

Covid-19 Impact: Pharma

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Safety Gets Top Billing at Malls to Secure Consumers

Precautionary measures such as fever screening, keeping adjacent seats in theatres vacant being considered

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New Delhi | T Tumbhai: From restricting shoppers through token-based entry, maintaining strict fever screenings, installing full-body fumigation chambers, and even keeping adjacent seats vacant at theatres and food courts — top malls and retailers are planning a slew of measures to instil confidence in shoppers that malls are safe zones and there's no risk in shopping and eating out again.

Of course, such measures could reduce footfalls drastically, squeezing cash flow further, but mall operators say it could also help convince authorities and consumers that there was no danger in visiting malls again.

"Malls have single owners who



can control and administer the rules set out by the government. There is controlled point of entry and each one can be manned carefully with rules enforced strictly. With most malls temperature and access controlled, sanitisation is easier to manage," High

Street Phoenix Mall's president (west), Rajendra Kalkar, said.

Currently, retailers selling discretionary products from apparel to lifestyle merchandise are not allowed to open stores.

Once the lockdown is lifted, social distancing norms will

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MANOJ GAUR
MD, Gaur Group

become an integral part of mall maintenance, owners say.

"We are in initial talks with cinema hall operators and retailers on how to ensure social distancing for at least 3-4 months. While cinemas may not be allowed to book more than 50% of the seats and ensure no one sits next to each other, retailers will be advised to ensure limited number of people inside the store at a time," said Manoj Gaur, the managing director of Noida-based Gaur's Group.

With thousands of retail and restaurant doors shut and zero sales, several retailers are not in a position to pay rent and even wages to employees.

Many have appealed to their mall and high-street landlords to change their contracts to a revenue-sharing model for the next

nine months to help tide over the crippling effect of the coronavirus pandemic.

While retailers maintain they will take adequate precautions wherever customer contact is involved and use technology like contactless payments to curtail contamination risk, some brand outlets which have high-contact services like make-overs and testers will discontinue these services.

"Inside the store, we will have sanitiser stations and floor markers to facilitate social distancing. We will be frequently steaming garments and disinfecting surfaces such as escalators, cash counters, card machines, shopping bags, etc.," Lifestyle International managing director Vasanth Kumar said.

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