

Local brands, design talent set for boost from new initiatives

Among the ideas is a design incubator due to open next year at Orchard Road

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LOCAL brands and retailers are set to get increased exposure as Singapore plans to showcase its homegrown talent amid a challenging operating environment for the retail industry.

A design incubator, operated by local retail group Naiise, is due to open at Orchard Road towards the end of next year acting as both a retail showcase and incubation space. The incubator— supported by the Singapore Tourism Board, Spring Singapore and JTC — is expected to feature more than 60 local brands covering the spectrum from fashion to lifestyle products to souvenirs.

In addition, Spring is working with department stores to feature local and regional designers. This way, these stores will serve as a launch pad for homegrown brands, build up their business capabilities and create avenues for market access. For local designers, it could also mean the opportunity to venture into overseas markets. These initiatives will build on the momentum achieved since the Retail Industry Transformation Map (ITM) was launched last year.

“One of the key strategies of the ITM is to help retailers build their own products and brands to internationalise and become global names,” said S Iswaran, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry). “Design plays an important role in creating a unique brand identity and value proposition.” He was speaking at the annual Singapore Retail Industry Conference on Friday which was organised by the Singapore Retailers Association (SRA).

Meanwhile, the Retail Centre of Excellence (RCoE) will be launched next month at Singapore Management University’s Lee Kong Chian School of Business. The RCoE will tie up with retailers to help plug gaps and tackle challenges in today’s dynamic retail environment. This will be done through talent development and outreach programmes as well as by undertaking research on the retail industry.

Singapore’s iconic shopping belt is also set for a refresh in order to make it more attractive as a shopping and lifestyle destination. A Ministerial Steering Committee — co-chaired by Mr Iswaran, Minister for National Development Lawrence Wong and Second Minister for Transport Ng Chee Meng — has been formed to spearhead the rejuvenation efforts.

At the conference, the SRA announced that it will embark on the Local Enterprise and Association Development Plus (LEAD+) programme to help the retail industry boost productivity, business growth and competitiveness. SRA president, R Dhinakaran, said: “We look forward to strengthening the Secretariat’s capabilities so as to responsibly champion the mass adoption of the various productivity initiatives, from in-store technologies to supply chain/logistics solutions by retailers and drive new initiatives that can potentially become game changers to help transform the retail industry.”

Initiatives under the LEAD+ programme include an

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