

THE WORLD'S ONLY GLOBAL RETAIL & LEISURE MAGAZINE

RLI



RETAIL & LEISURE INTERNATIONAL

www.rli.uk.com

JUNE 2019 ISSUE 143



GLOBAL FOCUS

CIDADE MATARAZZO

Experience is the New Luxury

KIKO MILANO
FREEDOM TO
EXPRESS YOURSELF

RADISSON HOTEL GROUP
EVERY MOMENT
MATTERS

ROGER DUBUIS
EXCEED YOUR
EXPECTATIONS

BAR LOUIE | MAPIC ITALY INSIGHT | LUCA FALONI | WORLD FOOD & BEVERAGE



LATIN AMERICA RETAIL TRENDS

OXÍGENO, Costa Rica
Developer: Cuestamoras Urbanismo



Gonzalo Montaña, President of MAC Architects & Consultants takes some time out in order to discuss the most recent trends in the Latin American market, and he considered it convenient to analyse the subject from two different perspectives: Retail and Shopping Centre trends.



1. RETAIL TRENDS: “TRANSACTIONS VS EXPERIENCES”

Reflecting on my views about the subject, a recurrent idea kept coming to my mind: “Fortunately we are Latin”. Reason is, I guess, that Latin-Americans usually share a peculiar interest regarding people: A remarkable desire, and ability, to connect with our equals on a personal level, above other simpler or more “pragmatic” attitudes, especially when related to retail.

Such ability is part of our DNA and I truly believe it is quite useful when it comes to our specific retail practices and performance, because there is a big difference between a middling “RETAIL TRANSACTION” and a memorable “RETAIL EXPERIENCE”.

A simple “Retail Transaction” is a cold and impersonal exchange of a good or service, which can be done through a “soulless” operation in a physical store, or through an efficient e-commerce operation, while a “Retail Experience” is an unbeatable opportunity to establish a more emotional connection between the seller and the buyer, which will allow them to weave bonds of trust and brand loyalty as long as the retailer takes special care to maintain an honest and permanent attitude of customer service.

Therefore, the two “global” trends to be pointed out are:

- The urgent recognition that stores can no longer be mere physical spaces for “exhibiting and exchanging merchandise”, but must now be transformed into environments that, together with more sophisticated systems and more dependable and qualified store dependents, provide “memorable experiences” that nurture trust and increase customer loyalty through an authentic offer of unexpected attention and services.

- Understand that the commercial exchange per-se is no longer the cause or reason of being of a physical store and, therefore, of the Shopping Centres, but now it is the effect of a relaxed mood, produced in an cosy architectural environment, fun and iconic, supported by an unbeatable level of service.

2. SHOPPING CENTRES TRENDS: “THE SPIRIT OF OUR TIME”

Except for a few exceptions, we can say that the Architecture of Shopping Centres that are being produced in general, NO LONGER SELLS. And it does not do it anymore, because those responsible for producing it (Investors, Developers, Architects) no longer understand clearly how they work, or what their purpose is; they simply do not know how to adjust the old premises to the new and changing conditions and expectations.

It is worrisome to conclude that many Shopping Centres in Latin America, including some of the most recent ones, can now be classified as “exhausted shelf” products, “tired” buildings and spaces, uncomfortable and/or monotonous, whose shapes, environments and design elements generate few, or none, emotion, experience or “happening” that may be relevant or memorable for the visitor.

Throughout history, the great buildings have always reflected the zeitgeist, or “spirit of their time”; what shows or reflects the intellectual, social and cultural climate of an era. Since 1990, our zeitgeist is Globalisation, a concept that must be fully understood in order to start transforming and reorienting our way of understanding and doing architecture.

Globalisation is a dynamic process that continuously impacts and transforms all activities and forms of human expression, including Art, Commerce and Architecture.

We must ensure that these thousand-year-old expressions of human activity, recover their leading role so that our commercial and mixed-use projects recover the preponderant role they have played in other times as drivers of the integral development of our communities and to become a vital tool for urban regeneration and a new “branding” for the community and/or the city.

In short, so that they can give testimony of the new global character of our culture and thus express the spirit of our time!

These two cases exemplify the “must be” in the operation of retail and the design of shopping centres, both cases of success in Latin America:

“AMBIENTE LIVING”

In Latin America there is a growing number of brands and retailers that have made significant changes in this direction. Such is the case of Patricia Vélez, a prominent Colombian entrepreneur who operates a group of 40 stores in Colombia, under five different brands, and her most recent commercial venture:

Founded in 2014 and specialised in furniture, decoration and lighting, “AMBIENTE LIVING” is a brand of lifestyle that is conducted with a strategy defined as: experience store. Among the innovative practices that contribute to its recognised differentiation and success, stands out:

- The temporary sale of products from other categories, such as costume jewellery, women’s fashion, gifts or cigars ...: “We put in and take out collections permanently. The store is like a surprise.”
- The incorporation of a restaurant of healthy food for 80 diners enlivened with live music, with the peculiarity that absolutely everything that is used in the restaurant is for sale: “The concept is that the restaurant works and is perceived as part of the store’s DNA”.

- The organisation of special events for its clients, such as fashion shows, exhibitions, concerts and other cultural activities: “The idea is to frame all the experience and entertainment of AMBIENTE LIVING in the brand. That is the most important”.

- In summary, their personal business philosophy is captured in this sentence: “We do not compete with the big players, because those chains have other strategies. Ours is to meet our customers’ needs: to relish and enjoy an experience.”

“OXÍGENO”

Regardless of market capacity, Oxígeno is an ambitious project that aims to transcend and leave behind the obsolete concept, distribution and expression of the traditional mall or old “mall”.

Proclaimed as “the first Human Playground in the world”, this innovative commercial area, built in the province of Heredia, in Costa Rica, recently opened its first stage, offering visitors a mixture of four different worlds that combine sport, nature, entertainment and retail offer.

According to its developers, the concept was inspired by the agora of the city-states of ancient Greece, an open central space that was the centre of commerce, culture, sports, and even the politics of social life. Thus, in Oxígeno visitors can go shopping, eat in a restaurant, practice athletics, swim, go to the gym, attend a concert, have fun and be in the central square, or simply climb the roof to observe the Poás and Barva volcanoes.

In the future, the project will include offices, residences, a hotel and access to the suburban train, that will facilitate accessibility to the rest of the Central Valley.

As they express it: “Oxígeno is a space designed to surprise us, make us enjoy and live out loud”.