

Food and beverage retail trends to be discussed at SACSC conference

At the South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC) Research Conference, Dr Yvonne Court, partner & head of international consultancy, EMEA cross border retail & leisure, for Cushman & Wakefield will discuss drivers behind today's food and beverage trends.



Yvonne Court

The conference takes place on 17 May 2017 at The Maslow Hotel in Sandton Central. Cushman & Wakefield Excellerate sponsors the intense one-day insight event.

“The global food service industry is enormous and continues to grow and trends in the US and Europe are beginning to replicate themselves in markets around the world, including South Africa. Tastes and sensibilities are ever changing and are fuelling greater customisation, a drive towards authenticity and more innovation.”

Court has extensive knowledge of advanced demographic analysis and market research techniques in the context of retail and property consultancy projects. She works in close cooperation with pan-European and global retailers and food and beverage brands plus retail financial services operators considering expansion.

Balancing foreign with local

“As consumers travel more widely and experience new flavours and foods, a new wave of global cuisines is emerging, such as Filipino, Korean and African. Yet there is also a contradiction here in that while consumers want global flavours and produce, they also want to connect with it on a more personal level. They want to know where the food comes from and how to be part of that local community.

“Consumers today are driven by a sense of exploration or simply fear of missing out, and are always on the hunt for new experiences. Restaurants are offering novel, fun and memorable meals through pop-ups, ‘secret’ venues and entertainment-themed venues, offering customers a thrill for just finding the location.

“Today’s educated consumers expect a top-notch dining experience. This is especially true at higher-end establishments.”

Healthy plus quality

People are increasingly seeking more healthy food (even if they do not admit it) whether it is vegetarian, vegan, low-fat, low-calorie, gluten-free, or just prepared from fresh ingredients.

“More consumers have begun to follow ‘special’ diets and want to enjoy these healthier choices both at home and when they are eating out. Quality and healthy are becoming increasingly synonymous.”

Reviewing shopping mall offerings

So, how does this impact the food offered at shopping malls?

Naturally, the role of food and beverage in shopping malls has changed because of the changing nature of consumers and food as culture. Food culture usually refers to the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs as well as the networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution and consumption of food. For example, nowadays people want to talk about their

latest dining experience and will share it on social media with their friends.

“Shopping malls have to adapt to this changing food culture. By doing this, they will create and bring in new customers to the mall,” she emphasises.



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Until relatively recently the food and beverage offering in shopping malls was confined to food courts; with their common seating area surrounded by a plethora of fast-food operators such as McDonald's, KFC, and so forth.

“Very few mall owners deviated from this pattern, until around ten years ago, when some decided to incorporate fast casual concepts. Now there is considerably more diversity in the food court offering, and some landlords are rethinking and upgrading their food courts.

She adds that while shopping malls remain dominated by global mainstream food brands that are appreciated by the mass market, more recently, food and beverage has been more widely distributed through a mall. Moreover, other concepts have evolved, including the food hall.

“There is also a move towards the creation of different zones within the mall, with the emphasis moving away from the food court. Increasingly, outside seating is being provided.”

“Restaurateurs have got the shopping centre bug too. Brands, which concentrated on metropolitan cities such as London, are now more easily tempted to expand to other cities nationwide, as a result of the success of American burger chain Five Guys, Byron Burger, Mexican restaurant Wahaca and the like.”

Court believes that a retail centre's catering and retail offers must be intrinsically linked and finding the perfect mix is becoming a science. It's a science that landlords are eagerly investing in, with some sinking millions in upgrading or reconfiguring centres to accommodate a better catering line up.

“The space given over to cafes, bars and restaurants in shopping centres was traditionally in single figures, but in some of the new centres it can be 20% or even 30%,” reveals Court.

Conference highlights

At the SACSC Research Conference, Court will delve into a detailed analysis of food as destination shopping. She will give delegates a closer look at food as a drawcard and entertainment element within shopping centres and unlock research done for Europe as a benchmark for the local South African context. She will also share how getting the mix between food and retail right can be a key factor in increasing dwell time, driving up spend and outshining the competition.

To book email events@sacsc.org.za or call SACSC on 010 003 0228.

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