



Press Release

Shopping centers as a digital platform:

ECE extends pilot phase of the online product search “Digital Mall” to five centers

More than 400,000 products of 35 retailers available online

Hamburg, December 11, 2018 – ECE advances the development of its centers to digital platforms: Effective today, the “Digital Mall” will be extended to five pilot centers and will thus be available at five shopping centers. The feature was developed by ECE and has been tested at Alstertal-Einkaufszentrum Hamburg (AEZ). Besides AEZ the online product search will now be offered on the websites of Elbe-Einkaufszentrum in Hamburg, Altmarkt-Galerie Dresden, Limbecker Platz in Essen, and by Main-Taunus-Zentrum in Sulzbach near Frankfurt. This way ECE enables its customers to check the availability of a product in a center, the available sizes, and the price at any time, reserve a product, and pick it up in the respective store.

The “Digital Mall” is based on the idea that customers can view the products offered at a center nearest to them and that their search will not automatically lead them to the major e-commerce platforms. According to a study published by the professional consulting services firm Deloitte (*Deloitte Digital: The New Digital Divide, 2016*) 56% of the purchases at a brick-and-mortar store are prepared online.

“Extending the pilot to five centers is the next step to establish the shopping centers of the future,” says Alexander Otto, CEO of ECE. “By carrying forward the interconnection of online and offline offerings we can meet the needs of our customers for a multichannel shopping experience and support the brick-and-mortar retail at the same time.”

Since the beginning of the pilot phase, the “Digital Mall” has been continually improved and extended. At the moment, it shows the locally available products of 35 participating retailers; six more are currently being added and will be included very soon. Thus, the online product search currently comprises 400,000 products from more than 60 stores of the five pilot centers. The participating retailers include Saturn, Thalia, Olymp, Gant, Appelrath-Cüpper, and Lascana. Recently, the products of Galeria Kaufhof, Bijou Brigitte, S.Oliver, and Tchibo were added to the platform.

“With the ‘Digital Mall’, we respond to the changing customer behavior and we exploit new potential for generating reach and traffic,” explains Dr. Philipp Sepehr, Director Digital Innovation & Analytics at ECE. “The feedback from both customers and retailers has been so positive that we decided to take the next step and add four more centers to the pilot. In the coming weeks and months and we will add more stores and we are planning to extend the ‘Digital Mall’ in the long term.”

As a next step, it is planned to make the “Digital Mall” available also for other ECE centers. In the long run, a delivery service of the products purchased at the center to customers living in close proximity to the center is another possible feature. The “Digital Mall” product search has been considered a unique technological innovation in the shopping center industry. Already in 2017, it received the MAPIC award in the “Best O2O Strategy” (Online to Offline) category and in 2018 it received a silver award at the ICSC Solal Marketing Awards in the “Emerging Technology” category. Currently, it is nominated for the European Innovation Award of the German Council of Shopping Centers.

About ECE

ECE develops and operates shopping centers and also implements large-scale real estate projects, including corporate headquarters, office towers, industrial buildings, logistics and transportation facilities, hotels, and city districts. ECE has around €34.4 billion of assets under management at current market value, and is responsible for the management of approximately 200 shopping centers (including more than 50 centers operated by MEC METRO-ECE Centermanagement GmbH & Co. KG). With business activities in twelve different countries, ECE is a leading European shopping center operator. Every day over 4.3 million customers visit ECE centers which house about 20,000 retail tenants in a total sales area of more than 7.1 million square meters, generating annual sales of around 24.4 billion euros. Through continuous

modernization projects, innovative service and F&B offerings, attractive mall designs, and customer-friendly digitalization projects, ECE continually develops its centers, keeping them suitable for the future.

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