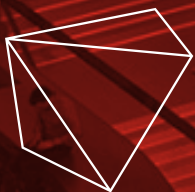


Insights:

RETAIL CENTRES IN THE POST-COVID WORLD – CHAPMAN TAYLOR'S VIEW



CHAPMAN TAYLOR
RETAIL



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As many countries begin to transition away from their most stringent COVID-19 lockdown measures, those retail destinations which had to close for the duration are coming to terms with a radically different reality from the one we all knew just a few months ago.

The need for social distancing and to minimise opportunities for the transmission of the virus requires adjustment to the shopping environment. Chapman Taylor has been monitoring the experience of shopping centres and other retail environments which have already reopened around the world to see what strategies have been adopted and how those places have been affected. Among the measures implemented are the following:

- Limited permissible occupancy and restricted parking numbers
- Fewer mall entrances, with 40-50% of entrances closed
- Thermal cameras introduced at the remaining entrances (linked to biometric screening processes)
- Facial recognition cameras installed, tied to the use of health passports
- A reduction in number of contact surfaces - hands-free washrooms, no doors on entrance to the washrooms, sensor-operated equipment and automatic doors at main entrances
- The provision of isolation spaces
- Customer awareness messaging, including website safety advice and notifications and interactive information screens displaying safety and health messages
- Branded masks being distributed
- Age / time restrictions on mall visitors
- Private rooms, including welfare, cultural and religious spaces, as well as toilets, being made as frictionless as possible - doors removed and equipment sensor-operated.

Although footfall still seems relatively low in many places which have been reopened for a period of time now, sales efficiencies seem to be higher, with what footfall there is being translated into direct spend. This may be attributable to catch-up spending, with people finally purchasing products that they were prevented from buying during lockdown.



THE NEED FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING AND TO MINIMISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF THE VIRUS REQUIRES ADJUSTMENT TO THE SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT.

Potentially little long-term impact on design of shopping malls

Our view is that the heavy restrictions imposed by the current situation, particularly the need for social distancing, are predicted to be short-term, becoming minimal in the long term. These are nearly universally management issues rather than design issues – we do not believe that there will be many long-term changes to how we design shopping centres and other retail environments which can be attributed directly to the COVID-19 emergency.

However, what the pandemic has done is accelerate the need for change in ways Chapman Taylor has been writing and talking about for a number of years now.

First and foremost, this means providing a relevant sense of place, a mix of uses and a curated experience which draws people in with leisure, entertainment and hospitality offers – attractive environments to which people want to go and spend several hours of their day, and which provide the ideal backdrop for experiences which can be shared widely on social media (helping to create a buzz about the place).

The provision of a well-considered mix of uses will become even more urgent. Being able to live, work, shop and play in the same place can be crucial for a retail development's sustainability, with particular importance attached to its role as a place in which to socialise. It is also vital that any new or redesigned retail environment be equipped with the flexibility to be able to adapt quickly and at relatively low cost to market, technological and societal changes if it is to thrive in the long term.

The visual aspect of the experience should include digital installations – providing a mix of exciting displays, information and interactivity. The effect has proved transformative for many existing centres which were previously relatively bland to spend time in.

Retailers having an online presence is now becoming fundamental, with, for example, the large tech companies in China making big investments in bricks and mortar retailing. Also, a combined strategy and web presence between shopping centre owners and individual retailers is now increasingly being recognised as important – this will include integrating individual tenants' websites with the wider shopping centre's website. Online retail will continue to grow in popularity, with home delivery services continuing to evolve and expand, in line with global trends.

Reduced store footprints will also be seen, with space used less for storage and more for showcasing products which can then be bought online or delivered to the store from a centralised distribution centre (which itself will reduce, or eliminate, the need for expensive, prime real estate for storage purposes).

Shopping will always be a fundamental human desire

The relevance of retail centres to their societies will remain so long as the cultures and peoples of the places in which they exist continue to place importance on shopping as a social event. For enclosed shopping centres in many countries, this will be particularly relevant, given the desire of people to escape the harshest summer and winter weather.

The design of retail centres everywhere will evolve in response to societal requirements, but physical retail will always have an important place. The world will return to something approaching normal, and humans, being an inherently social species, will always want places to congregate – shopping venues will continue to be central to that.

The way Chapman Taylor designs for retail environments is changing, but in ways which were already in progress long before the COVID-19 epidemic. We see this period as a magnifying glass in which existing issues have come into very sharp focus. As we look to the post-COVID era, we are renewed in our determinism to change perceptions of what a retail environment can and should be.



About the author

Chris has been at Chapman Taylor since 1979 and has played a major role in the expansion of the practice as a global design business. He is one of the owners of Chapman Taylor, with particular responsibility for the strategic direction of the international business.

Chris is fully involved in leading the design of projects, and has worked on many different types and sizes of buildings in over 60 countries around the world. He believes architectural design is a carefully managed and collaborative process which draws inspiration from the brief, the function and the place.



About the author

Adrian joined Chapman Taylor in 1986 and was promoted to the Main Board in 1998. As an architect and urban design specialist, he is recognised internationally for his expertise in the masterplanning of major complex mixed-use developments which are key drivers in the regeneration of our town and city centres.

Adrian is conscious of the fact that the developments we build today create the societies of tomorrow, recognising the responsibility the profession has in influencing the quality of people's lives. He regularly speaks at conferences and prepares papers which promote the benefits of mixed-use developments as a sustainable model for the long term. Adrian leads the Concept Design Team in the UK.



About the author

Tim has been at Chapman Taylor since 1986 and joined the LLP Main Board in 2006. As an owner, he takes an active role in shaping the strategic direction and growth of the business alongside the other members of the Main Board.

He was responsible for establishing Chapman Taylor's Manchester studio in 2000 and continues to manage this part of the business together with the UK practice's design management, resource planning and BIM/CAD strategy.

Recognised for his design management expertise, he has an established track-record in the design and delivery of complex mixed-use developments in the UK and internationally.

