

Design, durability, and pulling power

How high-quality, well-designed rugs and carpeting are helping bring the shoppers back.



DESIGNER RUGS.

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and allow people to feel at ease as they participate in
the social activity we have come to call ‘shopping’.

Introduction

While the pandemic is not yet a done deal and, as epidemiologists continue to tell us, we need to continue to be on guard for some time to come, those in the retail sector can console themselves in the knowledge that the lockdowns of the past two years are not likely to return. Governments, at all levels, have made this clear.⁽ⁱ⁾

At the same time, however, retailers should be under no illusion that COVID-19 is the source of all their problems. Competition from e-commerce is another major consideration. While its effect was accelerated by the pandemic, this challenge emerged well before any of us had even heard the term ‘lockdown’.

Even though COVID-related disruption appears to be over, retailers – or at least those retailers that rely on the traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ model – will continue to face competition from online alternatives. To address this, stores and indeed shopping centres need to differentiate themselves from e-commerce. They need to be able to offer consumers something they can’t get online; something that keeps them coming back for more.

In one sense, the solution to this challenge is – and always has been – clear. It stems from the fact that humans are

not sedentary creatures. They are social animals who like to get out, mix with other people, and participate in communal activities. Ever since the concept of the market, and of barter and trade have existed, ‘shopping’ has been an important component of this. While e-commerce represents an effective, efficient means of exchanging goods, it lacks this social component.

With this key point in their favour, retailers need to make the shopping experience as attractive as possible. One of the best ways to do this is through insightful design.

Retailers need to lean upon the expertise of architects and interior designers to attract and keep customers. They should rely upon these professionals to create shopping centres that turn the experience into something special. As ever, when considering design, this involves a broad range of considerations, including the layout or retail space, amenities, furnishings, lighting, and so on.

And it also involves flooring. This whitepaper examines the ways to incorporate rugs and carpeting into retail design. Focussing on the products of one leading manufacturer and supplier, Designer Rugs, it explains why rugs are a good choice for retail applications.



RUGS IN RETAIL APPLICATIONS

The process of selecting rugs and carpeting for stores, shopping malls, and so forth begins with ensuring their suitability for these applications. They should minimise the possibility of slips, trips, and falls.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ And, considering the negative health consequences of Volatile Organic Compounds and the fact that such substances have been found in some carpeting products,⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ it should be established that they are completely free of such substances. In short, products selected should meet all relevant health and safety standards.

Next, specifiers must ensure the products they are considering are durable. As is the case in a handful of other sectors, including the hospitality and health care, flooring in the retail sector is subject to constant traffic. As such, when specifying products for such applications, it is critical to consider factors like yarn material, yarn density and backing systems; and to choose designs and colours that reduce signs of wear over time. In this way longevity can be maximised and, considering the

reduced need for replacement, sustainability can be improved.

From there, specifiers need to decide what they hope to achieve by installing rugs and carpets, and how they intend to integrate them with broader design ambitions. As the QLD government notes, retail design is about creating a unique brand identity.^(iv) It's about setting yourself apart from your competitors, "making your retail space, warm, friendly, and approachable",^(v) and in so doing, attracting more customers.

Considering that interior fittings such as carpet have been shown to promote emotional responses in people and affect the chances of them making purchases,^(vi) this is more than just an aesthetic concern. It goes to show that rug design can have a positive impact on the bottom line for retailers. It can lend a space a certain atmosphere, and allow people to feel at ease as they participate in the social activity we have come to call 'shopping'.





DESIGNER RUGS

Established in 1986 and having provided rugs and carpeting for a range of high-profile clients, including Scentre Group/ Westfield, Vicinity, and Stocklands, Designer Rugs is well-versed in the flooring requirements of the retail sector.

Durability & longevity

“Our rugs are made from the highest quality New Zealand wool, known for both its softness and durability, and hand tufted with great skill to withstand many years,” says Yosi Tal, the company’s Managing Director. “Our New Zealand wool rugs are truly unsurpassed in their properties of durability and stain resistance. The unique fibre structure is strong and hard-wearing and provides natural protection to help resist staining and soiling.”

To quantify this, wool fibres can be stretched by more than 20% and still easily return back to their natural shape, meaning rugs made from this natural material will last for many years without showing signs of wear and tear. Beyond this, at the time of purchase, the Designer Rugs team is able to provide the best advice in terms of the ways in which design, patterning, and colour choice can help reduce signs of wear and tear, and further improve the longevity of these products.

Safety

Over recent years, the broader community has become increasingly aware of the negative health impacts of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Found in some building materials, these chemicals are to be avoided. This isn’t a concern for those considering purchasing 100% New Zealand Wool rugs from Designer Rugs. Not only have these products been tested and found to be low-VOC emitting, but they have also been shown to naturally absorb and filter airborne VOCs.

Collaboration & exclusive collections

For Designer Rugs, beyond experience and the quality of their materials, a key point of difference is their track record of collaboration with leading Australian fashion houses, artists and designers. Together with these leaders in their fields, they are able to tailor colours, shapes, materials, and finishes to suit individual applications. With their years of experience and expertise, they are invariably able to come up with just the right product. As the following case study illustrates, when it comes to carpeting, they strike just the right note to attract the customers that retailers want to attract.

NORTHLAND MALL

Located 13km north of the Melbourne CBD in suburban Preston, Northland Mall is a two-level regional shopping centre with a significant fashion retail offering.

Responding to customer feedback and eager to provide a modern and luxurious shopping experience, proprietors Vicinity Centres recently upgraded the facility. They commissioned builders, Insitu Group to upgrade the looping fashion mall known as 'the race course'. In all, the renovation involved the addition of new furniture pods with custom seating, the incorporation of greenery, fresh ceiling treatments, extensive lighting upgrades, and the introduction of new floor tiles around the main fashion retail spaces.

"The design was to be contemporary, luxe and have an almost high-end workplace feel," said Michelle Taylor, Director of MTRDC, the studio responsible for the mall's new interiors. "We were looking for something visually interesting and appealing to a youthful shopper."

As Taylor explained, the presence of furniture pods also necessitated the inclusion of new carpeting. In line with the brief, she chose products from Designer Rugs for the job. Specifically, the relevant spaces now feature a selection six bespoke rugs of various sizes and colourways.

Designed by Bernabeifreeman, the industrial studio created by Kelly Freeman and Rina Bernabei, the rugs are based on their 'Ocean' design. Paired with the new seating, they lend the newly-renovated centre a distinctive warmth and provide an ideal place for shoppers to have a rest before they continue their shopping.

According to Taylor, the textural addition of ridged sculpted carving have ensured they are perfect fit at Northland Mall and left all stakeholders happy. "In terms of creating visual interest in carpeting, we are really more interested in texture and sculpting, rather than heavy patterning," she said.

"Now that colour is back in vogue, we are finding we have to simplify graphics and styles within mall landscapes to ensure the rugs don't dominate the backdrop of the adjacent store fronts and merchandise displays." On these terms, the Bernabeifreeman designs are a clear winner. Now a fixture at Northland Mall, they are helping the facility and its tenants present themselves in the best possible light. And they are helping attract those much sought after young shoppers away from the lure of e-commerce.



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