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Mall seeing better traffic with festive season



THE Hari Raya season is giving mall operators a glimmer of hope after more than a year of deep impact and damage to the industry caused by the pandemic.

Retail Group Malaysia MD Tan Hai Hsin said shopping traffic for the majority of malls in the country has returned to a pre-Covid level since the second Movement Control Order (MCO 2.0) was lifted.

“After a long period of lockdown, Malaysians have been eager to return to malls for their shopping, dining, recreational and entertainment activities.

“Cafes and restaurants have been enjoying a good number of dine-in customers since MCO 2.0 was lifted, while cineplexes have also recorded a good response rate since government regulations allowed for its reopening,” he told The Malaysian Reserve (TMR) recently.

However, he said while retail and food and beverage (F&B) sales are still below 2019 levels, he expects a more positive second-quarter outlook.

“We estimate a growth rate of 7% as all types of retail shops have reopened with social-distancing measures. This will bring more sales during this festive season compared to last year.

“Despite many closures, there have been many openings on a weekly basis throughout the country. These include popular types of trades like F&B outlets in shops, offices, convenience stores, mini markets, as well as service-oriented retail trades like clinics, dental clinics and chiropractors,” Tan noted.

Additionally, Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd MD Datuk Wira Ameer Ali Mydin said there has been a huge increase in sales and footfall in almost every mall since the fasting period began.

“It is good to see, especially with Hari Raya coming up, shops all packed to the brim.

“The only thing I would caution is this may not last the entire season, as Covid-19 positive cases have started increasing. Maybe stricter standard operating procedures (SOPs) could be implemented,” he told *TMR*.

Ameer Ali said while people may not enjoy stricter regulations, this will help the nation in the long run.

“Ramadhan bazaars have been allowed to open, and while some are quite strict with social distancing and following SOPs, others are not. I think the government should shut down the latter as an example to the rest,” he said.

He expects the same pickup rate for Mydin stores across Malaysia, as there is still much pent-up demand among the people.

“The pandemic did not overtake social needs and demand, so there is still hope. We look forward to getting vaccinated, then we can move on from this pandemic as the economy strongly depends on this,” Ameer Ali noted.

Meanwhile, Suria KLCC Sdn Bhd CEO and ED Andrew Brien strongly believes this year to be different as he noticed people becoming more confident of being in public spaces as long as the SOPs are strictly adhered to.

“Shoppers are actually returning to their favourite stores, while F&B outlets at our malls are seeing improvement in sales following the relaxation of the MCO 2.0.

“We are very pleased that our malls can usher in the happiness and joy of Syawal in about less than a month’s time, in line with the overall resumption of economic activities nationwide after a long period of staying-at-home ruling by the government,” he told *TMR*.

He added that as the economy starts to recover from the pandemic, the Suria KLCC group consisting of Suria KLCC, Alamanda Shopping Centre in Putrajaya and Mesra Mall Terengganu is happy to play its role in being a safe place for gathering, dining and shopping.

Brien said, initially, the group considered winding back on its usually elaborate decorations, but changed its mind after noticing the trend of shopping is gaining momentum day by day since March.

He added that its malls have been registering a steady increase in footfall and sales from all categories.

“In spite of the pandemic, the overall business for us had rebound compared to last year. The management is optimistic that the festive season will further provide a boost to our sales and hopefully, a consistent growth thereafter.

“I am also pleased to report that the malls operated by the group had not been identified as the source of any Covid-19 transmission, showing that our prevention measures have worked effectively so far,” Brien said.

He added that while the group recognises the year ahead may not be easy, with its ongoing campaigns, activities and corporate social responsibility initiatives, the group hopes to continue bringing cheer to people.

“Our malls have been actively rewarding shoppers for the past few months, especially when we unveiled the ‘Great Giveaway Campaign’ at Suria KLCC, ‘We Love Shopping’ at Alamanda Shopping Centre, and ‘You Spend, We Reward Campaign’ at Mesra Mall Terengganu,” he said.

Suria KLCC’s Hari Raya campaign will run until May 23, and aims at bringing back the festive mood by maintaining the Centre Court as the centrepiece, showcasing a wooden “Rumah Kampung” inspired by Terengganu’s traditional Malay village house.

The house will be decked with vibrant batik motif as the entire area is transformed into a “kampung” setting, complete with chicken coops, swings, a “pangkin” (a traditional bench) where shoppers may try their hand at traditional Malay games like “congak”, “gasing”, “batu seremban” and more as they are surrounded by a network of “pelita” (oil lamp) fencing.

Alamanda Shopping Centre will feature architectural elements from Terengganu at the Centre Court, as well as North and South Wings, and treat its customers to “bubur lambuk”, a traditional Malay porridge usually served during Ramadhan.

Mesra Mall had a special offering for children with its ViKids Raya Card Making competition that ran until April 24.

(Source: <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2021/04/28/malls-seeing-better-traffic-with-festive-season/>)