

# Malls all decked out for Christmas without spending more



1 of 3 Christmas decorations at Bugis Junction. Several mall managers and retail experts say the positive outlook for the retail industry is translating into more decorations being put up for Christmas this year. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

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Sue-Ann Tan

Malls are decking their halls with more Christmas decorations in a bid to entice shoppers this holiday season, but without breaking the bank.

Mall managers and retail experts *The Sunday Times* spoke to said the positive outlook for the retail industry is translating into more decorations, with more lights and props being put up for Christmas this year.

Take City Square Mall. Last year, the mall had a "snow play" area with foam machines that produced "snow".

A spokesman said this year, the mall is enhancing the area with a 50m tunnel boasting 24,000 LED lights, designed to entice shoppers to the mall's entrance. This is in addition to life-size Transformers robots.

Takashimaya said it is spending at least 10 per cent more this year to woo shoppers.

Design-and-build firm Dezin Format is behind the decorations at [Velocity@Novena Square](#).

The firm's sales manager, Mr Alex-Wilem Lim, said there are about 30 to 40 per cent more decorative elements at the mall this year. But the cost is not significantly higher, he added, without giving figures.

A spokesman for design company Pollyanna Concepts said its clients, which include Great World City and some outlets of Robinsons, Metro and Isetan, are putting up about 10 to 15 per cent more decorations such as lights. None of the malls would say how much they spent. Some could be adopting different strategies to keep costs down, including doing things in-house, said Ms Esther Ho, deputy director at Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Business Management.

"Most malls, if they can, would recycle their decorations used in previous years. There may also be generic types used for different occasions, events and festive periods throughout the year," she added.



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Department of Statistics figures showed that for the first nine months of this year, year-on-year retail sales excluding motor vehicle sales showed more rises than drops, compared with the same period last year.

For the service sector, companies in the retail trade had the most positive outlook on their revenue in the fourth quarter of the year, compared with the previous quarter. This is in stark contrast to the first three quarters of the year, when the retail trade industry held a negative quarter-on-quarter revenue outlook.

"This year, retail sales seem to be doing better and retailers are quite positive, which might translate into more lavish decorations," said Singapore Polytechnic Business School's senior lecturer Sarah Lim.

Ms Ho said the decorations reflect the positive mood among retailers. "Consumer spending has been fairly stable... Retailers might also be riding on the post-Great Singapore Sale mood, which was positive."

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