

INDIAN MALLS



MALL TALK

August 2026



SHOPPING CENTRES
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA



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ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

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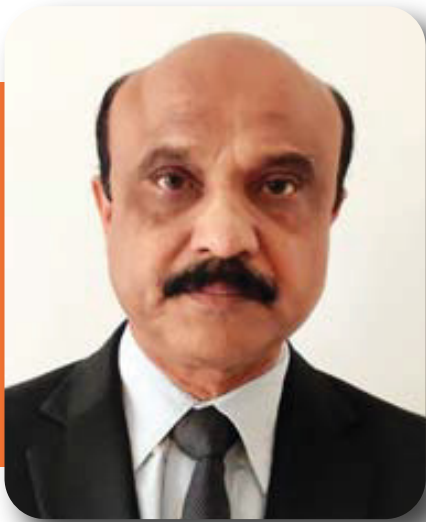


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Anjeev Kumar Srivastava
COO, SCAI

Welcoming a New Season of Retail

August marks the beginning of a new rhythm for retail. As consumers return from the summer break, shopping centres become more than destinations for commerce. They become places where people reconnect, discover new brands, spend time with family and engage with experiences that extend beyond the transaction.

Over the past few months, we've continued to strengthen our retail mix with new store openings, fresh dining concepts and experiences that reflect the evolving expectations of today's consumer. Every addition is guided by a simple objective: creating greater choice, stronger engagement and more reasons for visitors to return.

Beyond retail, we remain committed to building a vibrant community. From family experiences and cultural activations to wellness initiatives and seasonal events, our calendar is designed to bring people together while creating meaningful opportunities for our brand partners to connect with their audiences.

This edition captures that momentum. It reflects a destination that continues to evolve alongside its customers, embracing new ideas while remaining rooted in the experiences that matter most.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We look forward to welcoming you throughout the season and sharing many more memorable moments together.

Anjeev Kumar





WHY INDIA'S NEXT CONSUMPTION STORY WILL BE DEFINED BY LIFESTYLES, NOT LOCATIONS

For decades, India's retail playbook began with geography.

Brands planned expansion by city tier, measured opportunity through population density and income, and built distribution around where consumers lived. Geography determined access, affordability and, to a large extent, demand.

That model is becoming less reliable.

Today's consumers are shaped as much by digital communities as physical ones. A young professional in Indore who prioritises fitness, travel and wellness may share more in common with someone in Bengaluru than with another consumer in the same neighbourhood.

The next phase of India's retail growth will be defined less by where consumers live and more by how they live.

From demographics to lifestyles

The biggest shift isn't that Indian consumers are buying more. It's that they're buying differently.

Retailers have traditionally classified consumers by age, income or geography. Increasingly, those segments explain less than lifestyles, aspirations and occasions.

Consumers no longer buy products simply to meet a need. They buy products that fit different versions of themselves.



The same individual may wear performance footwear for a morning run, minimalist sneakers for work, casual styles while travelling and premium shoes for celebrations. They are no longer building wardrobes. They are building portfolios of products that serve different moments in their lives.

For retailers, this changes the challenge. Winning is no longer about category leadership alone. It is about becoming relevant across multiple occasions.

Premium is becoming emotional

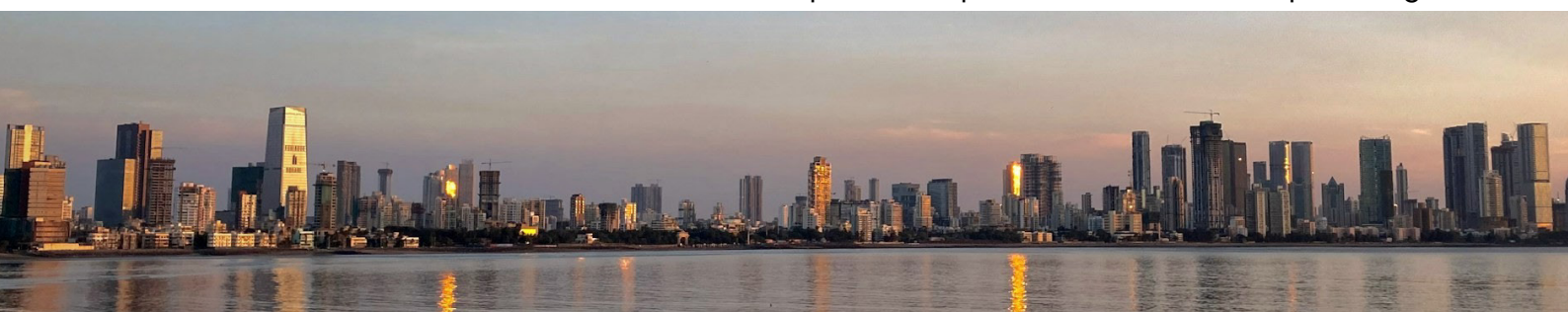
This shift also changes the meaning of premium. India's premiumisation story is often explained through rising incomes. That tells only part of the story.

Consumers increasingly trade up because products help them express identity, confidence and aspiration. Fashion, footwear and lifestyle purchases are becoming emotional investments rather than purely functional ones.

The real premium opportunity isn't defined by price. It is defined by perceived value.

Consumers willingly spend more when products improve how they feel, reflect who they are or fit the life they aspire to lead.

That is why accessible premium continues to outperform expectations across multiple categories.



Discovery is replacing distribution

Perhaps the biggest implication for retailers is that competitive advantage is moving upstream.

Distribution once determined success because access was limited.

Today, discovery has become the greater challenge.

Consumers across metros, smaller cities and emerging markets are exposed to the same creators, trends and brands through social media, e-commerce and digital content. Aspirations are becoming increasingly national even when purchasing power remains uneven.

That creates a different responsibility for retailers.

Success will depend on making premium aspirations accessible without weakening brand value, understanding local nuances without fragmenting the brand experience, and curating assortments around lifestyles rather than locations.

The question is no longer simply where growth will come from.

It is how well retailers understand the evolving lives of the people driving it.

For years, Indian retail asked, **"Where are our consumers?"**

The defining question of the next decade will be, **"Who are they becoming?"**



We welcome your feedback at
editormt2008@gmail.com





THE VRINDAVAN OPPORTUNITY

Why Braj Is India's Most Under-Read Retail Micro-Market — and Why Food & Beverage Is the Place to Begin

THE NUMBERS THAT CAN'T BE IGNORED



6.29 CRORE

devotees passed through Vrindavan, Govardhan, Barsana, Baldev and Mathura in a single month (June 2025).



2.49 CRORE

walked the twenty-onekilometre Govardhan parikrama on the closing Monday alone.



7.90 CRORE (2023)

8.35 CRORE (2024)

9.55 CRORE (2025)

visitors to Mathura-Vrindavan in the last three years.



20 CRORE BY 2041

The regional development vision expects the yearly number to cross 20 crore by 2041.

In June this year, as the Adhik Maas of the Purushottam month drew to a close, the Braj region did something that ought to have been front-page news in every leasing office in the country. In a single month, 6.29 crore devotees passed through Vrindavan, Govardhan, Barsana, Baldev and Mathura — a record. On the closing Monday alone, 2.49 crore of them walked the twenty-one-kilometre Govardhan parikrama. To put that figure in the language our industry actually speaks: this was a one-month catchment larger than the annual footfall of most of the metro malls we spend our careers optimising.

And it was not a one-off spike. Mathura-Vrindavan drew 7.90 crore visitors in 2023, 8.35 crore in 2024 and 9.55 crore in 2025. The regional development vision now guiding the belt expects the yearly number to cross 20 crore by 2041. For anyone who reads catchment studies for a living, a market that has grown steadily to nearly ten crore a year and is set to double again is not a curiosity to be filed under "pilgrimage." It is one of the most compelling growth stories in Indian retail geography — hiding in plain sight, one parikrama at a time.



The consumer nobody planned for

Why has organised retail been so slow to arrive here? Partly because the Vrindavan visitor does not behave like the shopper our formats are built to serve. Modern retail is designed around a person with discretionary time, a free weekend and a comparison-shopping mindset. The pilgrim is close to the opposite. Their day is governed by darshan timings and ritual, not by browsing. Their spending is emotional and occasion-led — an offering, a keepsake, a box of sweets carried home as proof of the journey. They arrive in vast, compressed surges around festivals and recede in between.

For years the trade read that profile as a weaker consumer. It is not. It is a different one — and in several ways a stronger one. Pilgrim spending is remarkably resilient to economic cycles, because devotion is not a discretionary purchase that gets cut when budgets tighten. It is loyal in a way no loyalty programme can manufacture: these families return year after year, generation after generation. And it converts — a visitor in a devotional frame of mind, away from home, with a clear purpose to the trip, buys: prasad, mithai, textiles, idols, and above all a meal shared with family. The demand was never the problem. The problem was that this enormous, renewing demand met a fragmented, unorganised supply of narrow lanes and informal stalls — and almost none of it was designed for.

Why food and beverage is the natural entry point

If a retailer wanted to choose a single category to test this market, food and beverage is the obvious answer — and it is the one the Vrindavan opportunity is most tailor-made for.

Consider how the pilgrim day actually unfolds. A family arrives after travelling overnight. They do darshan, they walk a parikrama, they spend hours on their feet in the heat or the monsoon rain. What they need, repeatedly through the day, is somewhere clean to sit, eat, refresh and regroup. Food is not an add-on to the visit; it is the connective tissue of it. And unlike apparel, footwear or electronics, F&B in a temple town carries almost no comparison-shopping friction and no e-commerce threat — you cannot have a hot, fresh, sattvik thali delivered to a parikrama path from a warehouse.

“The sub-categories almost design themselves. Sattvik restaurants and food courts serving pure-vegetarian, onion-and-garlic-free menus at pilgrim volumes. The sweet market Mathura’s peda and Braj’s traditional mithai are themselves a reason people shop, gift and carry home, a category with built-in takeaway and gifting demand. Prasad and offering counters that turn a devotional act into an organised, hygienic, repeatable transaction. And cafés the fastest-growing habit in Indian consumption which give the younger pilgrim and the weekend tourist from Delhi-NCR the third-space experience they now expect everywhere else.”

In a catchment of this scale, a well-run food court is not a tenant amenity. It is an anchor in its own right.

WHAT AN ORGANISED FORMAT LOOKS LIKE HERE

This is precisely the gap Krishna Bhumi Arcade has been built to close. Positioned as India's first religious and cultural product mall, the five-acre arcade sits within a larger spiritual township on Chhatikara Road, directly adjacent to the rising Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir and roughly four minutes from Prem Mandir. Its 300-plus shops, sized from a nimble 150 square feet up to 600, are organised around the categories the pilgrim actually shops — religious products, handicrafts and souvenirs, textiles, jewellery and services — anchored by a dedicated food-and-beverage core of sattvik restaurants, sweet shops, prasad counters and cafés, with a terrace level built for open-air dining and gatherings.

What makes the format work is that it does not fight the place. It disperses footfall along the pilgrim's natural path rather than concentrating it behind a single air-conditioned anchor; it honours the temple forecourt instead of competing with it. For a retailer, the arithmetic is unusually friendly: a small-format store rather than a large capital commitment, a captive and constantly renewing catchment, and 365 days of activity rather than a weekend-and-festival peak. It is the rare location where the footfall problem is already solved — the discipline is in serving it well.



Terrace Dining & Gatherings



Sweet Shops & Prasad Counters



Sattvik Restaurants & Food Courts

The wider invitation

None of this asks retailers to unlearn their craft. It asks them to read a map they have been overlooking. The faith economy is quietly redrawing India's retail geography, and it is doing so at a scale that dwarfs many of the metro catchments the trade competes hardest for. Vrindavan — with its record footfall, its resilient and fiercely loyal consumer, and its natural, everyday appetite for food and beverage — is the clearest place to begin.

The developers and retailers who win here will not be the ones who bring the most leasable area. They will be the ones who bring cultural literacy, patience, and a willingness to let a sacred place set the terms. For the Indian retailer still deciding where the next real micro-market is, the answer has been walking the parikrama all along — 6.29 crore strong, and growing.

“

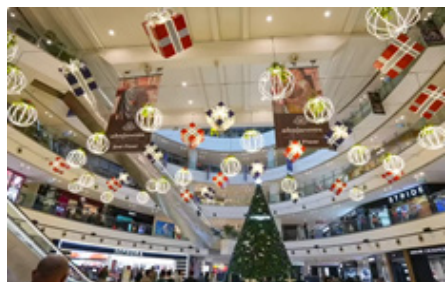
For too long, our industry has treated a pilgrim town as a place to sell to, not a place to build for. Vrindavan does not need another glass-and-chrome box dropped into a sacred landscape. It needs a marketplace that understands seva — that serves the devotee first and earns the sale as a result. Get that order right, and the commerce follows. Food and beverage is where it begins: a clean, warm, sattvik meal after darshan is not merely retail, it is hospitality in its truest sense — and it is the surest way to turn a once-a-year pilgrim into a customer for life.

Mr. Pulak Chamaria,
Director, Infinity Group

”



TOP RETAILERS BATTLE FOR PREMIUM MALL SPACE AS SUPPLY LAGS DEMAND



Retail leasing demand in India's top cities significantly exceeds new Grade A mall supply.

This persistent imbalance has driven vacancy rates to their lowest levels since 2010. New mall completions have sharply declined, further widening the demand-supply gap. Retailers are now competing intensely for high-quality, well-located retail spaces. Future retail growth will focus on institutional developments and experience-led formats.

New Delhi: Retail leasing has outpaced new Grade A mall completions across India's top seven cities as retailers continue to chase high-quality locations. India is witnessing a chronic shortfall in Grade A all space supply. According to Anarock data, the top seven cities recorded gross leasing of approximately 4.1 million sq. ft. of Grade A mall space in H1 2026, against just 0.9 million sq. ft. of new completions.

"The supply problem is cumulative and escalating. Data from India's top seven cities over the past 16 years show a persistent mismatch between Grade A retail supply and leasing demand. While new mall completions fluctuated sharply from year to year, leasing demand steadily absorbed available Grade A space, pushing vacancy rates lower," said Anuj Kejriwal, CEO – Retail and CEO – Europe, Middle East & Africa, ANAROCK Group.

In 2023, the top seven cities added 5.3 million sq. ft. of new Grade A retail supply against gross leasing of approximately 4.1 million sq. ft. of Grade A mall space in H1 2026, against just 0.9 million sq. ft. of new completions.

In 2023, the top seven cities added 5.3 million sq. ft. of new Grade A retail supply against gross leasing of 6.5 million sq. ft. In 2024, new supply fell sharply to just 1.1 million sq. ft., while leasing remained at 6.5 million sq. ft.—almost six times the newly added space.

"While new mall supply partially recovered in 2025 with 5.2 million sq. ft. of new completions, leasing surged to a record 13 million sq. ft.," Kejriwal said.

H1 2026 data indicate a further widening of the structural demand-supply imbalance as geopolitical uncertainty delayed mall deliveries and expansion decisions.

"The widening gap between demand and Grade A retail supply reflects a much larger structural shift in India's consumption economy. As organised retail penetration continues to rise and premium domestic and global brands accelerate their expansion, the conversation is no longer about whether demand exists; it is about how quickly quality retail infrastructure can be created to support it," said Shriram PM Monga, Co-founder of SRED Global. With vacancy levels compressing to just 6.7%, retailers are increasingly competing for a limited pool of high-performing assets, placing greater emphasis on location strategy, asset productivity and customer experience.

"Going forward, we expect the next cycle of retail growth to be driven by institutional-grade developments, mixed-use destinations and experience-led formats that deliver stronger consumer engagement rather than merely adding more retail space. Developers who can bring quality assets to market in the right locations will be best positioned to capture this long-term opportunity," Monga said.

Both leasing and new supply moderated from the exceptionally strong levels seen in 2025. Leasing declined by around 24% year-on-year, while new completions fell by approximately 57%. Geopolitical uncertainty in the first half of the year also prompted some retailers to defer expansion decisions.

"The availability of suitable land is itself a constraint in established urban markets, while rising land costs can make new projects difficult to structure. Approval timelines, financing conditions and construction schedules can further delay project delivery. 2024 demonstrated how quickly supply pipelines can be disrupted—new Grade A completions fell to just 1.1 million sq. ft. that year despite robust leasing demand," Kejriwal said.

The tightening demand-supply equation is evident in vacancy levels over the past 16 years. Vacancy has fallen to 6.7% in H1 2026, the lowest level since 2010. Before the pandemic, Grade A mall vacancy peaked at 21.5% in 2011. In the post-pandemic period, it was highest at 15.5% in 2021.

Grade B and Grade C assets across the major cities continue to report substantially higher vacancy rates, ranging from around 8% to as much as 35%.



SIMPLE, NOT EASY.

*Rajneesh Mahajan
on the Discipline,
Consistency and
Leadership That Build
Enduring Retail Brands
and Shopping Centres*
– R S Roy



Retail has never had more technology than it does today.

“

Artificial intelligence is redefining customer engagement. Predictive analytics is reshaping merchandising.”

Omnichannel ecosystems are blurring the lines between physical and digital commerce, while immersive experiences are becoming the new currency of consumer engagement. Yet amid this unprecedented transformation, Rajneesh Mahajan believes that the industry's greatest competitive advantage remains surprisingly unchanged: the disciplined execution of simple fundamentals.

It is a philosophy he has refined over nearly three decades in retail and shopping centres and one that he recently shared with industry leaders during an SCAI Online Masterclass, inspired by his widely appreciated book, *Simple, Not Easy*. Far from being a discussion on management theory, the session became a compelling reflection on why businesses often overcomplicate success, when enduring brands are built through clarity, consistency and operational discipline.

The industry's response to the book explains why its message has found such resonance. Retail professionals have described *Simple, Not Easy* as "essential reading" for leaders navigating today's rapidly changing consumer landscape. Many have praised its refreshingly practical approach, observing that Mahajan avoids management jargon and instead distils decades of experience into principles that are immediately relatable. Others have remarked that the book serves as a timely reminder that while innovation captures headlines, sustainable success is almost always built on mastering the basics.

A Philosophy Born from Experience

Mahajan's journey gives weight to that philosophy. From helping build Barista Coffee Company during the early years of organised retail to leading retail consulting at Cushman & Wakefield and eventually steering Inorbit Malls as CEO, he has experienced virtually every phase of India's modern retail evolution. His leadership has coincided with the emergence of organised retail, the rise of destination shopping centres, the explosion of e-commerce and the arrival of omnichannel commerce. Through every phase, one lesson has remained constant.



Retail, he says, is fundamentally a simple business.

It exists to fulfil basic human needs—food, fashion, lifestyle, convenience, entertainment and experiences. The fundamentals have never really changed. Businesses need the right product, offered at the right value, made available through the right channels and delivered with the right customer experience. Those principles are neither revolutionary nor difficult to understand.

So why do so many retailers struggle?

According to Mahajan, the answer lies not in business models or technology but in people.

Why Retail Is Simple—But Never Easy

One of the most memorable moments during the SCAI Masterclass was Mahajan's explanation of how the title Simple, Not Easy came into being. Surprisingly, it had nothing to do with retail. It emerged from an informal conversation with a surgeon, who explained the difference between a technically complex operation that lasted only a few minutes and a far longer procedure that was medically straightforward but demanded extraordinary patience, discipline and precision. The insight stayed with Mahajan. Some tasks appear simple but require relentless execution. Others look intimidating but are relatively easy once understood.



Retail, he realised, belongs firmly in the first category.

The business itself is not inherently complicated. What makes it challenging is that it revolves almost entirely around human behaviour. Consumers buy not merely with their wallets but with their aspirations, emotions, lifestyles, social identities and personal preferences. Equally, every product reaches the customer only after passing through numerous human touchpoints from sourcing and logistics to merchandising, selling and after-sales service. Every interaction introduces decisions, and every decision creates the possibility of inconsistency.

For Mahajan, that is where retail becomes "not easy."

Consistency: The Invisible Competitive Advantage

Much of today's business conversation revolves around innovation. Mahajan's thinking, however, shifts attention to something far less glamorous—consistency. Consumers seldom become loyal because of one exceptional visit. They become loyal because every interaction reinforces the same promise. Every positive experience strengthens trust. Every inconsistency weakens it.

Brands, therefore, are not built through advertising alone. They are built through thousands of operational moments that consistently deliver what customers expect. If every store visit feels different, if service standards fluctuate or if customer experience becomes unpredictable, the brand gradually loses its identity. Consistency in operations, service, presentation and execution eventually shapes consumer memory and consumer memory is what creates brand equity.

This philosophy extends naturally to shopping centres.

Visitors may remember spectacular events, celebrity appearances or festive installations, but what ultimately determines whether they return is often much more ordinary: the ease of parking, the cleanliness of common areas, intuitive navigation, courteous security personnel, efficient housekeeping, tenant mix and dependable service standards. These are the invisible disciplines that quietly build a mall's reputation over time.



When Growth Becomes the Greatest Challenge

One of Mahajan's most thought-provoking observations is that growth itself often becomes the greatest threat to consistency. Every retailer wants more stores, more cities, more customers and more channels. Yet every expansion also multiplies complexity. Opening another outlet is not merely adding another location. It means replicating the same culture, the same standards, the same customer experience and the same operational discipline in an entirely new environment. Similarly, entering a new city, launching another business format or adding an omnichannel capability introduces variables that challenge consistency at every level.



Growth may appear linear on a business plan, but *organisational complexity grows exponentially.*

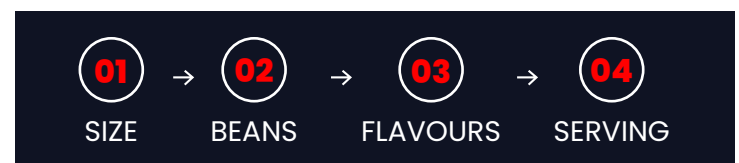
Maintaining simplicity while scaling rapidly becomes one of leadership's greatest tests. It is precisely this insight that has resonated with many retail leaders commenting on the book. Several have observed that Simple, Not Easy is not merely about retail operations but about preserving an organisation's DNA as it grows a challenge faced by virtually every successful consumer business.

Leadership Through Simplicity



Perhaps the most powerful aspect of Mahajan's philosophy is that it extends beyond retail strategy into leadership itself. Many organisations unknowingly create complexity by adding layers of approvals, choices and decision-making. Processes become slower, accountability becomes diluted and execution loses consistency.

Mahajan illustrates this through something as ordinary as ordering a cup of coffee. Every additional choice—size, beans, flavours, serving options—adds another layer of decision-making. Complexity increases not because the product has changed, but because the process has.



The same principle applies inside organisations. The simpler the systems, the easier they become to execute consistently. The clearer the processes, the more empowered frontline teams become. Leadership, therefore, is not about creating complexity. It is about removing it.

That people-first philosophy has become one of Mahajan's defining leadership traits. During the introduction to the SCAI Masterclass, he was described not only as an accomplished retail executive but also as a mentor who believes great organisations are built by developing leaders, empowering teams and creating cultures where people can consistently excel.

A Message That Continues to Resonate

The ideas shared during the SCAI Masterclass are not isolated reflections. In recent interactions with ET Retail and other industry forums, Mahajan has continued to reinforce the same belief—that while retail formats, technologies and consumer expectations will continue to evolve, the foundations of success remain remarkably constant. Product, value, accessibility, customer experience and disciplined execution continue to define winning businesses.

One of his recent observations, widely shared across social media, perhaps captures his philosophy best:

“
Discipline and consistency are boring. Innovation and experimentation are glamorous. The ability to do the same thing with excellence is the real mantra for success in retail.
”

It is a statement that challenges today's obsession with disruption. Innovation undoubtedly creates opportunities. Technology accelerates growth. Artificial intelligence improves efficiency. But none of them can replace the trust that is earned when customers know exactly what they will experience every single time they engage with a brand.



That lesson is especially relevant for India's shopping centre industry as it enters its next phase of growth. New developments, mixed-use destinations, premium formats and omnichannel integration will undoubtedly shape the future. Yet their long-term success will still depend on countless everyday disciplines that visitors may never consciously notice but always remember.

In many ways, Simple, Not Easy is far more than a book about retail. It is a philosophy of leadership. It reminds us that simplicity is not the absence of sophistication; it is the outcome of deep understanding. Behind every effortless customer experience lies extraordinary discipline. Behind every admired brand lies relentless consistency. And behind every successful shopping centre lies an organisation that has mastered the art of doing ordinary things exceptionally well.

As India's retail and shopping centre ecosystem becomes larger, smarter and more technologically advanced, Rajneesh Mahajan's message serves as a timely reminder that the future will not necessarily belong to those who embrace the greatest complexity.

It will belong to those who never lose sight of the fundamentals.

Because in retail, as in leadership, the hardest things are often the simplest.

And that is precisely why they are simple, not easy.



R S Roy, Retail Intelligence, Images Group

With over four decades of association with the Indian retail industry including 25+ years at the IMAGES Group—R. S. Roy has played a key role in the formation of the Shopping Centres Association of India.

He currently serves as Executive Director of the Trusted Board, leading the vision of the Trusted Mark Certification Scheme for retailers and shopping centres. A prolific industry chronicler, Roy has authored over 5,000 articles and reports documenting the evolution of Indian retail in India and globally.



THE CAREER ARCHITECTURE:

Balancing the Four Pillars of Professional Growth

In the modern corporate landscape, the myth of the pure meritocracy has been thoroughly debunked. Every year, countless technically brilliant professionals watch from the sidelines as peers with seemingly lesser technical skills are promoted ahead of them. This phenomenon isn't necessarily a failure of organizational justice; rather, it is a reflection of a fundamental truth about professional evolution: talent alone is a static asset.

To build a resilient, high-impact career, professionals must view their advancement through the lens of a dynamic ecosystem. This ecosystem is governed by four interdependent forces: Competence, Communication, Relationships, and Visibility.

When these four pillars are aligned, they create an unstoppable trajectory. When one is neglected, the entire structure becomes unstable. Here is an in-depth exploration of how to cultivate and balance these pillars to architect a meaningful and upwardly mobile career.



THE CAREER ECOSYSTEM

COMPETENCE
The Engine



COMMUNICATION
The Bridge



RELATIONSHIPS
The Network



VISIBILITY
The Amplifier

SUSTAINABLE CAREER GROWTH

Competence: The Engine of Trust

This is the foundation upon which all professional credibility is built. It is your baseline ticket to entry. Without it, visibility is merely exposure, and communication is just empty rhetoric.

However, the definition of competence changes as a career matures. Early in a career, competence is **functional and execution-oriented**—it is about mastering tools, writing clean code, closing sales, or analyzing data accurately. As you ascend, competence shifts toward **strategic thinking, business acumen, and emotional intelligence**.



The Competence Trap: The most common mistake professionals make is falling into the "Expertise Trap." They assume that becoming 20% better at a technical skill will yield a 20% increase in career velocity. In reality, technical skills hit a point of diminishing returns.

The Shift: True professional maturity requires transitioning from doing the work to understanding why the work matters to the bottom line.

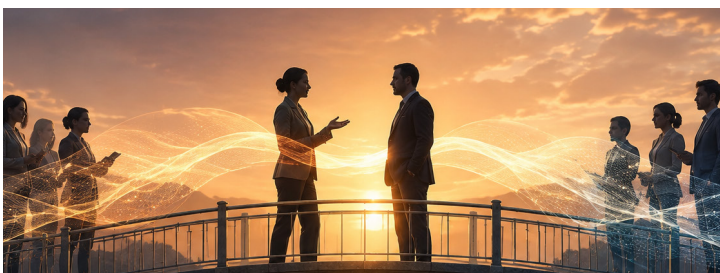
Strategic Action Items:

- **Audit Your Skill Stack:** Identify the core competencies required not just for your current role, but for the role two levels above you.
- **Develop "T-Shaped" Skills:** Maintain deep expertise in one specific discipline (the vertical bar of the T) while developing a broad understanding of cross-functional business operations (the horizontal bar).
- **Learn the Language of Business:** Move beyond your department's jargon. Understand how your work impacts revenue, cost mitigation, and customer retention.

Communication: The Bridge of Influence

If competence is the engine, communication is the transmission that translates power into movement. You can possess brilliant ideas, but if you cannot articulate them clearly, persuasively, and empathetically, those ideas will die on the vine.

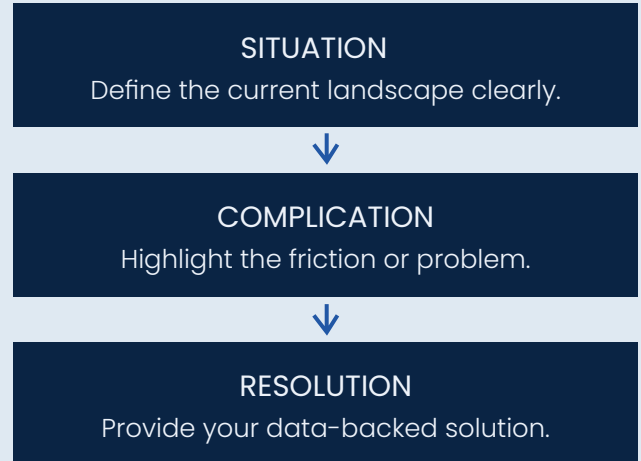
High-impact communication is never about using complex vocabulary or dominating the room; it is about contextual translation. It is the ability to distill complex data into actionable insights for a C-suite executive, while simultaneously being able to provide motivating, granular feedback to a junior engineer.



The Power of Executive Presence

Executive presence is largely a communication triumph. It involves commanding authority not through volume, but through brevity, clarity, and structural framework.

THE SCR COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK



Strategic Action Items:

- **Default to Brevity:** Land your main point in the first 30 seconds of an interaction. Use the "BLUF" method (Bottom Line Up Front).
- **Master the Pivot to Value:** When explaining technical issues to non-technical stakeholders, always translate features or processes into business outcomes.
- **Active Listening as a Strategy:** True communication is a two-way street. Practice summarizing what others have said before offering your counter-perspective to ensure alignment.

Relationships: The Professional Safety Net and Accelerator

No one achieves sustainable success in a vacuum. The quality of your career is directly proportional to the quality of the relationships you cultivate. In corporate environments, decisions about your promotion, compensation, and project assignments happen in rooms you are not in. Your relationships determine who speaks up for you in those rooms.

Relationships should not be viewed transactional; they are built on mutual value, trust, and shared professional respect. They span three critical categories: Peers, Mentors, and Sponsors.

The Distinction Between Mentors and Sponsors

While the corporate world often conflates these two roles, understanding the difference is vital for career acceleration:

Feature	Mentors	Sponsors
Role	Offer advice, perspective, and a safe sounding board.	Invest their own political capital to advocate for your advancement.
Focus	Your personal development and growth.	Your public promotion and opportunities.
Action	Talk with you.	Talk about you in decision-making rooms.

Strategic Action Items:

- **Build Lateral Alliances:** Do not just network upward. Your peers today will be the executives of tomorrow. Cultivate strong cross-functional relationships.
- **Manage Up Authentically:** Understand your manager's priorities, anxieties, and goals. Your primary job is to make their job easier and to solve problems before they reach their desk.
- **Earn Sponsorship Through Excellence:** You cannot ask for a sponsor; you must earn one by delivering undeniable value and demonstrating reliability over time.

Visibility: The Amplifier of Opportunity

Visibility is the most controversial of the four pillars. Many professionals view self-promotion as inherently distasteful or political. However, in a vast corporate ecosystem, **quiet competence is a recipe for stagnation.** If leadership does not know you exist, they cannot consider you for leadership opportunities.

Visibility is not about bragging or hogging the spotlight; it is about ensuring that your contributions are connected to your name, and that your insights are accessible to the organization at large. It is about making your value legible to stakeholders who do not work with you on a day-to-day basis.



Strategic Visibility vs. Self-Promotion

Bragging focuses on the individual ("Look how great I am"). Strategic visibility focuses on the impact and the team ("Look at what we achieved and what it means for the company").

The Rule of Visual Impact: Your work must not only be done; it must be seen to be done by those who hold the keys to organizational resources.



Strategic Action Items:

- **Volunteer for High-Impact, Cross-Functional Projects:** Step outside your comfort zone to lead initiatives that cross departmental boundaries. This automatically exposes you to different leadership circles.
- **Optimize Your Channels:** Present your team's findings in all-hands meetings, write internal newsletters or whitepapers, and maintain an active, professional external presence (e.g., on LinkedIn or industry panels).
- **Share the Credit, Own the Results:** When a project succeeds, loudly praise your team and collaborators. When an initiative faces headwinds, step forward with the data and ownership of the solution. This builds a reputation for secure, mature leadership.

The Synthesis: Diagnosing Your Career Mix

A successful career requires a continuous calibration of these four elements. If you over-index on any single pillar while neglecting the others, your career will experience specific, predictable bottlenecks.

Consider the following archetypes of imbalance:

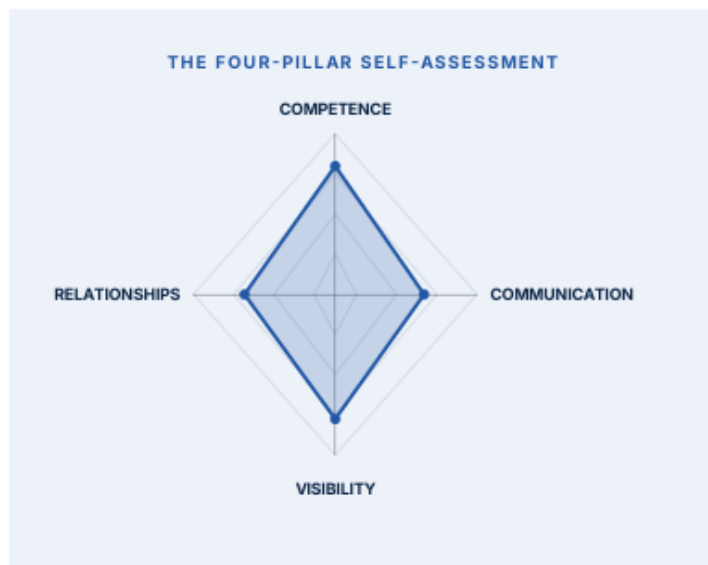
The Unsung Hero (High Competence, Low Visibility): This professional works incredibly hard, produces flawless results, but is consistently passed over for promotions because leadership simply doesn't know who they are.

The Smooth Talker (Low Competence, High Communication & Visibility): This individual excels at networking and presenting, but quickly burns out or loses credibility when called upon to deliver concrete, high-stakes results.

The Isolated Expert (High Competence, Low Relationships): A brilliant individual contributor who cannot scale their impact because they alienate peers and fail to build collaborative networks.

Finding Equilibrium

To gauge where you stand, visualize these four pillars as a radar chart. Rate yourself from 1 to 10 on each pillar:



If your shape is highly asymmetrical, your current career strategy is unsustainable. If your competence is at a 9, but your visibility is at a 3, your immediate developmental priority should not be taking another technical certification; it should be presenting at the next department quarterly review.

Activating Your Architectural Blueprint

Your career is the most valuable enterprise you will ever manage. Treating it as a purely technical endeavor is a disservice to your potential.

By systematically anchoring your work in deep competence, broadcasting that value through sophisticated communication, scaling your impact through genuine relationships, and amplifying your presence via strategic visibility, you transform your career from a series of accidental events into a deliberate, masterfully designed trajectory.

Stop waiting to be discovered. Build the infrastructure that makes your success inevitable.





CREATING EMOTIONAL BUSINESS VALUE THROUGH DESIGN

For over 40 years, GARDE has believed that design should do more than shape physical spaces. It should create places that inspire people, strengthen businesses, and generate lasting value.

Since its establishment in Tokyo in 1985, GARDE has grown from an interior design studio into a global design and consulting firm with offices across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Throughout this journey, one principle has remained constant: successful projects begin with understanding people as much as they do places. Today, our clients include developers, retailers, hospitality operators, investors, and public institutions seeking to create destinations that are commercially successful, culturally relevant, and memorable for the people who experience them. Whether designing a luxury retail flagship, a mixed-use district, a hotel, an office, or a cultural destination, GARDE approaches every project with the same objective: to create long-term value through design.



Emotional Branding as a Business Strategy

At the heart of GARDE's philosophy is Emotional Branding.

We believe that the most successful destinations are those that create meaningful emotional connections between people and places.



Raita Yamanouchi

Managing Director,
Garde Sdn. Bhd.,
Tokyo, Japan

Those connections encourage repeat visits, strengthen customer loyalty, reinforce brand identity, and ultimately enhance the long-term value of an asset.

For this reason, design is never treated as decoration. It is a strategic business tool.

Rather than beginning with aesthetics alone, GARDE works to understand a project's commercial objectives, target audience, operational requirements, and cultural context.

Design decisions are then guided by these broader business goals, ensuring that every project delivers both commercial performance and engaging user experience.

This integrated perspective has become one of GARDE's defining strengths and continues to shape every project we undertake.



Evolving Beyond Design

Over the past four decades, both our industry and our role within it have evolved considerably.

Commercial developments today demand more than architecture or interior design. They require clear positioning, strong branding, operational planning, leasing strategies, hospitality expertise, and a deep understanding of customer behavior.

In response, GARDE has expanded beyond traditional design services to become a multidisciplinary consulting partner. Our capabilities now include architecture, interior design, branding, leasing support, hospitality consulting, business development, real estate advisory, and cultural initiatives.

Increasingly, we are involved before design work begins.

By participating in the earliest stages of development, we help clients define project vision, market positioning, customer experience, and long-term commercial strategy. This allows design, branding, operations, and business objectives to be developed together rather than independently.

We believe this collaborative approach produces stronger projects and creates greater value over the lifetime of an asset.



Creating Destinations That Endure

The expectations placed on commercial real estate continue to evolve.

Shopping centers have become social destinations. Hotels are expected to offer authentic lifestyle experiences. Mixed-use developments increasingly combine retail, hospitality, entertainment, offices, residences, and public spaces into integrated urban environments.

As these changes reshape cities around the world, GARDE believes that successful developments are defined not by individual buildings, but by the experiences they create.

Our work therefore focuses on understanding how people move, interact, gather, and return. We seek to create environments that encourage discovery, strengthen communities, and remain relevant long after opening day.

This philosophy has guided projects across luxury retail, department stores, shopping centers, hospitality developments, branded residences, cultural institutions, offices, and large-scale urban regeneration initiatives throughout the world.

While every project is unique, our objective remains consistent: to create destinations that deliver lasting commercial value while enriching everyday life.



Global Perspective, Local Understanding

Operating internationally has reinforced an important lesson. Every city has its own identity, culture, and aspirations.

Rather than applying a single design language worldwide, GARDE adapts its approach to reflect local context while drawing upon experience gained across diverse international markets.

Our offices in Tokyo, Osaka, Milan, Paris, Dubai, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Los Angeles, and New York allow us to exchange ideas across regions while remaining closely connected to local markets.

Equally important is the diversity of expertise within GARDE itself.

Architects, interior designers, branding specialists, hospitality consultants, business development professionals, marketing teams, and art advisors collaborate throughout every stage of a project. This multidisciplinary structure enables us to provide integrated solutions that remain consistent from initial strategy through project completion.



Investing in the Future

The future of commercial development will be shaped by technology, sustainability, and changing consumer expectations.

GARDE continues investing in digital visualization, immersive storytelling, AI-supported design processes, and new methods of communicating design intent. These tools enable faster decision-making and help clients better understand projects before construction begins.

At the same time, sustainability has become an essential part of every development. We believe environmental responsibility and commercial success should advance together. Creating places that are efficient, resilient, and people-centered is fundamental to long-term value creation.

Our business continues to evolve as well.

In addition to expanding our consulting services, GARDE is strengthening its work in hospitality strategy, urban revitalization, business development, and cultural initiatives such as GOCA (Gallery of Contemporary Art by GARDE) located in New York's renowned Chelsea area, created with the aim to promote young East Asian talent on a global stage. Activities such as these reflect our belief that successful destinations are created through collaboration between design, business, culture, and community.

Looking ahead, we will continue expanding our international partnerships while exploring new opportunities across retail, hospitality, mixed-use developments, and emerging urban destinations throughout Asia and beyond.

Looking Forward to India

India represents one of the world's most dynamic and promising markets for retail and mixed-use development.

Rapid urbanization, rising consumer expectations, and continued investment are creating opportunities to redefine the role of shopping centers as destinations that integrate commerce, hospitality, entertainment, and community.

GARDE sees tremendous potential to contribute to this transformation.

Joining the Shopping Centers Association of India marks an important step in our continued international growth. More importantly, it provides an opportunity to build lasting relationships with developers, retailers, investors, and industry leaders who share a commitment to creating exceptional destinations.

While we are pleased to contribute to the experience gained through projects around the world, we also believe that meaningful partnerships begin with listening. Every market has its own culture, challenges, and opportunities, and we look forward to learning from India's rapidly evolving retail industry while sharing ideas that support its continued growth.

As GARDE continues to expand internationally, our mission remains unchanged. We will continue creating emotional business value through design, helping our clients realize long-term commercial success, and developing places that people value for generations to come.





KHAN MARKET AT 75

*How Two Acres
of Delhi Became
a Mirror of India*



From Refugee Colony to Global Luxury Address

In 1951, a U-shaped, double-storey block of 154 shops and 74 flats came up on a modest stretch of land in the shadow of Lutyens' Delhi. It had no ambition of grandeur. Built by the Rehabilitation Ministry under India's first relief and rehabilitation minister, it was created to give displaced families — many from the North West Frontier Province — a livelihood after the trauma of Partition. Shopkeepers slept in their stores at night and opened them again each morning. The market was named after Khan Abdul Jabbar Khan, also known as Dr. Khan Sahib, elder brother of the "Frontier Gandhi," Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, in tribute to the man who had helped many of those refugees escape safely into India.

Seventy-five years later, that same two acres houses global fashion labels, Michelin-adjacent restaurants, embassies' favourite cafés, and India's most expensive retail rents. Bahrison's Booksellers, founded in 1953 by a 19-year-old refugee from Malakwal, and Faqir Chand & Sons, run today by the fourth generation of a family that fled Peshawar in 1947, still trade a few doors from luxury boutiques that would look at home on Bond Street. It is this collision of memory and money that makes Khan Market worth pausing on at 75 — not simply as a shopping destination, but as a compressed, walkable history of independent India itself.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS IN NUMBERS



1951

Built by the Rehabilitation Ministry to resettle Partition refugees



154 shops & 74 flats

The original U-shaped, doublestorey block on a modest stretch of land



\$220 / sq ft

Annual rent — 24th priciest retail street in the world, Cushman & Wakefield, 2025



75 years

From refugee-rehabilitation colony to India's most expensive high street



What Khan Market Means to Delhi

For Delhiites, Khan Market has rarely been just a place to shop. Generations of the capital's writers, civil servants, diplomats, and journalists have treated it as a second living room — a place to run into people you know, to argue about politics over coffee, to buy a book and a bar of chocolate in the same ten minutes. Long-time residents recall a market where children from nearby schools shopped after class, where cycles could be rented by the hour, and where the parking lot was once a park. That intimacy has not entirely disappeared even as global storefronts have moved in; it has simply been layered over, the way an old family home gets renovated without losing its foundation.



For many Delhiites, the market's continuity across 75 years — the fact that a fourth-generation book-seller can still be found where his great-grandfather set up shop — is precisely why Khan Market still feels like Delhi's own, even as its price tags increasingly do not.



Reshaping India's Retail Industry

Khan Market's real significance to Indian retail lies in what it proved: that a small, walkable, mixed-use high street could out-earn air-conditioned malls many times its size. Long before India's mall boom of the 2000s, and long after it, Khan Market demonstrated that footfall, visibility, and brand adjacency mattered more than square footage. It became the address international entrants used to signal seriousness about the Indian market

"If a brand could justify Khan Market rents, it had arrived. That template has since been repeated in Mumbai's Kemps Corner, Bengaluru's Church Street, and Delhi's own Aerocity and DLF Emporio"

but Khan Market remains the reference point: the market every retail consultant's India report still opens with.

An Incubator of Fashion and Taste

Fashion in India did not arrive fully formed from the runways of Milan or Paris; much of it was quietly rehearsed in Khan Market's narrow lanes. Independent Indian designers and homegrown labels used the market's boutiques through the 1990s and 2000s to build the first real bridge between traditional Indian craft and contemporary silhouette — well before "Indo-fusion" became a marketing term. As liberalisation opened India's doors, Khan Market became one of the first places where a new, cosmopolitan Indian consumer could try on global fashion literally and figuratively, alongside home-grown design. Today, the market's mix of international labels, concept stores, and heritage Indian ateliers reflects a fashion consumer who no longer sees "Indian" and "global" as competing categories — a shift Khan Market helped normalise before it became conventional wisdom.

A Barometer of Consumer Trends

Because its customer base has always skewed towards diplomats, executives, and old and new money alike, Khan Market has functioned as an early-warning system for Indian consumer behaviour — a place where trends surface a season or two before they reach the rest of urban India. The market's evolution traces the arc of the Indian consumer with unusual clarity: from ration-era essentials in the 1950s and 60s, to the paperback-and-record shops of the 1970s and 80s, to the café culture and specialty coffee boom of the 2000s, to today's appetite for direct-to-consumer fashion labels, artisanal food brands, and wellness concepts. What sells in Khan Market today is often what the rest of urban India is asking for within a few years — a pattern retail strategists still track closely.

— commanding annual rents in the range of \$220 per square foot, according to Cushman & Wakefield's most recent Main Streets Across the World report, which placed Khan Market 24th among the world's priciest retail high streets in 2025, just ahead of several long-established European addresses. Quarterly rents in the market have been quoted at roughly ₹1,700–1,800 per square foot, with year-on-year growth outpacing much of the Asia-Pacific region. The shift began in earnest from the 1990s, as families that had once lived above their shops began selling or leasing out flats, and again after 2000, when residential-turned-commercial conversions accelerated. The lesson Khan Market offers Indian real estate is a durable one: in a market defined by land scarcity, brand prestige, and irreplaceable location, value compounds regardless of the size of the plot.



The Real Estate Story: Scarcity as Value

Perhaps nowhere is Khan Market's transformation more dramatic than in real estate. What began as government-allotted shops rented at a nominal sum has become, by some counts, the costliest retail real estate in the country

"It is a case study now studied alongside Mumbai's Kemps Corner and Bandra's Linking Road whenever developers and investors talk about India's 'high street' asset class."

High Streets Across the World: A Parallel Evolution

Khan Market's journey is best understood next to the arc that high streets everywhere have followed. London's Bond Street, New York's Fifth Avenue, Paris's Champs-Élysées, and Milan's Via Montenapoleone all began as functional commercial or residential streets before postwar prosperity and luxury retailing turned them into global status addresses — a transformation that, in most Western cities, played out over a century or more. High streets globally have since had to reinvent themselves again and again: fighting off suburban malls in the mid-20th century, absorbing the shock of e-commerce in the 2000s and 2010s, and now repositioning as "experience" destinations built around dining, culture, and flagship stores rather than routine shopping. London's New Bond Street overtook Milan's Via Montenapoleone in 2025 to become the world's single most expensive retail street, a reminder that this global hierarchy is still very much in motion.

Khan Market compressed a similar arc into 75 years rather than 150. It moved from subsistence retail to boutique commerce to global luxury address in roughly the time it took India itself to move from a rationed, licence-controlled economy to a liberalised, globally networked one. Where Bond Street's transformation tracked the rise and consolidation of British and European wealth, Khan Market's mirrors India's own economic liberalisation in 1991, its subsequent consumption boom, and its recent emergence as a market too large for global luxury brands to ignore. In that sense, Khan Market is not simply India's answer to Bond Street or Rodeo Drive — it is a faster-forward version of the same story, one in which a refugee-rehabilitation colony and a luxury shopping district turned out to be the same 75-year-old place all along.



Conclusion

"At 75, Khan Market's significance lies less in what it sells than in what it has witnessed: Partition and rehabilitation, a licence-era economy of scarcity, the liberalisation that unleashed Indian consumerism, and the arrival of India as a serious market for global capital and global brands. Few retail addresses anywhere condense a nation's economic biography quite so neatly into two acres. As Delhi's other high streets and malls compete for the next decade of Indian retail, Khan Market's enduring relevance may be its clearest lesson: that history, memory, and old wooden bookshelves can coexist quite comfortably with the highest retail rents in the country — and that, in real estate as in life, location and legacy are rarely separable."





RAISING THE NEXT CONSUMER: IS RETAIL READY FOR GEN ALPHA?

THE FUTURE SHOPS HERE



Generation Alpha won't wait until adulthood to reshape retail. As digital natives with growing influence over household spending, they're already changing how families discover, evaluate and buy products.

The question for brands is no longer whether to engage them, but how.

For years, retailers have segmented consumers by purchasing power. Generation Alpha challenges that logic.

Born between 2010 and 2024, this generation may still rely on their parents' wallets, but they are increasingly shaping what those wallets are spent on. Whether it's the cereal brand placed in the shopping cart, the trainers chosen for school or the next family dining destination, influence is arriving long before income.

destination, influence is arriving long before income.

That influence will only grow. According to Euromonitor International, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to be home to around 965 million Gen Alpha consumers by 2040, with spending projected to reach US\$3 trillion. At the same time, retail sales of children's products are forecast to reach US\$142.7 billion by 2029, accounting for more than a third of global sales.

For retailers, these aren't simply demographic statistics. They represent a fundamental shift in how purchasing decisions are made.



The first AI-native generation

Generation Alpha has never known a world without smartphones, streaming platforms or AI-powered recommendations. Their expectations of convenience and personalisation are not shaped by comparison with previous technologies; they are their default.

Research from PwC found that 97% of children aged seven to fourteen make purchasing decisions independently at least some of the time, whilst most already own or regularly use connected devices. Discovery increasingly begins with creators, gaming platforms, YouTube or social media rather than traditional advertising.



For brands, this means visibility is becoming less about broadcasting messages and more about appearing naturally within the digital environments where young consumers spend their time.

Winning the parent and the child

The challenge is that Gen Alpha rarely shops alone. Every purchase often involves two customers: the child influencing the decision and the parent making the payment. Success therefore depends on balancing emotional appeal with functional reassurance.

Children may respond to design, storytelling and creator influence. Parents are more likely to prioritise safety, educational value, nutrition and long-term quality.

The brands that succeed will speak convincingly to both audiences without appearing to target either at the expense of the other.

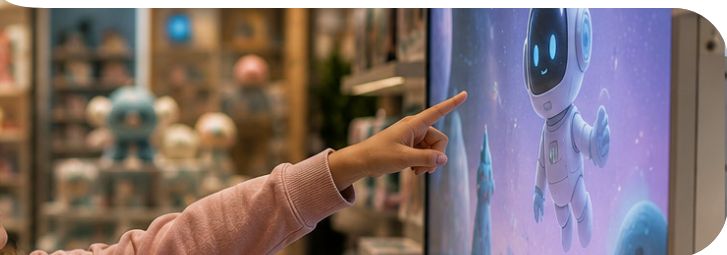


Retail opportunities extend well beyond toys

The opportunity reaches far beyond traditional children's categories.

As parents invest more heavily in each child, spending is accelerating across nutrition, health-care, footwear, apparel, education, technology and family experiences. Euromonitor expects particularly strong growth in developing Asian markets such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines, whilst mature markets including China and Japan are seeing demand shift towards value-oriented categories.

For retailers, this creates opportunities not only through product innovation but through curated experiences, omnichannel engagement and family-focused loyalty programmes.

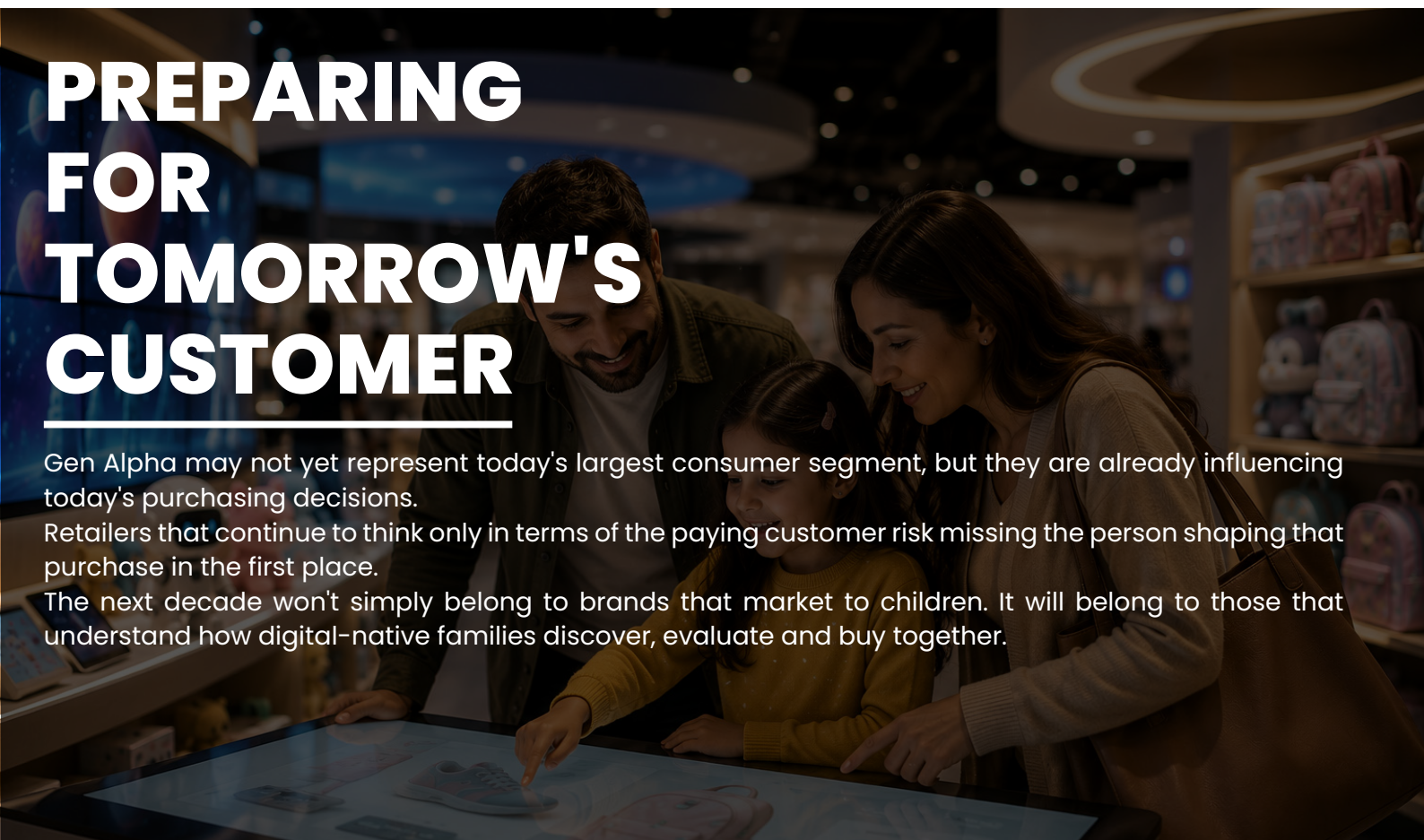


PREPARING FOR TOMORROW'S CUSTOMER

Gen Alpha may not yet represent today's largest consumer segment, but they are already influencing today's purchasing decisions.

Retailers that continue to think only in terms of the paying customer risk missing the person shaping that purchase in the first place.

The next decade won't simply belong to brands that market to children. It will belong to those that understand how digital-native families discover, evaluate and buy together.

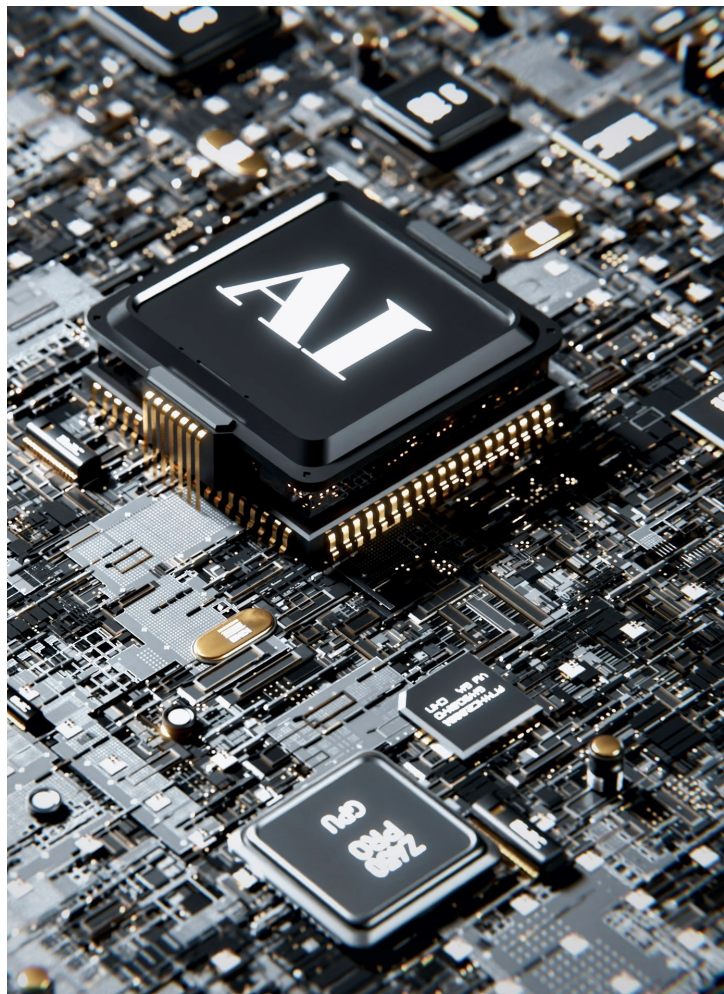




BEYOND SEO: THE NEW RULES OF BRAND DISCOVERABILITY IN THE AI ERA

For more than two decades, digital visibility followed a familiar formula. Brands invested in SEO, competed for rankings and measured success through clicks. Search engines rewarded relevance, and the customer journey began with a list of links. That model is changing.

AI-powered search platforms such as ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google's AI Overviews increasingly generate answers before users ever reach a search results page. Rather than directing people to websites, they synthesise information from multiple sources and decide which brands deserve to be referenced. Visibility is no longer determined solely by ranking well on Google. It depends on whether AI systems recognise a brand as credible, authoritative and relevant. For retailers and consumer brands, this changes the economics of discoverability. Optimising for keywords remains important, but it is no longer sufficient. AI evaluates a much broader set of signals, including editorial coverage, customer reviews, industry awards, social conversations and trusted third-party references. Together, these signals shape how machines understand a brand and whether it becomes part of an answer.



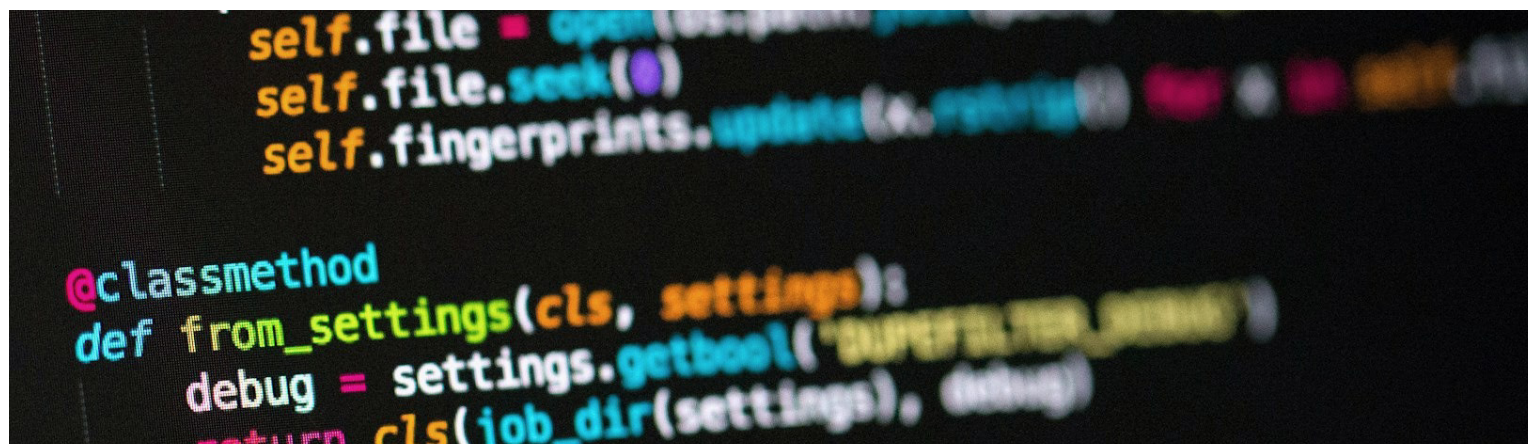
From keywords to entities

Perhaps the biggest shift is that AI no longer thinks in keywords. It thinks in entities.

Instead of asking whether a page is relevant for a particular search term, AI attempts to understand who a company is, what products it offers, how it relates to competitors and what others say about it. A retailer may publish hundreds of well-optimised articles, but if the brand lacks clear, consistent signals across the wider digital ecosystem, AI may struggle to identify it as an authoritative source.

This places greater importance on consistency. Product names, brand descriptions and category definitions need to be structured in ways that both people & machines can easily understand.





Content must be built for retrieval

Traditional SEO rewarded comprehensive articles designed to keep readers engaged. AI search works differently. It retrieves specific passages, summarises them and incorporates them into a broader response.



01

RETRIEVE



02

SUMMARISE



03

INCORPORATE

That places greater value on content that is factual, clearly structured and easy to extract. Definitions, concise explanations and regularly updated information are increasingly favoured over lengthy introductions and promotional language. Freshness also matters more, as AI models often prioritise recent information when forming responses.

For content teams, the challenge is no longer simply publishing more. It is creating information that intelligent systems can confidently identify, interpret and reuse.

Why PR has become a strategic asset

The growing influence of AI is also changing the role of public relations.

Editorial coverage, independent reviews, analyst reports and trusted community platforms such as Reddit, YouTube and Wikipedia all contribute to how AI systems evaluate brands. These external references provide validation that a company's own website cannot.

The reverse is equally true. Outdated or inaccurate information can persist across AI-generated responses unless it is replaced by newer, more authoritative signals. Managing a brand's digital reputation is becoming as important as managing its website.

Search is becoming an ecosystem

The next phase of discoverability requires a broader approach than SEO alone.

Many marketers are beginning to think in terms of Search Everywhere Optimisation, combining traditional search optimisation with digital PR, structured content, social authority, technical SEO and multimedia assets. The objective is no longer just to rank highly on a search engine, but to ensure that wherever AI looks for information, it finds consistent evidence that reinforces the brand's authority.

For retailers, the implications extend well beyond marketing. As AI increasingly shapes product discovery and purchase decisions, discoverability becomes a competitive advantage rather than simply a communications objective.



The brands that succeed will not necessarily produce the most content. They will be the ones that create the clearest, most trusted and most consistent digital footprint, for both customers and the intelligent systems that increasingly guide them.

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Masterclass in Kolkata

SCAI successfully hosted its Masterclass on "Smart Energy Strategies: Powering Malls, Offices & Industrial Parks with Solar" in Kolkata.

The insightful session, led by Mr. Gautam Das, CEO & Founder, Oorjan Cleantech, was attended by over 50 professionals from the shopping centre, office, industrial park, and real estate sectors.

SCAI extends its sincere gratitude to Mr. Sushil Mohta, the Merlyn Group for their generous sponsorship and excellent support in making this knowledge-sharing initiative a success.



PRESS RELEASE: Assembling the Modern Shopping Centre Jigsaw to Shape India's Next Retail Destinations

Shopping Centres Next (SCN) 2026 brought together India's leading retail real estate leaders to explore how collaboration, innovation and experience-led strategies are assembling the next generation of shopping centres.

Jaipur, July 24, 2026: Shopping Centres Next (SCN) 2026, IMAGES Group's flagship retail real estate intelligence platform, concluded successfully today at the Jaipur Marriott Hotel, bringing together over 500 retail real estate professionals, 200 leading brands and 100+ industry speakers for a day of insightful discussions on the future of India's shopping centre ecosystem.

Held under the theme 'Assembling the Modern Shopping Centre Jigsaw,' SCN 2026 combined a high-impact conference, exhibition, strategic networking opportunities and the prestigious IMAGES Shopping Centre Awards 2026. Through six thought-provoking sessions, the event explored the evolving role of shopping centres as experience-led destinations, the future of leasing, retail technology, customer engagement, and the collaborative partnerships shaping the next generation of retail real estate.

SCN 2026 was Powered by Pacific, with CRC as the Shopping Centre Partner and World Trade Park as the Legacy Partner. The conference also featured a dedicated exhibition showcasing innovations in shopping centre design, technology and infrastructure, along with presentations on upcoming retail developments that are redefining India's urban landscape.

Delivering the inaugural address, **Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Smt. Diya Kumari**, said,



Smt. Diya Kumari, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

"I congratulate IMAGES Group and all the organisers for bringing together leaders from the retail, real estate and investment sectors on this important platform. Rajasthan is rapidly emerging as one of India's most promising destinations for retail, tourism and investment. With progressive policies, world-class infrastructure, a thriving tourism economy and growing consumer markets, we are creating an environment where businesses can invest and grow with confidence. I invite all of you to partner with Rajasthan as we build the next generation of vibrant, experience-led destinations."



Rajesh Jain, MD & CEO, Lacoste India; Ajay Kumar, Country Director, Guess India; Mukesh Kumar, CEO, Malls & Business Head, New Businesses, Infiniti Malls; Dr. Gopalakrishna Machani, Chairman, Shopping Centres Association of India; Himanshu Kwatra, CMD, Western Living; Sundeep Chugh, MD, OVS S.p.A and Salil Kumar, Director, CRC Group

Welcoming the delegates, **Vineet Chadha, COO – Retail, IMAGES Group**, said Jaipur's centuries-old legacy as a thriving centre of commerce made it the perfect backdrop for Shopping Centres Next 2026. He noted that the event goes beyond discussions on mall development and retail metrics, bringing together the people shaping India's retail destinations across metros as well as emerging Tier II and Tier III markets. He added that the platform celebrates the evolving places where India shops, connects and grows, while encouraging meaningful dialogue on the future of organised retail.

Rajasthan at an Inflection Point: Building the State's Next Retail Landmarks

The session explored Rajasthan's emergence as a leading retail destination, highlighting investment opportunities, evolving consumer aspirations, experience-led developments and long-term strategies for building future-ready shopping centres that remain relevant for decades. Opening the discussion, industry leaders highlighted how Rajasthan's evolving infrastructure, rising consumer aspirations and expanding urban catchments are positioning the state among India's fastest-growing organised retail markets.



(L to R): Bimal Sharma, Head Retail, Leasing, CBRE India; Dr. Anoop Bartaria, Founder & Chairman, World Trade Park; Abhishek Bansal, Managing Director, Pacific Development Corporation Ltd.; Ajay Gupta, Director, Manglam Group and Gaurav Bardiya, Director, Bardiya Group.

"Shopping centres must evolve beyond transactional retail into destinations that inspire aspirations, foster community engagement and enhance the identity of a city," said **Dr. Anoop Barataria, Founder & Chairman, World Trade Park**. He observed that organised retail still represents only a small share of India's overall market, presenting immense opportunities for future growth. Introducing world-class brands into emerging markets, coupled with educating consumers about modern retail experiences, will be instrumental in unlocking the next phase of expansion for India's shopping centre ecosystem.

Abhishek Bansal, Managing Director, Pacific Development Corporation Ltd., said Jaipur's growing consumer aspirations, expanding regional influence and strong tourism economy made it a compelling destination for Pacific's next phase of growth. Drawing from successful developments across Tier II markets, the company identified a clear opportunity to create a world-class retail destination that seamlessly integrates premium brands, entertainment, hospitality, food and lifestyle experiences. The enthusiastic response from national and international retailers further reinforced confidence in Jaipur's retail potential. The upcoming development aims to establish the city among India's premier shopping destinations while reflecting its evolving economic strength and lifestyle aspirations.

Gaurav Bardiya, Director, Bardiya Group, said today's shopping centres must offer much more than retail by creating destinations that blend premium brands with entertainment, dining, family experiences and community engagement. He noted that consumers increasingly seek world-class experiences, making it essential for malls to remain vibrant throughout the year through curated events and attractions. Retail, he added, is now about enriching the city's lifestyle and delivering memorable experiences that encourage repeat visits.

The inaugural session '**Assembling the Modern Shopping Centre Jigsaw: Bringing Together the Pieces that Drive Growth**' focused on the importance of stronger collaboration between developers, retailers, policymakers, brands and technology partners in building future-ready shopping centres. Discussion focused on India's next generation of malls as they must be designed as integrated, experience-driven ecosystems capable of delivering sustainable business growth while enhancing consumer engagement.

"The future of shopping centres lies in creating destinations that extend well beyond shopping. As consumers increasingly seek entertainment, wellness, dining and immersive experiences that digital platforms cannot replicate, malls must evolve into spaces that encourage longer visits, deeper engagement and stronger emotional connections," said **Mukesh Kumar, CEO, Malls & Business Head – New Businesses, Infiniti Malls.**

"India's expanding retail economy requires stronger collaboration between industry stakeholders and government. Supportive policies, improved ease of doing business and coordinated efforts across the ecosystem will play a critical role in accelerating the growth of organised shopping centres," emphasised **Dr. Gopalakrishna Machani, Chairman, Shopping Centres Association of India.**

"Shopping centres today are no longer merely transactional spaces. Consumers increasingly visit malls for holistic experiences, making engaging environments, memorable interactions and customer-centric planning the defining factors for future success," observed **Himanshu Kwatra, CMD, Western Living,**

Rajesh Jain, MD & CEO, Lacoste India, highlighted that successful shopping centres of the future will be built through close collaboration among brands, developers, technology partners and policymakers. He noted that aligning these stakeholders creates richer customer experiences while driving long-term business growth and stronger consumer loyalty.

"Shopping centres are steadily evolving into vibrant social destinations offering convenience, services and community experiences. The consumers have consistently raised expectations, making it imperative for developers to continuously enhance experiences and create destinations that remain relevant in people's everyday lives," **Salil Kumar, Director, CRC Group.**

The post-lunch session 'Malls as Growth Partners: What Brands Really Look For' shifted the focus from mall development to retailer expectations, examining how shopping centres can become long-term growth partners rather than merely leasing destinations. The discussion highlighted that successful retail ecosystems are built on early collaboration, strategic planning, adaptable leasing models and an in-depth understanding of evolving consumer behaviour and emerging retail categories.

Rohit Gopalani, CBO, Inorbit Malls explained that the strategy differs across markets, with Tier III developments requiring earlier engagement and luxury assets demanding far more detailed planning around anchor brands and store configurations. "Leasing journey begins well before construction progresses significantly, with every decision influenced by the nature of the asset and the market it serves. Detailed planning around anchor-to-inline ratios, tenant mix and overall positioning lays the foundation for retailer engagement. While there is no fixed leasing timeline, the objective is to have nearly 80% of the mall committed before handovers begin," he said.

"In mixed-use developments, decisions around grid sizes, frontage, store flexibility and zoning must be aligned with future tenant requirements. While anchor brands shape the overall design framework, equal attention must be given to category-specific space requirements across fashion, athleisure, jewellery, watches and F&B. Careful planning at the drawing-board stage ultimately creates a shopping centre that delivers value for both retailers and consumers," explained Tanu Prasad, CEO, Oberoi Realty suggesting retailer engagement should begin at the design stage itself, as leasing and mall planning go hand in hand. watches and F&B. Careful planning at the drawing-board stage ultimately creates a shopping centre that delivers value for both retailers and consumers," explained Tanu Prasad, CEO, Oberoi Realty suggesting retailer engagement should begin at the design stage itself, as leasing and mall planning go hand in hand.

Nandini Taneja, CEO, Bhumika Enterprises Pvt. Ltd., said future-ready shopping centres must build flexibility into their leasing strategy from the very beginning. While established brands provide stability and predictable returns, developers should also reserve space for emerging and aspirational concepts that could become mainstream by the time the mall opens. She noted that categories such as lab-grown

diamonds and evolving food concepts illustrate how rapidly consumer preferences can change. A balanced tenant strategy, backed by realistic rental planning and periodic reassessment, helps ensure malls remain relevant in a dynamic retail environment.

Muhammed Fawaz, CEO, HiLite Malls, observed that mall development spans several years, making it impossible to predict the final tenant mix or exact retailer requirements at the outset. He emphasised that while developers must establish a strong vision through thoughtful curation, anchor planning and design strategy from the beginning, they must also retain the flexibility to adapt as market conditions evolve. Nearly 90 percent of the concept should be defined early, he said, but the final tenant mix is best refined closer to project completion to reflect changing retail realities.

Beyond the conference sessions, SCN 2026 provided delegates with an opportunity to explore cutting-edge innovations in AI-powered space planning, sustainable construction, urban integration, digital transformation and phygital consumer engagement. The exhibition showcased emerging technologies and development models that are redefining the future of retail destinations across the country.

A recurring message across every session was that tomorrow's shopping centres must become integral to the cultural, social and economic fabric of the cities they serve. By bringing together leading mall developers, retail CEOs, investors, architects, urban planners and technology providers, Shopping Centres Next 2026 successfully created a collaborative platform to exchange ideas, forge partnerships and shape the next chapter of India's retail real estate evolution.

About Shopping Centres Next

Shopping Centres Next is India's premier knowledge-sharing platform dedicated to the shopping centre and retail real estate industry. Bringing together developers, retailers, investors, architects, consultants and technology providers, SCN serves as a catalyst for thought leadership, innovation and collaboration. Through its conference, exhibition and the prestigious IMAGES Shopping Centre Awards, the platform continues to drive conversations that shape the future of shopping centres and organised retail across India.

About IMAGES Group

IMAGES Group is the biggest retail intelligence association in South Asia and the Middle East, whose numerous items and administrations work as impetus for the productive development of present day retail through information stage initiative. The Groups knowledge platforms incorporate print and online reportage, research review, and significant yearly business occasions with Conferences, Master-Classes and Workshops serving multiple verticals/fragments/tasks of retail.



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