



PHOTO: MARINA BAY SANDS

SHOPPING FOR NIGHT OWLS

Marina Bay Sands is the place to go if you need some late-night retail therapy. **KAREN TEE** reports

Late-night shopping might have fizzled out in Orchard Road, but another retail destination is giving it a shot.

If you fancy a Chanel handbag or a Dior suit late at night, head over to Marina Bay Sands (MBS), where most of its 250 retail stores open till midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

For the rest of the week, The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands is open till 11pm – most other shops along Orchard Road close by 10pm, even on weekends.

The mall is home to a host of designer labels including Fendi, Ferragamo and Gucci, as well as mid-priced labels such as Armani Exchange and Banana Republic.

An MBS spokesman says the late hours have been in place since it opened last April to cater for its mix of customers, including busy executives, tourists and hotel guests.

Dr Lynda Wee, adjunct associate professor in retailing at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), says the cluster of night businesses such as the 24-hour casino, concert and performance venues and F&B options under one roof sets MBS apart by creating a captive market for the mall.

"The lovely backdrop of MBS also makes it compelling for people to hang out, so staying open later helps," she adds.

A recent Sunday Times article reported that late-night shopping in Orchard Road has lost steam because of low demand.

When it began in 2006, several malls and retailers opened till midnight on the last Friday of each month and the scheme was later extended to Saturday nights as well.

But a Sunday Times check with 55 retailers at six malls found that only 13 now open till 11pm on Saturdays. Most of the retailers now close by 9 or 10pm.

At MBS, the initial response to the later hours has been promising.

The Raoul boutique at MBS says it gets the most foot traffic from 9 to 11pm. This is also when sales peak, says the FJ Benjamin group, but it declines to reveal figures.

The fashion retailer runs three other stores in MBS – Banana Republic, Guess and La Senza – which also report better-than-expected sales.

But not all MBS retailers see brisk business during the graveyard shift.

One tenant, who declines to be named, says the number of walk-in customers after 10pm is "not consistent", and that by 11pm, his place would be empty.

But he hopes the situation will pick up by mid-year, when the remaining shops near his unit open for business.

About 50 more shops are slated to open in the coming months.

Indeed, critical mass is key in determining the success of late-night shopping, say retail experts.

Ms Sulian Tan-Wijaya, senior director of retail and lifestyle at Savills Singapore, says the drive would be more effective if more retailers band together to keep their doors open.

To draw a regular pool of shoppers, NTU's Dr Wee says retailers could offer late-night deals.

But staffing costs, experts say, are the biggest challenge, as retailers may not be able to generate enough sales to cover the additional wages.

This is why late-night shopping is often most successful during festive seasons like Christmas and Chinese New Year or special events such as the Great Singapore Sale, they note.

Still, there are shopping options for night owls. Urban offers a list of places you can go for your fashion and beauty fix after 10pm.

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Shops that stay open beyond 10pm

Tangs Orchard

Till 11pm every Friday

Watsons

01-09 Holland Road Shopping Centre, till midnight on Friday and Saturday; 224 Geylang Road, till 11pm daily; Changi Airport Terminals 2 and 3 check-in halls, till 11pm daily; Changi Airport Terminals 2 and 3 transit halls, 24 hours daily

The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands

Till midnight on Friday and Saturday; till 11pm Sunday to Thursday

Mustafa

145 Syed Alwi Road, 24 hours daily

New Look

B2-34 313@Somerset, till 11pm daily

Dress Code

01-07 The Cathay, till 11.30pm on Friday and Saturday

Rockstar by Soon Lee

03-08 Cineleisure, till midnight on Friday and Saturday

Perfumes & Cosmetics

Main stores in Changi Airport's Terminals 1, 2 and 3 transit halls and the Budget Terminal's arrival hall, 24 hours daily; Changi Airport Terminals 1, 2 and 3 check-in halls, till 11pm daily

Abyzz by Desmond Yang

02-21 Orchard Central, till 11pm on Friday and Saturday

New Urban Male

02-01 Cineleisure, till midnight on Friday and Saturday

Stitch

02-20 Cineleisure, till midnight on Friday and Saturday

The Editor's Market

03-04 Cineleisure, till 1am on Friday and Saturday