

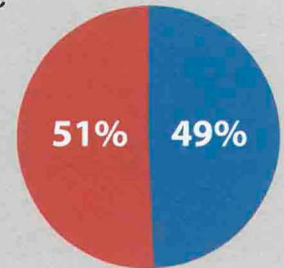


Adding richness to Kuwait's mall space

360 Mall offers a unique mix of luxury to mid-market brands, coupled with F&B and entertainment options for all age-groups, catering to a discerning Kuwaiti consumer base in a creatively designed space that's comfortable as well, **Rupkatha Bhowmick** reports



Allocated area



■ Anchors ■ Non-Anchors

Merchandise category allocation

Merchandise category	Area (in %)
Ladies fashion	5%
Men's fashion	2%
Unisex fashion	11%
Specialty fashion	1%
Sportswear	4%
Children's wear	1%
Fashion accessories	1%
Footwear	1%
Eyewear	0%
Jewellery	1%
Watches	1%
Cosmetics & fragrance	1%
Luggage	0%
Home furniture & furnishings	2%
Services	1%
Specialty food	1%
Fast food	2%
Cafés	4%
Restaurants	8%
Department stores	11%
Toys	4%
Cinemas	18%
Entertainment	20%
Total	100%

360 Mall, located at the intersection of King Faisal Highway and 6th Ring Road, adds a 360° perspective to the mall space in Kuwait, but the beginning wasn't easy. "The journey started some years before the mall was inaugurated in July 2009. We wanted to create a premium offering so we began by conceptualising the design of the project and then figured out its positioning," recounts Shavak Srivastava, board member of Kuwait-based Tamdeen Shopping Centres.

"The first six months were quite tough

because the timing wasn't quite right. Those were the days in 2008-09 when the global economic crisis had hit the market. Some of the retailers who had signed up with us said they were cutting back and refused to open new stores. We tried several initiatives to encourage them, even offering a rent-free period that was unheard of in this part of the world. But we knew our strengths. Nothing like 360 Mall had been attempted in Kuwait before so we were certain our formula would work," he continues.

"The good times came soon. We saw Kuwaiti

consumers quickly warming up to the mall and traffic started increasing slowly but consistently. Retailers began to feel more confident and more stores opened. Sales picked up pace. By early 2010 – six months later – the mall started performing quite well despite the market still struggling to maintain its operations, leave aside clocking profits. What worked in our favour then – and still does now – is our diverse retail offerings and merchandise mix, which found a resonance among Kuwait's more affluent consumers, particularly discerning and



savvy Kuwaiti women shoppers – the mall's core customers," Srivastava elaborates.

"Excluding the anchor stores, we clock sales worth over \$1,100-to-1,200 per sqft, with all brands registering consistent like-for-like sales since 2009. Footfall has grown to over a million people per month over the last three years, totalling 12-to-13 million annually, with a very high conversion rate," he adds.

Offering timeless elegance through its architecture

360 Mall complements Kuwait's retail sector well, adding excitement to the shopping mall segment. Its positioning is unique. It's quite huge when compared to other malls in Kuwait, with a GLA of one million sqft. But the strongest driver of success is its quality and design. As Srivastava observes, "Its ambience was an immediate hit."

The mall's circular architectural design was inspired by a modern day interpretation of the tradition of navigating by the stars, fitting in beautifully with the environment and, more importantly, the local culture. All materials used in its construction are natural – from limestone and granite to wood and carpets. The spaces are also creatively designed to offer a high degree of comfort. "Kuwait has a fairly tightly knit community. Over 70% of the mall's visitors are locals, who appreciate its design elements and the relaxed, yet vibrant ambience. The main atrium is flanked by a huge staircase and houses three cafés where visitors spend time socialising.



Shavak Srivastava

Another unique feature is the large, first-of-its-kind vertical garden co-located with a water body that overlooks the F&B area, offering visitors a unique dining experience," Srivastava points out.

Boasting a rich retail portfolio

360 Mall has an interesting retail mix, its brand positioning differentiating it from other malls in the country. In sync with Kuwaiti consumer tastes, it has attracted premium to luxury retailers, with bridge brands in between. Luxury fashion brands include Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta and Prada, followed at the next level by Coach, Ted Baker and Sacoor Brothers and mid-market brands like Marks & Spencer, Mango and Gap.

In children's wear there are brands such as Armani Junior and Gucci Kids, while the toy category features Toys R Us. Sportswear has brands such as Intersport, Nike, The Athlete's Foot and Vilebrequin, while footwear features brands like Jimmy Choo, Clarks, Crocs and so

on. Then there are jewellery brands like Cartier, Damas, Omega and IWC Schaffhausen as well as a wide beauty category with brands such as Lush, Bobbi Brown and Mikyajy.

"There's something for everyone. The mall draws not just the affluent shopper but the more discerning ones as well who look for certain brands and a certain kind of ambience while shopping," Srivastava points out. The F&B selection, too, boasts over 30 restaurants and cafés, with local brands such as Lenotre, B+F Open Flame Kitchen, Posh Café and Café Meem rubbing shoulders with international brands like Fauchon.

"Our original tenant mix worked well for the mall but it's important to reshuffle activities to keep the excitement alive and the offerings fresh. That's what all good malls do and that's why 360 Mall is undergoing a major redevelopment of its food court, upgrading the space by adding more casual dining options and converting it into a high-end food lounge. We've also accentuated our fashion and accessories categories, bringing in brands that weren't there before but are in keeping with our ethos," Srivastava explains.

Comprehensive in-house entertainment concepts

"Entertainment is a big draw in any mall and 360 Mall is no exception. We worked hard to get the right mix, splitting the entertainment zone into two parts – cinemas and a family entertainment centre (FEC). One of the Tamdeen Group's subsidiaries is the Kuwait National Cinema Company, which runs its own cinemas so we were able to operate a lucrative cinema business," he avers.

The FEC has zones for specific age-groups, taking into consideration the growing youth demographic of the GCC population. The first component is Infinity, created by Tamdeen Entertainment, which changes its components from time-to-time, adding new elements in response to market needs. Two other zones are Freeze Club for young teens and The Bowl Room, a bowling club. In addition, Tamdeen recently invested in a US-based company called Make Meaning, a concept for children aged between 8-and-13 years that offers activities they can do in a safe environment.

"We keep evolving our entertainment mix on the basis of market needs and consumer feedback, which is now possible because most of our brands are in-house," Srivastava concludes. ■

