



‘EXPRESS AVENUE LED TO THE CREATION OF A **NEW-AGE** RETAIL MARKET IN CHENNAI’

– By **Surabhi Khosla**

When the entire country’s retail growth was concentrated in the North and West, Kavita Singhania envisaged and worked towards building Express Avenue in Chennai. Amidst serious doubts about the potential of such a huge mall in such a conservative market, she launched the mall in 2010 and it turned out to be a roaring success...

Express Avenue, the brainchild of its visionary Managing Director, Kavita Singhania, has often been said as the potential to introduce a whole new dimension of stylish living to the people of Chennai. When the entire country’s retail growth was concentrated in the North and West, Kavita Singhania envisaged and worked towards building Express Avenue in Chennai.

“Amidst serious doubts about the potential of such a huge mall in such a conservative market, she along with her entire team launched the mall in 2010. It turned out to be a roaring

success and laid to rest the arguments of many skeptics. It also proved her right – that Chennai was ready for transformation. The creation and success of Express Avenue has also paved the way for other malls, leading to the creation of a retail market that is second to none,” says Ganesh CV, President – Leasing & Marketing, Express Infrastructure Pvt Ltd in an exclusive interview with IMAGES Retail Bureau.

The mall has a perfect mix of the key elements that determine the success of any shopping centre in the country today – a great location, a catchment area second to none, a category and brand mix to be envious of and an entertainment

quotient – including dining options – that’s par excellence.

The mall also follows a superior zoning strategy to ensure that stores are organized in an ‘easy discovery’ manner for visitors. The ground floor, being the face of the mall, is occupied by some of the best international brands and the mall management is now upgrading the same by bringing in more bridge-to-luxury brands.

“We just finished one round of churn and brought in brands like Bobbi Brown, H&M, Forever21, and Sephora to name a few. We are now planning to bring in bridge to luxury brands, of which Omega is already present and Mont Blanc is in the verge of opening. We are also in discussion with a couple of more bridge-to-luxury brands, the names of which will be revealed when the time is ripe,” Ganesh reveals.



The lower ground floor is the hypermarket, along with electronics and many homegrown brands. The first floor is dominated by menswear and accessories, and footwear, while the second floor is occupied by womenswear and accessories, kidswear, and sportswear.

The third floor is earmarked for entertainment. It includes a cinema, a funzone, food options as well as best of indulgence options like a spa.

"If a mall doesn't have F&B and hospitality, then why should a consumer visit? He can get the same things that he buys in a mall in his neighbourhood market as well. Today, coming to a mall does not mean only shopping, but it also means spend quality time with your loved ones and having a delightful experience. The only way to get a family to come to a mall again and again is to provide right quotient of retail therapy, entertainment, indulgence and no mall can provide a 'wholistic experience' if F&B and hospitality options are absent," states Ganesh.

"Our motto is that the customer and his convenience come first, and we have worked tirelessly

towards this, and towards ensuring that our brand value is preserved," he adds.

Keeping customer convenience in mind, Express Avenue was the first mall to introduce an emergency medical centre inside its premises, complete with ambulance services.

"We also are one of the first malls to bring in a dedicated pharmacy. Also, to enable ease of commuting within the mall by the elderly and the physically challenged, we have battery-operated carts," he adds.

Aside from this, the mall also organises activities and promotional activities through the year – festive season or not – to keep the consumers interest and the

Implementing Intelligent Tech

Apart from physical convenience to consumers, the mall also offers personal and digital technologies to give more power to mall visitors.

"Express Avenue was the first mall to introduce a Robotic Directory. The Robot moves around the mall and when a customer stands in front of it, the Robot welcomes them to the mall and helps them with the store directory using a screen mounted on its body," explains Ganesh. "We are also on the verge of rolling out an app which will not only help visitors locate stores and find offers, it will also help them locate the area where they parked their car, as well as



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people would rather sit at home and shop, than drive – which has significantly changed consumer behaviour in India, it has become a matter of survival for most brands to go Omnichannel. Malls are no different.

Today we are talking about and bringing in Omnichannelisation, tomorrow we might be talking of some new technology that could change the face of retail and we will have to adapt to it as well," says Ganesh.

While 2017 was all about the e-commerce boom in India, the mall management strongly feels that 2018 will be the year when brick-and-mortar emerges victorious, for after all, while Internet may have penetrated the heart of India, the hearts of Indians (and their trust) still lies with the physical retailer. Hence, the management is working tirelessly towards giving the consumers the best of both worlds, a union of offline and online. **R**

footfalls rolling in. These include shopping festivals, fashion shows, international and national sports activities, promotional activities of in-house retail brands and FMCG, Automobile, CSR-related events.

We take pride in creating a buzz all the year around. In fact, the events are so well-attended that Express Avenue even received the award for the 'Highest Footfall of the Year' by Total Activation Venue Forum.

the nearest toilet, making it one of the most consumer-convenience oriented apps and malls," he adds.

The Omnichannel Route

Change is the only constant in this evolving world and malls have no choice but to adapt to survive. Adhering to this maxim, Express Avenue has willfully set on the path to Omnichannelisation.

"With the advent of m-commerce – add to this traffic woes and the fact that

