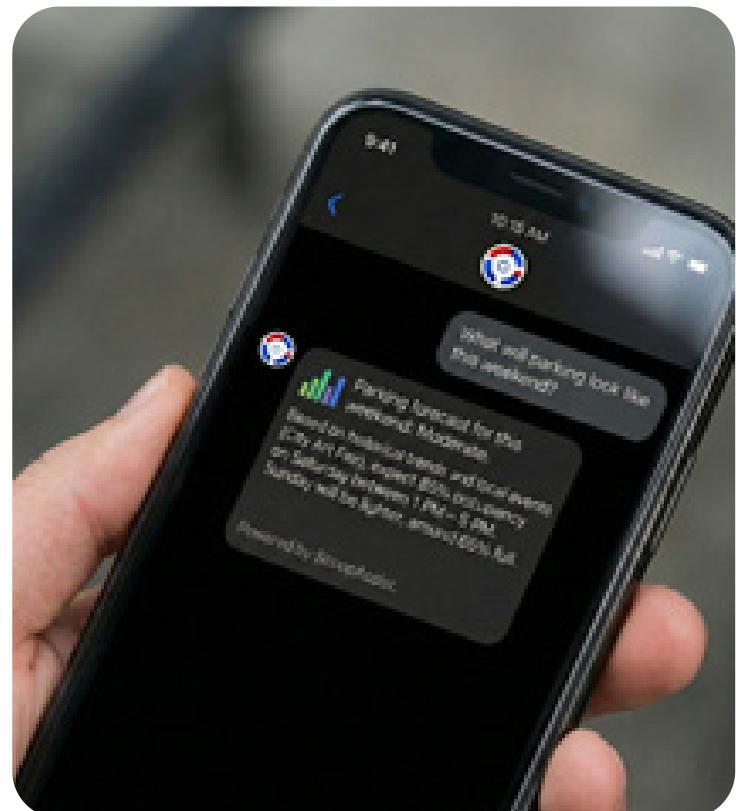
The next transformation in mall management isn't about more dashboards—it's about conversations with data.

Imagine asking:

- "Which tenants may delay payments this month?"
- "Why did expenses spike last quarter?"
- "What will parking look like this weekend?"

And getting clear, contextual answers—instantly.

This is the philosophy behind our AI initiatives. By connecting data points that humans typically view in isolation—footfall, sales, complaints, power usage, events, and historical trends—ScoopSense enables malls to see meaning, not just numbers.

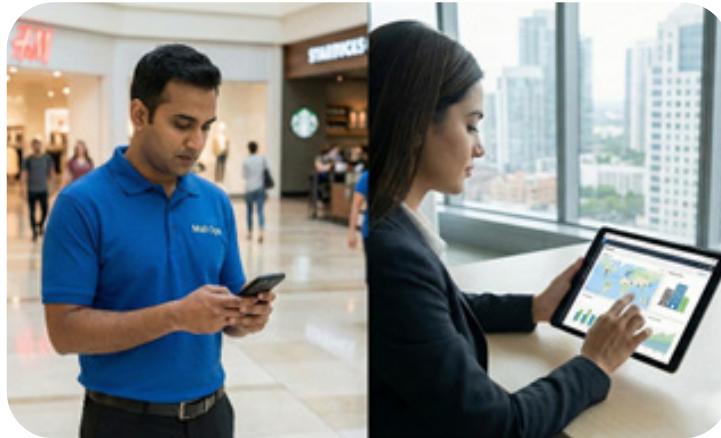


Problems start resolving themselves before they escalate:

- Customer feedback triggers immediate house-keeping action
- Delayed fit-outs automatically adjust revenue projections
- Event performance is measured by sales impact, not crowd size.

The mall begins to feel... alive.

Built for Real-Time. Designed for Anywhere..



ScoopSense is built for a world where decisions can't wait for desktops.

From day one, the platform has been optimised for mobile and cloud-first operations.

Today, ScoopSense enables mall and transit hub teams across India to monitor, act, and manage operations in real time—directly from their smartphone or tablet.

Whether you're on the mall floor, in transit, or overseeing multiple assets remotely, your operational command centre is always within reach.

The Shift from Firefighting to Forecasting

Traditionally, malls have reacted to problems after they occurred.

Our focus now is on changing that narrative:

- Predicting cashflow stress before it becomes critical
- Forecasting gift voucher demand before inventory shortages
- Identifying at-risk tenants before churn begins
- Understanding which experiences truly drive commercial success

With ScoopAssist, our predictive engine, mall teams move from asking "What went wrong?" to "What's coming next—and how do we improve it?"



The Road Ahead

ScoopSense is no longer just a mall management platform.

It is evolving into an AI-driven command centre for malls and transit retail hubs—empowering teams to operate with confidence, foresight, and speed. What excites me most is that we are building this entirely in India, for a market that deserves globally competitive technology tailored to its unique realities.

The future of malls is not online or offline. It is intelligent, integrated, and everywhere. And this is only the beginning.



VIKAS SINGHAL

Founder of ScoopSense

A homegrown technology platform transforming how malls and transit hubs operate. Passionate about data, intelligence, and retail ecosystems, he focuses on building predictive, mobile-first solutions that empower mall teams to think ahead and act faster.

*SCAI is delighted to present an
exclusive Masterclass
on
**Beyond Shopping: The future
of Retail through lifestyle
mixed-use Hubs***

As consumer behaviour shifts from need-based shopping to experience-led destinations, retail spaces must evolve into vibrant lifestyle ecosystems. This masterclass will explore how mixed-use hubs are redefining the future of malls, cities, and community engagement.

Date: 25th February, 2026

Masterclass by: Tassos Kotzanastassis

Focus: Retail innovation, place making, and next-generation mixed-use strategies

Gain global insights, practical frameworks, and future-ready thinking from one of the leading voices shaping destination-led retail worldwide.



Why Emotional Intelligence Will Define the Future of BUSINESS AND RETAIL



For decades, business success was measured by efficiency, scale, and profitability. Today, a new performance currency is taking centre stage: Emotional Intelligence (EI). Once dismissed as a "soft skill," EI has evolved into a strategic capability that shapes leadership effectiveness, organisational resilience, customer loyalty, and long-term growth.

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand & manage one's own emotions while recognising, interpreting, and responding effectively to the emotions of others. In an era defined by automation, AI, and constant disruption, EI represents the human dimension technology cannot replicate. As one leadership expert aptly observed, "Technology may run the systems, but emotional intelligence runs the organisation."

The Human Advantage in a Digital World

As businesses become more data-driven and digitally enabled, the paradox is clear: the more technology advances, the more human skills matter. Artificial intelligence can optimise processes and predict behaviour, but it cannot build trust, resolve conflict with empathy, or create emotional connection.

This shift is particularly visible in leadership and teamwork. A multinational organisation transitioning to hybrid work saw productivity dip, not due to lack of skills, but due to emotionally disconnected virtual communication.

After training managers in empathetic listening and clearer communication, team coordination improved by 17 percent and morale rebounded. The lesson was simple: tools enable work, but EI enables collaboration.

Similarly, retail organisations consistently find that stores led by emotionally intelligent managers outperform others, not only in sales but also in customer satisfaction. As one retail leader put it, "Customers remember how you made them feel, not just what you sold."

Why Emotional Intelligence Is Becoming Essential

Stronger leadership

Emotionally intelligent leaders communicate with clarity, inspire trust, and provide stability during uncertainty. During crises, employees do not look for the most analytical voice in the room, but for the calmest and most reassuring one. Organisations led with empathy during the pandemic retained talent and recovered faster.





Higher employee engagement

Today's workforce expects more than compensation. Psychological safety, respect, and meaningful connection are critical drivers of performance. Companies that invested in EI-based leadership training report lower attrition and stronger cross-team collaboration. When people feel valued, they contribute differently.

Deeper customer relationships

Emotionally aware frontline teams recognise frustration, confusion, and delight in real time. A global hospitality brand that trained staff to respond to emotional cues saw customer satisfaction scores rise significantly. As one guest noted, "They didn't just fix the problem. They understood it."

Better innovation and problem-solving

Teams with high EI communicate openly, challenge ideas respectfully, and collaborate more creatively. Research consistently shows that emotionally intelligent teams generate stronger ideas and execute them more effectively.

Why Emotional Intelligence Matters for Malls and Retail Destinations



Nowhere is the relevance of EI more pronounced than in the retail and mall ecosystem, which is undergoing one of its most profound transformations in decades. While automation, analytics, and digital platforms are redefining operations, the future advantage lies in understanding people, not just patterns.

Consumers no longer visit malls purely to shop. They come seeking experiences, social connection, belonging, and emotional engagement. This makes Emotional Intelligence essential across every layer of the mall ecosystem, from leadership strategy and tenant relations to customer service, security, and community engagement.

Understanding consumer emotions

Emotionally aware environments respond intuitively to shoppers' needs. From empathetic frontline staff and intuitive wayfinding to responsive security teams, every interaction shapes the emotional memory of the visit.

Human-centric leadership

Mall management teams operate within complex, collaborative ecosystems. Leaders with high EI navigate change more effectively, communicate transparently, and build trust across tenants, partners, and communities.

Stronger tenant partnerships

Malls succeed when tenants succeed. Active listening, empathetic problem-solving, and constructive conflict management lead to stronger long-term partnerships, smoother operations, and shared growth.

Crisis response & reputation management

In moments of disruption, emotionally intelligent responses protect brand credibility. Calm communication and thoughtful decision-making can turn challenges into opportunities to strengthen trust and loyalty.

EI as a Strategy, Not a Soft Skill

As malls evolve into social spaces, entertainment hubs, and mixed-use destinations, Emotional Intelligence becomes a strategic imperative. Imagine environments where staff proactively recognise customer stress, events are designed for emotional engagement, tenant relationships are collaborative rather than transactional, and empathy fuels innovation. These are not abstract ideals. They directly influence dwell time, repeat visits, loyalty, and commercial performance.

The Future Is Human

In a world increasingly shaped by AI & automation, Emotional Intelligence delivers what machines cannot: connection, meaning, and trust. For businesses and malls alike, the message is clear. The next phase of growth will not be driven by technology alone, but by emotionally intelligent people creating emotionally resonant experiences. As work becomes more digital, success will become more human.



Mall Gift Cards Are Not Promotions. They Are Pre-Sold Footfall



In India, mall gift cards are still parked under “festive initiatives” or treated as convenient marketing add-ons. That framing is comfortable — and fundamentally flawed. Global mall operators such as Simon Property Group, Westfield, and leading South-East Asian malls view gift cards very differently. They do not treat them as a product. They treat them as pre-paid footfall. That distinction changes everything.

Money That Has Already Chosen Your Mall

Money That Has Already Chosen Your Mall
The most powerful advantage of a mall gift card is disarmingly simple: the spending decision has already been made. The customer has not chosen a brand. They have not chosen a category. In many cases, they have not even chosen a product. But they have chosen the mall.

Once that money sits with the mall, the single most expensive problem in retail — getting the customer to show up — is already solved. This is precisely why global operators obsess less about discounting and more about universal acceptance. The card must work everywhere: apparel, dining, cinema, entertainment, services.

The moment redemption becomes complicated, consumption collapses. Ease is not a feature. It is the business model.

Why Gift Card Spending Behaves Differently From Cash

Anyone who has observed gift card redemption on the ground knows this truth: people behave differently when they are spending gifted money. They upgrade.

They linger.

They add a coffee, then dessert, then “one more walk.”

This behaviour is emotional, not accidental. Gift cards feel like found money, not earned money. And found money is spent more freely.

Globally, gift card redemptions consistently overshoot face value. Not because of clever promotions, but because the customer is already relaxed, already open, already browsing.

Indian mall operators see this spike every festive season. Very few design for it deliberately.

What Global Malls Do Better: Make Gift Cards Everyday, Not Occasional

International operators take a more structural approach. They embed gift cards into everyday mall life — inside the mall app, across digital wallets, and in easily accessible physical formats that offset daily spends.

The psychology here is important.



Unused gift cards feel like waste.

Waste creates return visits.

This is not generosity. It is behaviour design.

By parking value inside the mall ecosystem, the mall becomes the most logical place to spend.

Many Indian operators talk about gift card programs. Very few link them to payment behaviour. Global malls do. That is the gap.

What Gift Cards Really Do for Tenants

Retailers often see mall gift cards as neutral. They are not.

Gift card customers are:

- Less discount-led
- More open to trial
- More likely to buy at full price

This is especially powerful for mid-box and emerging brands that do not always sit on the natural customer path.

Gift cards redistribute footfall in ways no leasing plan can. They pull customers past anchors, into food courts, into stores they had no intention of visiting.

That is not marketing. That is economics.

The Missed Opportunity for Indian Mall Operators

In India, gift cards are still largely treated as:

- Festive SKUs
- Corporate Diwali products
- Front-desk sales targets

What they are rarely treated as is a year-round demand engine.

Global examples show that when gift cards are:

- Easy to buy
- Easier to redeem
- Digitally embedded
- Widely accepted

They stop being a side business and start behaving like pre-paid annuity revenue.

Money comes in first.

Footfall follows later.

Consumption takes care of itself.

Where Most Gift Card Programs Quietly Break

Not at the idea stage. At execution.

- Store staff unsure about acceptance
- Partial brand coverage
- Manual redemption processes
- No data loop back into marketing

The fastest way to kill a gift card program is to make the customer ask, "Can I use this here?"

The best programs make the question irrelevant.

A Closing Thought for Mall Leadership

Every mall operator spends heavily trying to influence future behaviour.

Gift cards do something rarer.

They lock future behaviour in advance.

That is not a marketing benefit.

That is a balance-sheet advantage.

The question is not whether gift cards drive stickiness & consumption. They do quietly, consistently, and predictably.

The real question is whether Indian mall operators are ready to stop treating gift cards as festive merchandise and start treating them as pre-sold visits.

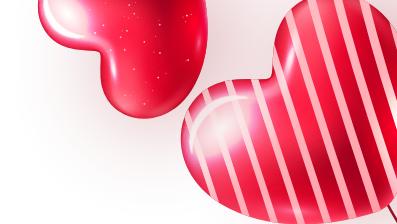
That shift is strategic. And long overdue.



We welcome your feedback at
editormt2008@gmail.com

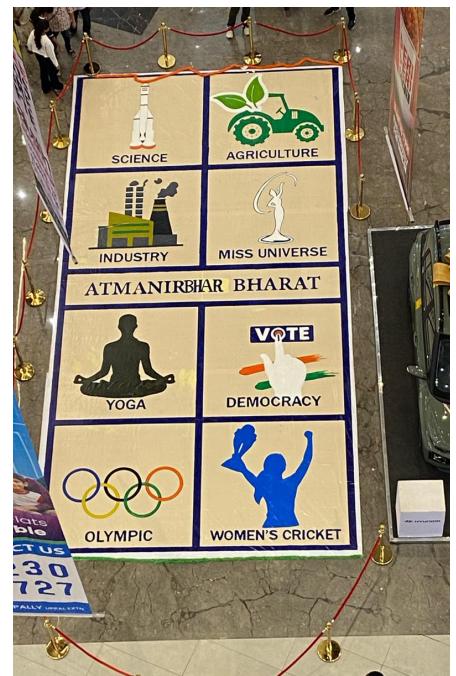


EVENT WATCH



Republic Day Celebration

DSL VIRTUE MALL



GSM MALL



MOHALI WALK MALL



OMAXE CHOWK



SECURE PARKING SOLUTIONS



TAPADIYA CITY CENTRE



VEGAS MALL



M5 E-CITY MALL



ROYAL MEENAKSHI MALL



THE GALLERIA MALL





SHOPPING CENTRES
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

For More Information, Please Contact:

Sachin Nakti : +91 9029643729, sachinnatki@scai.in

Follow us: @scai08

