

Innovative centres and projects

Brand centres, previously known as factory outlet centres, have undergone a change in status. Previously considered as an easy way to get rid of unsold goods before, they have now become a distribution segment in their own right. As the numerous centres currently springing up all over the world demonstrate, this concept is generating widespread enthusiasm, which is being shared equally by Europe. However, competition between the 150 European centres is becoming stiffer. Therefore, in order to penetrate the market effectively, operators are seeking projects with original concepts that will help them stand out from existing brand centres.

The most popular trend right now for future centres is to incorporate and feature the characteristics of the region in which a centre is located. These characteristics are primarily historical, architectural, cultural, and geographical. Companies who operate brand centres are using this strategy to show that this is not just an isolated commercial project, but one that involves the entire region. This trend, which is very popular among elected officials, hinges primarily on the architecture of the future centre.

In addition to architecture, outlet operators are now exploring other areas, such as the environment, which they have not previously included when developing their projects. Integrating an environmentally-friendly aspect into their concepts is likely to attract a new set of customers: the eco-consumers.

A few examples of centres whose architecture is based on one or more of the characteristics of the region in which it is located

["Fashion House Sosnowiec"](#) (Poland)

This Polish centre, created in 2004, features Silesia, the largest mining region in the country. To do this, without the mine shafts, the centre has a Victorian-era train that runs through the complex. Wanting to recreate the industrial architecture of the Victorian era and 19th-century Silesia, the centre's façades were built from carefully chosen materials (glass, brick, steel, and zinc).



["Mc Arthur Glen Troyes"](#) (Aube, France)

As pointed out recently by Geoffrey Nidd, director of the Mc Arthur Glen Troyes and Roubaix sites, the Troyes centre did not previously reflect the city of Troyes.

To rectify this problem, he opted for a new look when the centre was expanded.

On April 5, 2007, the centre showed off a new entrance, intended to be symbolic, featuring the half-timbered houses that are traditionally found in Troyes. This double porch with its A-shaped roofs provides tourists with a look at a local speciality as they pass through.



« [Mc Arthur Glen Castel Romano](#) » (Italy)

To build this centre, Mc Arthur Glen drew its inspiration from the Augustus era of Imperial Rome. This construction with its refined architecture displays several similarities with the ancient city.

Just like the temples and palaces of Imperial Rome, the stores have vaulted archways and columns supporting them.



« [Batavia Stad Outlet Shopping](#) » (Netherlands)

Bordering the North Sea and taking advantage of its geographical location, this Dutch brands centre was designed to look like a fishing village.

Boats dot the café terraces in a fantastical setting teeming with colours.

The cultural element is everywhere and the centre's architecture resembles the Golden Age of the Dutch Navy. In addition, when this centre opened, the region revived a more than century-old tradition, where textile factories in France and Italy sold their surplus in their own factory stores.



A few examples of environmentally-friendly projects

« [Le Village des Alpes](#) » (Ain, France)

If this project is successfully completed¹ by spring of 2009, it will contribute to the respect and preservation of the environment.

Rainwater will be recovered, filtered, and stored in underground reservoirs. Collecting this rainwater will allow the centre to water green spaces or clean the streets of the Village. Automatic water-saving systems in the public restrooms will help reduce and control consumption.

Moreover, waste from the Village will be processed locally through separate collection (containers: glass, plastic, cardboard) and will not affect the recycling and treatment of local waste.



« [Viaduc Village](#) » (Aveyron, France)

Designed to maintain harmony with the local heritage, this future centre is also environmentally friendly through its use of solar energy and a rainwater recovery system. Its opening is planned for the beginning of 2009.

« [Aubonne Outlet Centre](#) » (Switzerland)

IKEA invested 45 million Swiss francs into the overall construction of this centre.

The centre will be built according to the Minergie standard of low energy consumption, recognized by the Confederation and cantons. This standard defines five points for a building, which are the primary requirements for the building envelope, in order to ensure a sustainable construction technique, as well as air renewal through a comfort ventilation system. This standard will allow the new centre to reduce its energy consumption by two-thirds compared to the same type of buildings.

"I think that this standard will have an impact on consumers who are the most aware and most responsive to this type of thing. This can also be an advantage in their shopping selection," explains Jérôme Ruffieux, sales director for IKEA Furniture Corporation and designated director for the future centre, whose opening is scheduled for this year, 2007.



Source: European Factory Outlets Observatory (April 2007); www.magdus.com

¹ A CNEC appeal is expected following the refusal of the CDEC, from March 29, 2007.