

20 SHOPPING CENTER MARKETING IDEAS TO BRING BACK MORE FOOT TRAFFIC

As more people get vaccinated and more restrictions across the country get lifted, shopping malls are now contemplating how to lure shoppers back to their centers.



After being quarantined and warned to stay away from large crowds by public officials, many consumers are hesitant returning to public locations including shopping centers.

This is even in the face of Covid-19 infections and death rates on the decline in many parts of the country. As of the time of this writing, more than 200 million doses of the vaccine have been put in people's arms. This is a major milestone signaling the road to full reopening's and economic recovery is on the way. For shopping malls, this is strong signal that malls may soon return back to full capacity. The question becomes, how do shopping centers bring back hesitant consumers? This white paper will discuss shopping center marketing by proposing 20 ideas to bring back foot traffic, attract new customers, and promote themselves with the help of modern, consumer-oriented solutions.

BACKGROUND

SHOPPING IS AN ACTIVITY THAT HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE ANTIQUITY,

when marketplaces were facilitating the exchange of goods and services for the citizens of a community. Throughout the years, with the development of modern communities, shopping centers have surfaced in the outskirts of cities, providing consumers with a wide variety of goods and services. In today's times, shopping centers and malls provide people with a place in which they can satisfy their shopping needs, but also pay bills, engage the services of various professionals, or spend time with friends or family either enjoying a meal or watching a movie. In 2017, there were approximately 8,000 shopping malls throughout the United States and Canada, and even though—since 1970—new shopping centers have been constructed every year, there are more and more centers that are closing due to their inability to keep up with current times especially when COVID-19 hit the country.

Providing consumers with the perfect shopper journey in a post-Covid world will take a considerable amount of change in terms of strategies, but also when it comes to what people need and the kind of relationship they want to have with their favorite brands. Therefore, shopping centers are currently dealing with a lot more pressure than before. Whether we are talking of competitors, the rise of e-commerce, or the inability to keep up with the quickness with which consumers change their demands due to Covid, the issues faced when drafting and implementing marketing strategies will have serious consequences. Before proposing ideas for bringing back foot traffic, we will discuss what shopping center marketing means and the role it will play in the post-COVID world.

ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF SHOPPING CENTER MARKETING AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Total retail sales in the United States were forecasted to reach \$6.03 trillion in 2022, increasing from around \$5.4 trillion in 2018. Given that shopping centers must now work to regain trust with risk averse consumers, many will do so by implementing traditional marketing methods that no longer work. If in the past consumers were molding their needs into the shape of whatever shopping centers had to offer them, buying products that were for sale or using services based on promotions or proximity to their location, nowadays, things will have significantly changed. With more and more shopping centers being reopened to full capacity, the industry will now face the challenge of luring back hesitant shoppers.

Without a thorough shopping center marketing strategy, a comprehensive customer database, and the ability to gather feedback and implement marketing plans to execute on them, a shopping center could not drive sales and increase revenue—its ability to lure customers back will suffer significantly. With the aforementioned, this can help mall owners understand how to lure shoppers back and also provide them with a better grasp of how fluid and ever-changing shopping patterns will be. Further, we are going to propose 20 shopping center marketing ideas to bring back foot traffic and get people interested in your shopping center.



SHOPPING CENTER MARKETING IDEAS TO GENERATE MORE FOOT TRAFFIC

According to statistics, 64% of Americans still prefer to conduct their shopping in a physical store, regardless of the wide array of digital stores. Yet that does not change the fact that a lot of consumers are finding great deals online, and therefore turning to e-commerce when it comes to their day-to-day needs. Therefore, shopping centers need to tailor their marketing strategies with the purpose of bringing back foot traffic, in order to keep up with modern demands and assure business continuity. If your shopping center is dealing with a decrease in foot traffic and is having difficulties in reaching customers, implementing these 20 shopping center marketing ideas will significantly improve the situation.

- **CREATING A STRONG ONLINE PRESENCE**

Even those who still prefer to shop in a physical store want to be able to get information about a shopping centers from an online channel. Having a virtual presence means being able to connect with your customers and inform them on everything related to your shopping center, but also being able to gather feedback, and work towards an improvement of your brand identity. Make sure that your online presence—such as social media pages—is always up-to-date and assures customers of a friendly and personalized interaction, without touching on topics that are unrelated to your business, customer needs, or various events of the industry or of the local community. Don't rely on social media alone for broadcasting important messages or information you want your customers to see in a short amount of time.

- **IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

When it comes to shopping center marketing—and consumer marketing in general—being able to broadcast your message at the right time and reach a wide audience cost-effectively are two of the most important prerequisites for success. Without a comprehensive communication strategy, implemented through a modern solution with a wide array of features, getting in touch with customers and informing them about your offers is highly difficult. Make sure that you have a well segmented database to use when implementing your communication strategies.

- **INSTALLING DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS THROUGHOUT THE SHOPPING CENTER**

Modern marketing solutions such as proximity marketing have made it possible for shopping centers to interact with customers who are either visiting the mall. Combining proximity marketing with fun and useful promotions to drive traffic to specific tenants in the shopping center will allow customers to engage with stores and find out more about new stores, special products, and more. This strategy will help you keep your current customers but also attract new ones, if done correctly.

- **OFFERING FREE WI-FI**

Offering free Wi-Fi has become commonplace over the last few years with smartphone adoption becoming almost universal. Offering free Wi-Fi within the premises of your shopping center is an excellent way to communicate what your center is doing to maintain the health and safety of its visitors. By leveraging Wi-Fi, you'll be able to transmit messages to onsite shoppers notifying them of continuing safety protocols to keep their minds at ease while driving them to specific tenants.

- **IMPLEMENTING TEXT MESSAGE MARKETING STRATEGIES**

Reaching offsite customers in a short period of time is important for shopping centers that either want to promote strategies such as flash sales or seasonal offers, but also for informing people of their goods and services in a timely manner. Text message marketing strategies are the best solution when it comes to cost and time effective shopping center marketing ideas, from which you can also gather real-time statistics and feedback.

- **INVESTING IN RECREATIONAL ZONES**

Bringing back foot traffic means offering people more than goods and services—it means offering them recreational activities and the ability to rest in between stores. Make sure that all recreational zones have free Wi-Fi coverage to send them timely and relevant messages. When promoting these areas to onsite or offsite shoppers, make sure you inform them of what current safety precautions your center is taking to keep them safe. This will help give them a level of comfort increasing the chances of them coming back.

- **IDENTIFYING AND COLLABORATING WITH INFLUENCERS**

Modern marketing methods involve more than reaching out to customers and informing them about sales and other offers. Influencer marketing, one of the most popular forms of digital marketing of our age, is seeing an increase when it comes to being used in shopping center marketing. Identifying and collaborating with influencers will help your business reach more customers and bring back foot traffic. Influencers can also serve as ambassadors for your center that can convince weary shoppers to come back.

- **HOLDING EVENTS AND GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Throughout history, shopping centers have served as a mean of getting communities together while providing them with their day-to-day needs. If you want to bring back foot traffic and increase revenue, you need to engage with the local community, but also promote and organize events that your customers might be interested in. With a full-circle marketing solution, you can promote events to offsite shoppers and demonstrate what your center is doing to keep them safe.

- **CREATING EYE-CATCHING IN-STORE DISPLAYS**

One of the biggest mistakes shopping centers make is to believe that once a customer has visited their stores, they will come back regardless of what you offer them. The reality is that nowadays customers are weary coming back in the first place. Therefore, making sure that your shopping center has appealing displays that speak of the goods and services offered is important.

- **COLLABORATING WITH STORES MARKETING TEAMS**

Given that a shopping center houses a wide variety of stores, making sure that your marketing strategies align with those of the stores is of utmost importance for reaching customers and bringing back foot traffic. Don't forget to tailor all shopping center marketing strategies in order to promote seasonal offers and other needs of your shoppers.



- **INVESTING IN WELLNESS PROGRAMS**

Creating an identity for your center that speaks of a place that can cater to the wellness needs of consumers will significantly increase your position in the industry and get people to visit your shopping mall. Leverage this by informing them of steps you're taking to ease their mind as you welcome them back.

- **PROMOTING LOYALTY PROGRAMS**

Keeping a good relationship with your customers means attracting them with regular offers and loyalty programs that will entice them to visit your shopping center and inform others about your business. When it comes to marketing strategies, some businesses consider that loyalty programs are something they can use only for current customers, yet if promoted correctly, they can also play a significant role in bringing back foot traffic.

- **INVESTING IN PERSONNEL TRAINING**

According to statistics, one of the main reasons for which people decide to stop visiting a store or a shopping center is related to interactions with employees who are unable to offer the information that customers need. Make sure that your shopping center invests in proper personnel training with regularity, and that all your employees are up to date with all your marketing campaigns.

- **IMPROVING PARKING LOT DISPLAYS**

The parking lot of a shopping center is the first thing new customers see when they come to visit your business. Implementing parking lot displays and promotional materials or improving existing ones is of utmost importance for getting the attention of customers and informing them on your business. In addition, promote curbside pickups for your tenants who continue to offer this service to their customers.

- **EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY**

Technology is advancing swiftly, and customers are keeping up with all new methods of either communicating or interacting with both individuals and brands. As a result, use shopping center technology methods through which you can promote your shopping centers and create a great shopper journey.

- **FOCUSING ON EXISTING CUSTOMERS**

Focusing on existing customers means more than simply keeping your regular foot traffic numbers in place—it speaks of the relationship you have with your customers and of what you can offer new ones, but it also helps you attract new customers with the help of reviews and testimonies from your current customers.

- **SPEEDING THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE**

Most shopping centers avoid taking this marketing decision as they think it will lead to people spending less time in their facility. Yet speeding the shopping experience, together with offering great recreational, wellness, and entertainment solutions for your customers means telling them that you value their relaxation and social life, and that your shopping center will always be a place in which to have fun, and not just shop.

- **SEGMENTING YOUR AUDIENCE**

Audience segmentation—for both current and prospective customers—will allow you to improve the personalization of services offered and thus generate more foot traffic from those who will see that their specific needs can be met by your shopping center. Make sure that all your customer data information is thorough and up-to-date so you can send them messages that are timely and relevant to them.

- **PARTNERING WITH LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES**

More and studies speak of customers wanting to engage with local producers and buy goods and services from their local communities. If you want to generate more foot traffic and increase marketing ROI, partner with local small businesses, either for various events, or from having their products in your shopping center. Make sure that this strategy is accompanied with tracking and reporting capabilities to determine the success of these type of initiatives.

- **GATHERING AND ANALYZING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

All shopping center marketing decisions needs to be based on feedback from your previous and current campaigns, but also on feedback gathered from customers. Don't neglect unsuccessful campaigns, as that data is even more important the one you are getting from your successful campaigns—and make sure that all your future strategies are amended accordingly.



CONCLUSION

Regardless of the current marketing strategies your shopping center is implementing, bringing back foot traffic is of the utmost importance in a world that moving beyond the pandemic. Implementing strategies that work towards attracting customers and increasing revenue, while keeping modern technology and the ever-changing needs of customers in mind is mandatory for all shopping centers that want to stay on step of competitors. Making use of the marketing ideas presented in this white paper will help your shopping center develop a professional marketing strategy for bringing back foot traffic, increasing revenue, and improving brand identity. Make sure that the drafting and implementing of these strategies is performed in accordance with the needs of your customers and the goals of your shopping center—but also with the help of modern communication and marketing strategies.



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