

Opinion Paper: Shopping Centre Longevity Post-COVID-19 in Jakarta, Indonesia

Hendyansyah Putra

Universitas Trilogi, Indonesia

Email: hendyansyah@trilogi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered consumer behavior and impacted the physical retail sector globally, leading to a decline in visitors at many shopping centres. In Jakarta, Indonesia, this has resulted in several once-popular malls becoming nearly empty and struggling to survive in the post-pandemic era. The purpose of the study is to state the writer's opinion on how important malls are to people after Covid-19 in Jakarta. The writer also wants readers to initiate sustainability actions as part of their everyday activities, contributing to the prosperity of the community and improving Indonesia's SDG rank. The study focuses on providing opinions to save malls in Jakarta from becoming perished and abandoned as an effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. The method used in this paper is an opinion paper, where the writer tries to demonstrate his opinions on a certain topic, analyze them, and draw conclusions. The writer uses observation to describe the true condition of malls, which appear nearly empty, to form opinions on how these malls should and can survive the post-Covid-19 period. The results confirm that these malls need ideas, renovation, owner support, government support, financial support, and stakeholders' support to survive and contribute to Indonesia's SDGs. More specifically, this will lead directly to the prosperity of all stakeholders and the Jakarta community.

Keywords: *longevity; shopping centre; sustainability.*

This article is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) 

INTRODUCTION

In June 2023 Covid-19 after pandemic in Indonesia officially pronounced ended, there are some legendary shopping centres (malls) in Jakarta that fail to attract as many as visitor as they were before the pandemic (Santosa, 2023). Not only that these shopping centres look empty, but it also quiet. There weren't many visitors and tenants, some media such as (CNBC Indonesia, 2023; Tempo.co, 2023) even exaggeratedly compare these malls to be similar to cemetery. Looking at numbers of malls in Indonesia, there are 5 cities with the most malls in Indonesia. (1) Jakarta has got 132 malls, (2) Bandung has got 62 malls, (3) Surabaya has got 42 malls and Medan has got 42 malls (Wilda, 2022).

These numbers show the potential of economic growth and sustainability. Among malls in Jakarta, it is shown that Mall in South Jakarta are the most frequent visited by customers each month (Astarini & Utomo, 2025). As mentioned in (Annur, 2022), 2 (two) Malls in Jakarta Selatan during period of Januari to February 2022 has the most visitor recorded through "Pedulilindungi" apps. The most visited mall was a mall in Pondok Indah reaching up to 512.609 visitors per month. These numbers means that malls in South Jakarta are attractive to their visitors (Ismael & Suresh Kumar, 2020).

Previous studies have extensively discussed the general decline of malls post-pandemic and the shift towards online shopping globally (Gupta & Mukherjee, 2022). Research has also highlighted the role of malls in urban sustainability and community building (Retail Insider, 2022). Specific studies on mall performance often utilize quantitative metrics such as footfall analytics and sales data (Delgado, 2022). However, there is a noticeable gap in qualitative,

observation-based research focusing on the physical and operational conditions of struggling malls in specific urban contexts like Jakarta, particularly those located in typically vibrant areas such as South Jakarta (Adrianto, 2022). Most existing local reports (e.g., CNBC Indonesia, 2023; [Tempo.co](https://tempo.co), 2023) are journalistic and lack a structured analytical framework.

This study addresses this gap by offering a novel qualitative perspective through direct, structured observational analysis based on Creswell's (2016) framework. It investigates the phenomenon of "near-empty" malls in South Jakarta – an area known for high mall traffic – providing a contrasting case study. Furthermore, it uniquely links the revitalization of these malls to Indonesia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), proposing sustainability not just as an ethical choice but as a core strategy for business longevity post-pandemic.

Therefore, this research is interesting to be studied, because the writer is exploring three near empty malls, despite located in area of Jakarta Selatan with many attractive malls (Ilyanni & AZAN, 2024). Existence of malls is important in community, even though many shoppers had been utilizing the joy of online shopping, malls contribute as an important landmark, fixtures, uniqueness and sustainably designed to generations to come (Retail Insider, 2022). Based on the findings of these observations, the study then aimed to analyze the factors that contributed to the decline in their visits, despite being located in a strategic area. Ultimately, this paper intends to propose strategic recommendations based on the principles of sustainability and stakeholder collaboration. These benefits of malls should be maximized by the involvement of all stakeholder to contribute to malls longevity.

METHOD

The research for this opinion paper employed an observational method to assess the post-Covid-19 status of shopping malls in Jakarta. The author visited three nearly empty malls in South Jakarta—Mall A in Blok M, Mall B in Pejaten, and Mall C in Manggarai—on weekdays in November 2023. Observations included descriptive notes on current conditions such as empty parking lots, unoccupied stores, and absence of visitors, and reflective notes interpreting these conditions in relation to mall sustainability after the pandemic. This method enabled conclusions based on the malls' physical state, customer activity, and overall business performance.

The study used a qualitative approach focusing on factors like occupancy level, visitor behavior, and tenant sustainability to assess mall longevity post-Covid-19 and suggest survival strategies. Observations were grouped into themes including mall design, customer engagement, and the impact of external factors such as government and financial support. The research also considered Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), to address challenges faced by malls. Suggestions for improvement included introducing engaging events, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting eco-friendly initiatives to foster long-term sustainability. The study proposed that incorporating SDGs into mall management could boost community development in Jakarta while improving mall appeal and customer loyalty.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Topic Related Facts

There are factors that need to be accomplished in order to develop a mall or shopping centres according to (Delgado, 2022). These 5 (five) Key Performance Indicators to Grow Mall are as follows; (1) Unique visitors, means visitors who are interested to visit certain mall and potentially be new customers to shop there, (2) Number of visits, malls must analysed and conduct promotional activities at each operational hours and days of the mall, good marketing leads to number of visitors, number of visitors will see promotion at window display then they're attracted to purchase, (3) Dwell time in the centres, need to be learned by the mall management to understand traffic behaviour and buying patterns of mall visitors to improve their customer experience, then which section of the mall has more people dwell there and provide the correct promotion to the section, (4) Repetition rate, which is the most important thing to comprehend by knowing what make customers buy and back again to buy up to two to three times to the same section/ store. Stores may provide loyalty promotion program for this type of customers and (5) Hot/ cold spots, malls should indicate hot spots where visitors spend more time there and indicate cold spots where visitors spend least time or rarely visit the area. Then management need to increase attention to be able to lease cold spots and also keep the hot spots crowded with visitors. Malls able to contribute a great deal of tribute to economic that can support social, economic and sustainability, as highlighted by (Retail Insider, 2022) through the following; (1) Energy conservation; malls may implement solar panels and other renewable energy in their buildings and operations, (2) Water usage; to be part in saving water from scarcity, malls should install low-flow toilets and faucets to reduce water usage and harvest rain water in a reservoir for reserve, (3) Waste Management; the presence of customers means a lot of waste at the same time, malls can create recycling program, use recyclable packaging and minimize packaging when customers purchase products to reduce waste, (4) Green Spaces; malls nowadays need to use more natural material and create more open spaces on their structure, this green spaces will provide better air circulation and calming their visitors around busy city environment, (5) Sustainable design; by implementing many natural ventilation design, malls create a healthier environment for visitors. (6) Sustainable materials; malls can use natural material resources, such as; wood taken from sustainable managed forests, recycled beams from local scrap yards, bamboo and stones for flooring. Eco-friendly materials are cheaper, help reduce bad environmental impact, look attractive to visitors, (7) Recycling and waste reduction; more public recycling bins, need to be placed in malls to dispose and separate food waste, plastic bottles, paper products and aluminium cans, (8) Supporting green brands; malls management may selectively select their vendors according to brands that support environmental sustainability called green shops, selling green brands to the visitors. Apart from involvement in energy and environmental sustainability, the business owner should directly implement the consistent effort to run the business and ensure its longevity. According to Sudhamek as cited in (Kurniawan, 2023), there are 7 (seven) tips in running sustainability business; (1) Business should have purpose in order to be effective in its operation, (2) Mindfulness in business based on the value of kindness, (3) Integrating sustainability in its business process, (4) Always have eyes and ears on opportunities, (5) Mentally prepared for the worst case scenario, (6) Network flexibility in collaborating with any

partners, (7) Keep being innovative, relevant and ahead of its competitors. These tips from Sudhamek were proven to be effective, as he implemented them in his 33 years career of leading a food and beverage business and led him to be one of 50 richest men in Indonesia in 2021 version Forbes Magazine.

Sustainable Development Goals has been set by Department of Economic and Social Affairs United Nations to 17 (twelve) targets for nations in the world to accomplished them. These goals are; (1) No poverty, (2) Zero hunger, (3) Good health & well-being, (4) Quality education, (5) Gender equality, (6) Clean water & sanitation, (7) Affordable & clean energy, (8) Decent work & economic growth, (9) Industry, innovation & infrastructure, (10) Reduced inequalities, (11) Sustainable cities & communities, (12) Responsible consumption & production, (13) Climate action, (14) Life below water, (15) Life on land (16) Peace, justice & strong institutions, (17) Partnership for the goals (United Nations, 2022). Mall sustainability has got relation among SDG which are number (7), (8), (9) but the more specific are (11) Sustainable cities & communities and (12) Responsible consumption & production. Therefore, sustainability action to preserve shopping Mall post Covid-19 is important to contribute to Indonesia SDG.

Problem and Arguments

This paper indicated that there is a problem to solve in order to conserve malls from being non-existence. The writer aims in giving inputs and perspectives towards the importance of keeping malls occupied by having visitors to come, dine, shop and do activities there. This paper will be beneficial to all mall management, tenant, stakeholder, society, government, people as their customers and the science of business. The writer conduct observation in November 2023, to find these three (near empty) malls and describe the condition then give arguments based on the observation. These 3 (three) malls are Mall A in Blok M, Mall B in Pejaten and Mall C in Manggarai, these Malls are located in Jakarta and each of these malls were visited by the writer in November on work days, not on the weekends.

Observations is a good way in extracting data, where the participant is unable or unwilling to be interviewed. In this case since the situation of these Malls not really comforting and only few people were there, the writer initiates an observation instead of interview. Observation technic that was used by the writer is in accordance to (Creswell, 2016); where the writer separates two main notes, there are “*descriptive notes*” of what was seen by the writer and “*reflective notes*” of the writer’s interpretation based on the description of what was observed.

Insights and Observations result of Mall A:

Mall A located in Blok M, South Jakarta. As mentioned in (Randy, 2022) Blok M was part of Jakarta’s urban planning in 1950s as an economic centre equipped with multiple supporting infrastructure. This area then in 1980s to 2000s become a place where urban youth gather around doing various activities such as; shopping, dining and hanging out with their friends. Seeing the economic potential in 1992, government initiate the development of an integrated mall connected to bus station. Standings in an area of about 17.000 m², Mall A was functioned as an underground 2 (two) stories shopping mall integrated to 6 (six) lanes bus station. The bus station itself has an area of about 1.840 m². There were 420 spaces in the carpark for cars. In 2005 there were about 150.000 people coming by using the bus station and

going through the lower ground through the stairs connected to the shops at the lower ground each day (Indonesia Prima Property, 2020; era.id, 2023; Setiapgedung, 2023). In 2019 Mall A get another market open in its area, which is car spare parts and car services. This market equipped with 400 car park service spaces. Mall A economic potential started to lose its attraction during the Pandemic Covid-19 in 2020. Only 67% were still occupied, then by 2021 to 2022 it got worse. Only the car spare part area was still existed. (Field note of Mall A; on 23 Nov 2023 at 11.00 am):

Table 1. Structured Observation Results for Mall A in Blok M

Length of Activity 60 minutes	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
The parking lot looks empty, on the bus lanes no small busses were seen since they were no longer operated, only few of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) busses still going pass the bus station.	<i>The bus lanes were no longer used as main bus lanes in Blok M area, but only to several BRT busses. This shows that there are no traffic of people using the stairs connecting the bus lanes and shopping malls.</i>
Stairs to connect the bus station to the lower ground Mall looks empty, nearly no visitors seen going through it. Food court only occupied by few tenants were still open for service.	<i>These tenants only few and the visitors also only few it looks not interesting anymore. They only open on one corner near of the stairs, doesn't look appeal to customers wants and needs. Maintenance, service and hospitality need a lot of improvement and reconstruction. Customers will not feel welcome and comfortable in this condition.</i>
On the main floor of the Mall looked that there were only very small number of tenants still open for business. Air Conditioner were no longer operated, even the toilet on the main floor was locked.	
The lower ground parking lot was occupied by car spare-parts tenants it looked well occupied.	<i>This part of the Mall still interesting to customers. People come for car spare parts.</i>

Source: Field Observation (Primary Data), November 2023

Insights and Observations result of Mall B:

Mall B situated in Pejaten. According to history, at the age of Kingdoms in Indonesia, this area was used as the residents of royals from Mataram Kingdom in Batavia. There has been archaeological excavation in this area to prove this historical ground, then the name given as the same name of one area under territory of Mataram Kingdom in Java, called Pejaten.

Standing at a land of 58.000 m² supported by for 40.000 m² for lease area or as big as 76% of the Mall total area. Mall B was open for service in 2008 as a promising Mall for B and B+ (middle family class) demographic class based on expenditure, additional to that the area hasn't got no competitor nearby at that time. There were also some brands from different tenants, creating this Mall as one stop leisure & shopping centre, such as: shopping, cinema, café, restaurants, language course, music course, fitness centre, etc. (Field note of Mall B; on 25 Nov 2023 at 19.00 pm)

Table 2. Structured Observation Results for Mall B in Pejaten

Length of Activity 90 minutes	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
There were a few cars in the parking lot. The parking lot for cars was divided into three; one at the front (valet), one at the underground and one at the back. These three parking lots looked less occupied. The underground and the back part of the parking lot	The front and the back parking lot was too expensive because it was valet type parking, but when the lower ground nearly empty from cars, that means visitor also only a few.

looked even less occupied because these large parking lot was used to be full.

The Inside part of the mall looked many of store has been closed, even there are sign from the government in the closed stores saying that the tenants hasn't paid their taxes. The lobby that was used to have events/ bazaar looked nearly empty; one retail shop at that moment selling their products in the bazaar area in the attempt to sell more of their product not only from their shop.

Supermarket in the lower level looked like it's about to closed for operation. Many products were on sales and some refrigerators are not display properly, some refrigerator display even not switched on.

Toilet also looked empty, there is a cleaner in the toilet but it looked as if it was empty but the water and light was still working properly and the condition was clean.

Despite of looking empty, there are some tenants that still looking normally operated, the visitors look like regular and loyal costumer to the store; there is a Fitness centre and an English course.

Tenants have lost interest to prolong agreement or continuing their lease. Mall should be creative in luring people back in to this Mall.

Supermarket need to be renewed, with new concept, product should be fresh and price should be lower.

Renovation is needed, improved sanitary and clean and dry floor is a must.

People come for fitness class here, it run well and there is a well-known English Course also run their business properly.

Source: Field Observation (Primary Data), November 2023

Insights and Observations result of Mall C:

Mall C situated in Manggarai, South Jakarta. Back in 1934, the present area was used to be as swimming pool. Mall C was built in 1974 and managed by one of the top fashion retailers in Indonesia with the purpose to be a shopping centre that become the favourite of people in Jakarta, especially for shopper around and close to that area (Poskota, 2023). The main building of Mall C was functioned as fashion retail selling wide variety of branded products. (Field note of Mall C; on 23 Nov 2023 at 13.00 pm)

Table 3. Structured Observation Results for Mall C in Manggarai

Length of Activity 120 minutes	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
There were less than a few cars in the parking lot. The in gate and the exit gate was going through the same gate. The main mall was locked from the outside, from the outside windows the writer can see inside that there were no display and item left there, only some left-over mannequins.	<i>Seems like there is no customers come to shop anymore. The locked main building is definitely meant that the Mall is not open for business.</i>
There were no longer any shopping activities in the main building. However, the outer part of the mall still occupied by two tenants servicing food & beverages in the form of a café and a fast-food restaurant.	<i>The outer part still managed to get the interest of customers. It was caused by the location was close to the busy street and the brand of the café & restaurant was also reliable.</i>

Source: Field Observation (Primary Data), November 2023

Limitations

This research is focusing on exploring the phenomena of empty malls in South Jakarta, using secondary data taken from the websites and journals, combine with observations in 3 (three) malls in South Jakarta, in November 2023 where the writer is directly involved as visitors. But still this observation includes in non-participative observation. These 3 (three) malls are Mall A in Blok M, Mall B in Pejaten and Mall C in Manggarai. Future research may observe these empty malls at the weekends to see directly differences compared to the crowd on the work days reported by the writer. Also, future researcher may try to do interview with the mall management, tenant and customers about what had caused the trouble according to their own experience and expertise.

CONCLUSION

The writer urges all stakeholders to collaborate in preserving malls in alignment with Indonesia's SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The government can support offline shopping through fair regulations that balance the recovery of physical malls, which were economically impacted by Covid-19, with the growth of online businesses. Innovation and renovation to attract visitors are essential, including themed areas, appealing events, and adapting mall facilities to use sustainable energy, such as installing automatic faucets and flushes. Mall management should promote sustainable behavior through signage, campaigns, and events. Emphasizing *gotong-royong*, Indonesia's heritage of mutual cooperation, can enhance collaboration among mall stakeholders to improve urban community spaces and life quality in Jakarta. Future research could explore effective models for integrating sustainability practices in malls that increase visitor engagement and measure their impact on both community well-being and economic recovery.

REFERENCES

- Annur, C. M. (2022, Februari). *Layanan Konsumen dan Kesehatan: Peduli Lindungi Catat 10 Mall ini Paling Ramai Pengunjung di Jakarta*. Retrieved from databoks.katadata.co.id: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/02/15/pedulilindungi-catat-10-mal-ini-paling-ramai-pengunjung-di-jakarta>
- CNBC Indonesia. (2023, January). *Sudah Seperti 'Kuburan,' Penampakan Mal Legendaris Awal 2023*. Retrieved from [www.cnbcindonesia.com: https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20230103203207-7-402543/sudah-seperti-kuburan-penampakan-mal-legendaris-awal-2023](https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20230103203207-7-402543/sudah-seperti-kuburan-penampakan-mal-legendaris-awal-2023)
- Creswell, J. W. (2016). *30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.
- Delgado, J. C. (2022, November). *Shopping Mall Management: 5 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to Grow Your Mall Revenue*. Retrieved from Hyperin.com: <https://blog.hyperin.com/shopping-mall-management-5-key-performance-indicators-kpis-to-grow-your-mall-revenue/>
- era.id. (2023, Februari). *Stori: Menyusuri Lorong Waktu di Mall*. Retrieved from era.id: <https://era.id/STORI/117865/menyusuri-lorong-waktu-di-mal-blok-m>
- Indonesia Prima Property. (2020). *Pusat Perbelanjaan: Mall Blok M*. Retrieved from IPP.co.id: https://www.ipp.co.id/ind/product_ipp/pusat_perbelanjaan/mal_blok_m.html

- Kurniawan, S. (2023, June). Marketeer of the Month. *Envisioning Sustainability*, pp. 12-16.
- Poskota. (2023, October). *Poskota Foto: Melihat Mall Pasaraya Manggarai yang Sepi Bak Kota Mati*. Retrieved from Poskota.co.id: <https://poskota.co.id/2023/10/03/melihat-mal-pasaraya-manggarai-yang-sepi-bak-kota-mati>
- Randy, F. (2022, October). *Galeri: Blok M Dulu Hiruk Pikuk Kini Mati Suri*. Retrieved from Historia.id: <https://historia.id/galeri/articles/blok-m-mal-dulu-hiruk-pikuk-kini-mati-suri-DAZnX/page/1>
- Retail Insider. (2022, December). *How shopping malls are contributing to social growth*. Retrieved from retail-insider.com: <https://retail-insider.com/articles/2022/12/how-shopping-malls-are-contributing-to-sustainable-growth/>
- Setiapgedung. (2023, May). *Setiap Gedung Punya Cerita*. Retrieved from Setiapgedung.web.id: <https://setiapgedung.web.id/2022/05/mall-blok-m.html>
- Tempo.co. (2023, April 28). *Bisnis: 8 Daftar Mall di Jakarta yang sepi, jadi kuburan?* Retrieved from Tempo.co website: <https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/1719706/8-daftar-mal-di-jakarta-yang-sepi-jadi-kuburan>
- United Nations. (2022, December). *Goals: The 17 Goals*. Retrieved from sdgs.un.org: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- Wilda, F. (2022, Februari). *Destinasi: 5 Kota yang memiliki jumlah Mall terbanyak di Indonesia*. Retrieved from travel.okezone.com: <https://travel.okezone.com/read/2022/02/22/408/2551355/5-kota-yang-memiliki-jumlah-mal-terbanyak-di-indonesia?page=2>
- Adrianto, Dimas. (2022). *Peri-Urbanisation and the Emergence of Integrated Spatial Planning and Governance-Managing the Growth of Peri-Urban Areas in the Secondary City-Regions of Indonesia*. The University of Manchester (United Kingdom).
- Astarini, Sulfiah Dwi, & Utomo, Christiono. (2025). Observation scale of space value for measuring successful shopping malls, a case study in Indonesia. *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 24(1), 115–138.
- Gupta, Astha Sanjeev, & Mukherjee, Jaydeep. (2022). Long-term changes in consumers' shopping behavior post-pandemic: an exploratory study. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 50(12), 1518–1534.
- Ilyanni, Humaira, & AZAN, ZALIZA. (2024). Mall Essence's Impact On Shopping Preferences in Small Cities. *Jurnal Evolusi*, 5(1).
- Ismael, Faruqi, & Suresh Kumar, S. T. (2020). *Indonesian Consumers' Patronage Invention Toward Shopping Malls*. Rasibook.
- Santosa, Sami Naufal. (2023). *Marketing Communication Strategies After the Covid 19 Pandemic in Food and Beverages Enterprise (Case Study in Kalis Donuts Yogyakarta)*. Universitas Islam Indonesia.