

NORTH

DELHI

THE BUZZ OF THE FLEAS

With flea markets inside high-end malls in the capital gaining popularity, shoppers have plenty to do



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Following Select Citywalk's Flea@nite which began in 2008, the trend of theme-based weekly flea markets has caught on in the Capital—DLF Promenade in Vasant Kunj now hosts Urban Street on weekends. Located next to the food court, this flea market offers lower prices than the luxury brands in the mall. TDI Paragon in West Delhi has also been organising festive fleas to increase its sales during Diwali and Teej.

"People want change when they visit a mall. Seeing the same brands every day becomes monotonous... these flea markets offer variety to the buyers as well as

window-shoppers," says TDI Group General Manager (mall promotions), Manish Arora. Select Citywalk Director Arjun Sharma, had slightly different reasons for bringing a flea market to the mall. "In Europe, flea markets are a tradition where people from different backgrounds intermingle," he says. The primary goal of Flea@nite was to create a space for the unorganised players in retail, he adds. Through Flea@Nite, Sharma also wished to create a platform for budding designers to showcase their talent, away from high rentals in luxury malls.

Furthermore, these markets have increased the weekday footfall by 15 per cent contributing 8 per cent extra sales per

square feet to Select Citywalk. In case of TDI Paragon, Arora admits to a rise in footfalls by almost 20 per cent during festivals. DLF Promenade was not available for comment.

It needn't be reiterated that the target customers of these markets are women. "Even in this heat, women are buying as we are selling," remarks a busy Vandana Sethi, a designer with a range of Indian and ethnic wear for women, as she shuttles between two eager customers. Sethi has her own story to tell; she set up her stall at Flea@nite two years ago, soon becoming a recognised name with loyal customers. Today, she has a showroom on the first floor of the mall but continues to sell at the flea

market every Wednesday without fail. "A woman decides what she wants to wear for the weekend during a weekday itself. I come here every Wednesday to cater to these women," adds Sethi. Which is why you will find overzealous women browsing through bags and tunics beneath colourful kiosks and canopies, discussing the day's budget and strategies to stay within it.

Sharma agrees. "About 90 per cent of our customers are women from all age groups. But during festivals such as Diwali, these flea markets become a family hub." With coffee shops and game parlours positioned near every exit of the fleas, the men have plenty to keep themselves entertained with. While Flea@Nite is spread out over a balcony, Urban Street has the advantage of 24/7 air-conditioning.

How do these flea markets differ from the Sarojinis and Janpaths? For one, it is a safer shopping environment for women. The live music, food stalls with international

cuisines and tarot card readers keep onlookers engaged as caricaturists draw them out to perfection. With much to choose from—footwear, handcrafted jewellery, home linen and lifestyle accessories—the contagious energy in the flea markets is enough to entice you to loosen your purse strings.

Though the term 'flea' suggests a scope for bargains, such is not the case. "These bazaars are not discount stores, but exhibitions. There is no bargain for quality," says Neha Diwan, owner of Kimano, dealing in ladies apparel, with her own stall at Flea@Nite. So a pleading smile or the threat of walking away may not work here.

Another distinguishing feature about these flea markets—no two weeks look the same. Malls encourage fresh designers every week, to buy stall space and offer the consumer greater choice. "We don't want customer fatigue to set in, which is why we demand variety in our stalls," says Sharma. So be it a Wednesday or a Saturday, fleas for great food and shopping. And if that doesn't catch your fancy, go there to witness the changing trends of retail in the capital.