IRF TRUSTED MARK

THE INTERNATIONAL RETAIL FORUM SETTING **'CUSTOMER CENTRIC'** STANDARDS IN RETAIL

TRUST 206

MYSTERY AUDIT MANUAL FOR SHOPPING CENTRES WITH MA GUIDELINES

Under the IRF Trusted Mark® Certification Scheme

Revision History

Version	Date	Description
1.0	24.11.2020	Original publication
2.0	25.11.2020	COVID-19 protocols incorporated
3.0	28.11.2022	COVID-19 protocols withdrawn and enhanced hygiene and safety requirements incorporated
4.0	19.07.2026	Minor Revisions
5.0	03.08.2026	Comprehensive customer-centric revision incorporating Mystery Audit Guidelines, aligned with the IRF Trusted Mark® Certification Scheme. Document name changed from Trust Trust 152 A. Mystery Audit Checklist for Shopping Centres to Trust 206

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1. Introduction

Shopping Centres are no longer merely retail destinations. They are integrated customer environments where shopping, dining, entertainment, leisure and community experiences converge.

The purpose of Mystery Auditing under the IRF Trusted Mark® Certification Scheme is to independently evaluate the actual customer experience by assessing facilities, services and customer interactions exactly as they are experienced by an ordinary customer.

Unlike Certification Body Audits, Mystery Audits do not evaluate internal procedures, records or management systems. Instead, they assess whether the Shopping Centre consistently delivers customer experiences that conform to the requirements of Trust 152 – Trusted Shopping Centre Standard.

The Mystery Audit therefore provides an independent customer perspective that complements the Certification Body Audit and forms an integral component of the Trusted Mark® Certification Scheme.

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2. Purpose

These Guidelines provide a structured methodology for conducting Mystery Audits of Shopping Centres seeking certification under the IRF Trusted Mark® Certification Scheme.

The Guidelines are intended to ensure:

- consistency of Mystery Audits;
- objectivity of observations;
- uniform interpretation of Trust 152 requirements;
- reliable assessment of customer experience; and
- comparable audit outcomes across Shopping Centres.

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3. Scope

These Guidelines apply to all Mystery Audits conducted under Trust 152 – Trusted Shopping Centre Standard.

They cover assessment of customer-facing facilities, services, amenities, communication, customer interactions and operational practices that can reasonably be experienced or observed during a normal customer visit.

The Guidelines do not require Mystery Auditors to review confidential documents, statutory records or internal management systems.

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4. Mystery Audit Philosophy

Mystery Auditing evaluates outcomes rather than organisational processes.

The Mystery Auditor performs the assessment by experiencing the Shopping Centre in the same manner as an ordinary customer without disclosing their identity or audit purpose.

The emphasis is therefore placed upon:

- customer experience;
- service delivery;
- physical observations;
- customer interactions;
- accessibility;
- convenience;
- consistency; and
- customer confidence.

5. Principles of Mystery Auditing

Mystery Auditors shall:

- remain anonymous throughout the visit;
- avoid influencing normal operations;
- assess only customer-observable conditions;
- record objective evidence;
- avoid assumptions;
- evaluate actual customer experience;
- maintain confidentiality;
- remain impartial.

6. Mystery Auditor Competence

Mystery Auditors should possess:

- observation skills;
- attention to detail;
- customer service understanding;
- written communication skills;
- integrity;
- impartiality;
- knowledge of Trust 152.

7. Mystery Audit Methodology

The Mystery Auditor should normally evaluate the Shopping Centre by following the customer journey, including:

- arrival;
- parking;
- entrances;
- security screening;
- mall navigation;
- common areas;
- customer amenities;
- washrooms;
- lifts and escalators;
- retail areas;
- food court;
- customer service desk;
- entertainment facilities (where applicable);

- departure.

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8. Conformity Assessment

Each applicable clause shall be assessed as:

Rating	Meaning
Yes	Requirement conforms
No	Requirement does not conform
NA	Requirement not applicable

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9. Objective Evidence

Evidence may include:

- direct observation;
- customer interaction;
- photographs (where permitted);
- timings;
- screenshots;
- customer communication;
- signage;
- publicly available information.

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10. Reporting Nonconformities

Only objective observations shall be recorded.

Nonconformities shall:

- describe facts;
- avoid opinions;
- identify observed evidence;
- avoid recommendations.

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11. Structure of these Guidelines

Each applicable Trust Requirement is presented using the following format:

| Clause | Mystery Audit Method | Mystery Audit Guideline | Conformity (Yes/No/NA) | Objective Evidence | Remarks (Only if NC) |

The first three columns provide guidance.

The final three columns are completed during the Mystery Audit.

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12. Mystery Audit Guidelines

SECTION A – REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Objective

To assess customer-visible evidence that the Shopping Centre operates in compliance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements relevant to customer confidence and safety.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
A.2	Observe customer-visible statutory displays while entering or moving through the Shopping Centre.	Verify whether mandatory statutory licences, notices or public information required to be displayed are available and appear current.			
A.3(a)	Observe customer-facing practices during the customer journey.	Assess whether customer-facing practices appear consistent with applicable consumer protection requirements.			
A.3(b)	Observe customer-accessible areas throughout the visit.	Assess whether obvious conditions exist that may present safety risks to customers, visitors or occupants.			
A.3(c)	Observe environmental	Assess whether customer-visible			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	practices visible during the visit.	environmental practices are appropriately implemented, where applicable.			

Excellent. We now move into the main body of the document.

As with all the revised Trust 205 manuals, every clause should contain:

- **Mystery Audit Method** (how the auditor performs the assessment)
- **Mystery Audit Guideline** (what the auditor should assess)
- **Three blank columns** for the auditor to complete.

SECTION B – SUSTAINABILITY

Objective

To assess customer-visible environmental practices that demonstrate the Shopping Centre's commitment to sustainability, resource conservation and environmentally responsible operations.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
B.2	Observe customer-accessible areas throughout the Shopping Centre.	Assess whether customer-visible energy-efficient practices, such as LED lighting or energy-efficient displays, appear to be implemented and operational, where applicable.			
B.3	Observe customer washrooms, common areas and other accessible facilities.	Assess whether customer-visible water conservation measures, such as sensor-operated taps or water-saving fixtures, appear to be provided and			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
		functioning, where applicable.			
B.4	Observe waste collection points and customer areas.	Assess whether waste bins are clean, appropriately identified and waste segregation practices appear to be implemented where facilities are provided.			
B.4.1	Observe customer-accessible waste disposal facilities.	Verify whether waste segregation facilities are appropriately identified, accessible and appear to be used correctly.			
B.5.1	Observe customer-accessible areas during the visit.	Assess whether obvious air, water, noise or other environmental pollution affecting customer comfort is evident.			
B.6	Observe landscaped areas, gardens and outdoor customer spaces.	Assess whether landscaped areas are clean, safe, well maintained and contribute positively to the customer experience.			
B.7	Observe indoor customer areas throughout the visit.	Assess whether lighting, ventilation, temperature and general environmental comfort appear satisfactory.			

SECTION C – HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES

Objective

To assess the competence, professionalism, appearance and customer orientation of personnel interacting with customers during the Mystery Audit.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
C.2.1	Interact with customer-facing personnel where appropriate.	Assess whether personnel demonstrate confidence, competence and familiarity with their responsibilities while interacting with customers.			
C.3	Seek assistance or routine information from customer-facing personnel.	Assess whether personnel communicate courteously, professionally, helpfully and are able to respond appropriately to routine customer enquiries.			
C.4	Observe security and emergency response personnel during the visit.	Assess whether security and emergency personnel appear alert, appropriately deployed and capable of responding professionally to customer needs.			
C.5	Observe personnel throughout the customer journey.	Assess whether personnel wear appropriate uniforms or identification and are readily identifiable.			
C.5.1	Observe customer-facing personnel during interactions.	Assess whether personnel maintain appropriate grooming, hygiene and professional appearance consistent with the Shopping Centre's service standards.			
C.6	Request information relating to facilities,	Assess whether personnel provide accurate guidance and appropriate			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	amenities or services.	assistance to customers.			
C.6.1	Ask personnel about Shopping Centre facilities, amenities or emergency assistance.	Assess whether personnel demonstrate adequate knowledge and provide accurate customer guidance.			
C.7	Observe outsourced personnel such as housekeeping, parking attendants or security staff.	Assess whether outsourced personnel maintain service standards comparable to Shopping Centre personnel.			
C.7.1	Observe customer interactions involving outsourced personnel.	Assess whether outsourced personnel consistently provide courteous and professional customer service.			

I think **Trust 206** is actually a better numbering than Trust 205K.

The earlier documents (Trust 205A–J) are category-specific Mystery Audit Guidelines. This Shopping Centre document is much more comprehensive—it includes the Mystery Audit philosophy, methodology, competence requirements, reporting requirements and the clause-by-clause MA Guidelines. It therefore deserves to stand as a **separate manual** rather than another sub-document under Trust 205.

Let's continue accordingly.

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SECTION F – TERMS & CONDITIONS OF HOSTING

Objective

To assess whether customer-facing Terms & Conditions governing the use of Shopping Centre facilities, services and amenities are communicated clearly, applied consistently and promote customer confidence, fairness and transparency.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
F.1	Observe customer-facing notices, signboards, digital platforms and information displays relating to the use of Shopping Centre facilities and services.	Assess whether applicable Terms & Conditions are communicated clearly and are readily available to customers where necessary.			
F.3	Observe customer-facing restrictions displayed throughout the Shopping Centre.	Assess whether restrictions relating to customer safety, prohibited activities or operational requirements are clearly displayed and easy to understand.			
F.4	Compare displayed operating hours with the actual operating status of the Shopping Centre and customer facilities.	Assess whether operating hours are accurately displayed and consistent with actual operations.			
F.5	Observe customer facilities or services where charges are levied by the Shopping Centre.	Assess whether applicable charges are clearly communicated before customers use the facility or service.			
F.5.1	Where applicable, review customer-facing information relating to bookings, refunds, deposits or advance payments.	Assess whether applicable booking, refund, deposit or advance payment conditions are communicated before the transaction.			
F.6	Observe locations where customer personal information is collected through Shopping Centre-	Assess whether privacy notices or customer information relating to personal data			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	operated facilities or digital platforms.	collection are readily available, where applicable.			
F.7	Observe customer-facing practices while using Shopping Centre facilities and services.	Assess whether customer-facing Terms & Conditions appear to be applied fairly, consistently and without discrimination.			
F.7.1	Observe customer-facing communications relating to exclusions or limitations.	Assess whether significant exclusions, eligibility conditions or limitations are clearly communicated wherever applicable.			
F.8	Compare displayed Terms & Conditions with customer-facing information available during the visit.	Assess whether displayed Terms & Conditions appear current, consistent and reflect existing customer practices.			

SECTION G – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL INFORMATION

Objective

To assess whether customer-facing digital platforms, technology-enabled services and electronic information systems support a safe, convenient, reliable and seamless customer experience.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
G.1	Access the Shopping Centre's website, mobile application, digital	Assess whether customer information is accessible,			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	directory, kiosk or other customer-facing digital platforms, where available.	accurate and functioning correctly.			
G.2	Compare digital information with facilities and services available during the visit.	Assess whether digital information is accurate, current, complete, user-friendly and consistent with actual Shopping Centre operations.			
G.2.1	Review online information relating to retailers, facilities, events, promotions and operating hours.	Assess whether customer-facing digital information appears current and does not contain obvious inaccuracies or outdated information.			
G.3	Observe customer-facing digital platforms where personal information is collected.	Assess whether privacy notices or customer information relating to data protection are displayed where applicable.			
G.3.1	Where personal information is requested through customer-facing digital platforms, observe the customer journey.	Assess whether customer consent or privacy notifications are presented before personal information is collected, where applicable.			
G.4	Use available digital customer services such as Wi-Fi, kiosks, digital directories or Shopping Centre applications.	Assess whether digital customer services are functional, user-friendly and available during the visit.			
G.4.1	Observe the operational status of	Assess whether customer-facing			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	digital customer services throughout the visit.	digital services appear operational without prolonged interruptions.			
G.5	Where Shopping Centre-operated digital payment facilities are available, observe or use the service where practicable.	Assess whether digital payment facilities appear functional, convenient and reliable.			
G.5.1	Where digital payment facilities are temporarily unavailable, observe customer-facing communication.	Assess whether suitable alternative payment arrangements are communicated to customers, where applicable.			
G.6	Observe digital advertising displays, electronic signages and customer information screens.	Assess whether displayed information is relevant, legible, current and functioning correctly.			
G.6.1	Review customer-facing digital promotions, event information and temporary notices.	Assess whether expired promotions or outdated information have been removed or updated promptly.			

Continuing with the final two sections in the same format.

SECTION H – CENTRE SERVICES, CUSTOMER FEEDBACK & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Objective

To assess whether customer services, feedback mechanisms and dispute resolution arrangements are accessible, responsive and effective in enhancing customer satisfaction and confidence.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
H.1	Visit customer service facilities, help desks or information counters, where provided.	Assess whether customer service facilities are visible, accessible and capable of providing effective customer assistance.			
H.1.1	Visit customer service counters during normal operating hours.	Assess whether customer service facilities are adequately staffed and available to customers during the visit.			
H.2	Enquire about providing feedback, lodging a complaint or seeking customer assistance.	Assess whether customers can easily submit feedback or complaints and whether customer service personnel respond courteously and professionally.			
H.3	Raise a routine enquiry or simulated customer concern, where appropriate.	Assess whether customer concerns are acknowledged professionally and handled fairly and courteously.			
H.3.1	Where immediate resolution is not possible, enquire about the next steps.	Assess whether customers are informed of the expected complaint resolution process or indicative timeframe, where applicable.			
H.5	Locate customer feedback and complaint channels during the visit.	Assess whether customer assistance, feedback and complaint information is readily available and easy to access.			
H.5.1	Attempt to access customer feedback through available physical or digital channels.	Assess whether customer feedback channels are clearly identified, easily accessible and convenient to use.			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
H.6	Interact with customer service personnel by requesting assistance or information.	Assess whether customer service personnel are courteous, professional, knowledgeable and helpful.			
H.6.1	Request information regarding Shopping Centre facilities, tenant locations, customer amenities or emergency assistance.	Assess whether customer service personnel provide accurate, confident and helpful guidance.			
H.7	Where appropriate, enquire about the Shopping Centre's process for handling customer disputes.	Assess whether customer concerns appear to be handled fairly, professionally and without unnecessary delay.			
H.8	Where loyalty or privilege programmes are operated, review customer-facing programme information.	Assess whether programme information is readily available and communicated clearly to customers.			
H.8.1	Review customer-facing information relating to loyalty, membership or privilege programmes.	Assess whether programme benefits, eligibility, validity and redemption conditions are clearly communicated before enrolment or participation.			

SECTION I – SAFETY & SECURITY

Objective

To assess whether the Shopping Centre provides a safe, secure and customer-friendly environment through effective implementation of visible safety, security and emergency preparedness measures.

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
I.1	Observe customer-accessible areas throughout the visit.	Assess whether obvious safety or security hazards that may affect customers are absent.			
I.2	Observe security arrangements at entrances, common areas and customer facilities.	Assess whether security personnel are visible, alert, professional and contribute to a safe and reassuring customer environment.			
I.2.1	Approach security personnel with a routine customer enquiry.	Assess whether security personnel are readily identifiable, approachable and capable of providing appropriate basic customer assistance.			
I.3	Observe access to restricted or hazardous areas.	Assess whether restricted or hazardous areas are appropriately secured, controlled and clearly identified.			
I.4	Observe visible fire detection, fire protection and emergency equipment.	Assess whether fire safety equipment appears accessible, identifiable, unobstructed and in serviceable condition.			
I.5	Walk through customer	Assess whether emergency exits,			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	circulation areas, emergency exits and evacuation routes.	escape routes and assembly areas are clearly identified and free from obstruction.			
I.5.1	Observe temporary obstructions, maintenance work or restricted customer circulation areas.	Assess whether temporary obstructions are appropriately controlled, identified and do not compromise customer safety.			
I.6	Observe customer-accessible first aid facilities or emergency assistance information, where provided.	Assess whether emergency assistance information is readily identifiable and accessible to customers.			
I.6.1	Observe customer-facing emergency contact information displayed throughout the Shopping Centre.	Assess whether emergency contact details or emergency assistance information are readily available where applicable.			
I.7	Observe visible surveillance and monitoring arrangements.	Assess whether surveillance systems appear operational and contribute to customer safety and security.			
I.8	Observe housekeeping, maintenance and general safety conditions throughout the customer journey.	Assess whether overall safety conditions support a clean, safe and well-maintained customer environment.			
I.9	Observe customer-facing emergency information and	Assess whether emergency information and assistance arrangements are			

Clause	Mystery Audit Method	Mystery Audit Guideline	Conformity (Yes/No/NA)	Objective Evidence	Remarks (Only if NC)
	assistance arrangements.	clearly communicated and readily available to customers.			
I.9.1	Where appropriate, seek basic emergency assistance or directions from Shopping Centre personnel.	Assess whether personnel demonstrate awareness of their responsibilities and provide appropriate guidance during emergency-related enquiries.			

Annexure A – Examples of Objective Evidence

Examples may include:

- Customer observations
- Photographs (where permitted)
- Screenshots of digital information
- Time-stamped observations
- Customer interaction notes
- Signage observations
- Public announcements
- Digital displays
- Customer service responses
- Other customer-visible evidence

Annexure B – Guidance for Recording Nonconformities

Include guidance such as:

- Record only objective facts.
- Do not record assumptions or opinions.
- Describe what was observed, not what should have been done.
- Support each nonconformity with objective evidence.
- Where possible, identify the exact location and time of observation.
- Record one nonconformity per observation to facilitate effective corrective action.