Design Project: Redesigning the shopping Mall Experience

1. CONTEXT
During the last 60 years, America has been "Malled." Shopping malls have become the new “Main Streets of America”. Along with power mowers, "the pill," antibiotics, smoke detectors, transistors, and personal computers, the shopping mall was selected as one of the top 50 wonders that has revolutionized the lives of consumers.

But... are shopping malls an american icon that's quickly becoming obsolete?

During the past few years, foot traffic in retail shopping malls has been declining rapidly, from 35 billion visits in 2010 to less than 20 billion visits in 2013. In the last 10 years, more than 400 malls have either been “re-purposed” or closed outright. No new malls have been completed since at least 2009.

Some people believe that short term trends are behind this decline, such as macroeconomic uncertainties, weather patterns or even 2013’s abbreviated holiday shopping season.

Some others blame online shopping as the major reason behind the decline in shopping mall visits. Online sales reached six per cent of total retail spending in 2013, and retailers are naturally responding by focussing more on the online end of the retail business.
Rick Caruso, the C.E.O of one of the largest privately held American real-estate companies forecasts that “within ten to fifteen years, the typical U.S. mall, unless it is completely reinvented, will be a historical anachronism—a sixty-year aberration that no longer meets the public’s needs, the retailers’ needs, or the community’s needs.”

An undiscutable fact is that American consumers are busier than ever and have less free time to shop in stores. Smartphones, tablets, conference calls, email, social networking, and video streaming all help to provide more efficient communication and more. Consumer preferences are shifting toward what can be done quickly and efficiently.

On the other side, people have always needed gathering places, from the Lascaux caves, in France, with their Paleolithic paintings, to the modern-day souks (flea markets) of Marrakech. Humans have an innate sense of wanting to come together, whether that will happen at the shopping malls or somewhere else.

Do shopping malls have have a chance to survive? Can they reinvent themselves? Can you help us figure that out?
2. YOUR CHALLENGE: Redesign the Shopping Mall Experience

Your challenge is to redesign the shopping mall experience for a person different than yourself. You will work with your team until 5pm today to complete this assignment.

Consider people who may have an extreme perspective on shopping, maybe someone that only goes there just on a “need to go” basis, or a suburban mom that may go to the mall every day to socialize, shop and buy groceries.

3. START WITH EMPATHY

As we’re heading to the field, a few things to have in mind:

**Empathize**

Empathy is when you can feel what another person is feeling. Empathy is the foundation of a human-centered design process; by deeply understanding people we are better able to design for them.

To empathize, we:

**Immerse**: Experience what your user experiences.

**Observe**: View users and their behavior in the context of their lives.

**Engage**: Interact with and interview users through both scheduled and short ‘intercept’ encounters.
Empathy tips: Interviews

How to interview? Have a conversation.

Be human.
Seek stories.
Talk about feelings.

Starter Questions
(Remember, you’re seeking stories and feelings. Ask open ended questions and let the conversation flow)

- How did you feel as you entered the shopping mall today? Can you share how you feel right now?
- Can you walk me through from when you left your house to now? How did you get here? What emotions did you have driving/parking/walking?
- Do you shop online? Can you tell me a story of a <best/worst/last> online shopping experience that you had? What was particularly good/bad about it?
- Does social media influence what and how you buy? Can you tell me a personal story related to that?
- Tell me a story about a <great/horrible> memory you have at the shopping mall?
- Can you share a story about the <best/worst/last> experience you had shopping with another person?
- What’s your favorite part of being in a shopping mall? What’s your least favorite?
- Can you tell me about a memorable interaction with a store employee?
Empathy Tips: Observation

Understand People

Through observation and interviews, we can build a picture of our users’ motivations based on what they say, do, think, and feel.


- What is the person doing? (what are the observable facts?)
- How is the person doing that? (what emotions and techniques are present?)
- Why is the person doing that? in that way? (what inferences can we draw?)
4. LAST: CAPTURE YOUR WORK

- Take thorough Notes
- Write user quotes
- Document Stories
- Take Pictures & Videos

**Example of empathy at work in an airport**

**Observation**

**WHAT**
- Sitting at edge of walkway
- Looking down at laptop on lap
- Earphone in ears

**HOW**
- Sitting cross-legged, back up against rail
- Loose papers and electronics on the ground
- Bag right next to body
- Seems to be 'in the zone'——just concentrating and working

**WHY**
- Needs to finish some things up before getting on flight
- Only available electrical outlet around, within earshot of gate
- Wants to relax on flight? Switch stuff done now.

**Interviewing**

9:00, waiting at bar counter for him to show up.

Q: What are you travelling? Are you trying to visit family?
   A: First time flying, going to work in 6 weeks. Not worried.

Q: Worried?
   A: Not worried.

Q: What's the biggest thing that's happened in your life?
   A: Just moved into an apartment.

Q: Have you felt embarrased?
   A: I feel embarrassed not knowing what to do.

Q: Why embarrassed?
   A: Everyone's angry, it's like a fight.

Q: How do you feel about your workflow?
   A: I don't want to show weakness.

Q: What was so different on the plane from the airport?
   A: Always someone to help you on the plane.

Q: How do you feel when you need help?
   A: No one wants to help you.

“YOU'RE ALWAYS ON THEIR SIDE”