

How Netflix, Shein, and Skims are bringing malls back from the dead

Article



Mall foot traffic is returning to pre-COVID-19 levels. In 2023, visits to indoor shopping malls were down 5.8% from 2019 levels, compared to a decline of 15.3% in 2021, per Placer.ai's The Comeback of the Mall in 2024 report.

Visits to open-air shopping centers and outlet malls are also recovering. Continued mall success requires the right mix of brands and attractions to keep today's consumers engaged.

Breaking with tradition: While retail remains a mall staple, experiences and restaurants are major drivers of mall traffic, per Placer.ai's report.

That's good news for [Netflix](#), which plans to open two brick-and-mortar locations in 2025. The first, within the King of Prussia Mall in Pennsylvania, will feature a 250-seat theater, amusement rooms, dining space, and a retail marketplace.

Within retail, brands are rethinking the traditional mall model, experimenting with short-term leases and pop-up events to pique consumers' curiosity and sense of urgency.

- Shein has hosted several pop-up shops in US malls. Its three-day event at the Woodfield Mall in Illinois last December resulted in similar mall traffic as Super Saturday (the Saturday before Christmas), per Placer.ai's report.
- Rent the Runway is also experimenting with pop-ups, hosting a sample sale at the Mall of America on March 18.

The Gen Z element: Skims is expanding its physical presence with a new store in Austin's Domain Northside outdoor shopping plaza and is reportedly planning another in Atlanta's Lenox Square Mall.

- Nearly half (47%) of 18- to 24-year olds have a favorable opinion of Kim Kardashian's shapewear brand Skims, per CivicScience.
- This move could attract both [Gen Z](#) shoppers and the brands they love to malls.

Thinking bigger: Ikea is reportedly acquiring and rejuvenating multiple existing US malls, per Fortune.

- This will expand parent company Ingka's catalog of 38 shopping centers across 15 countries, including its sole US location in San Francisco.
- In addition to featuring Ikea stores, which are significantly smaller than its traditional warehouse locations, these malls feature food courts, coworking spaces, and children's play areas.

The bottom line: While traditional mall retailers like Nordstrom and Macy's are expanding outside of the mall format, other brands are working their way in, using engaging experiences and cultural cache to attract consumers, particularly younger ones.

Interestingly, many of these brands are [digital natives](#), using smaller formats or short-term leases to experiment with brick-and-mortar without over-committing.

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