

BIG STORY  
AHMED AR BINDAWOOD

MIDDLE EAST  
RETAIL FORUM 2020

FOCUS  
PATRICK CHALHOUB

E-COMMERCE  
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# IMAGES RetailMEE

Future of Businesses

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December 2020



LOOKING AHEAD

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## Cover Flipping the funnel

It's not convenience versus experience anymore. Stores are increasingly becoming a stage and media, making customers the audience for everything that a brand has to showcase. But who is doing it right?



## Vegan The moneymaking greens

Consumers have begun the vegan revolution, but are retailers keeping up? elGrocer speaks about how they are capitalising on this lifestyle trend.



## Maison Clad Retail in a hotel

Coralie Francois brings European fashion to Dubai's hotel arcades to give her customers a personalised, cosy and warm shopping experience - without the parking woes.

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## Up and close Patrick Chalhou

Luxury retail leader Patrick Chalhou of Chalhou Group speaks candidly about the current crisis, tech pivot, and placing people over processes during the pandemic.

Dear reader

## Will future stores become retail theatres?

The traditional concept of a store changed a long, long time ago. The advent of e-commerce has given a new flip to the already challenged stores with the handset savvy customers deserting them for digital convenience.

Retail design and branding agencies are working overtime to transform retail spaces to promote the idea of the store as not just a space to buy and sell goods, but a place for shoppers to have memorable experiences.

“Stores of the future will move from being static places of buying to living, working environments and ecosystems. Retailers need to think of themselves as a host or a curator. If I think of a food retailer, customers already expect them to be a specialist and an expert,” says Interstore creative director Nathan Watts.

If retailers are essentially entertainers, then retail spaces will have to be media for brand experiences and stories. It could be a visual magazine or a radio channel and a marketing portal. Such space can create a powerful, and emotionally galvanising experience, to create an essential level brand affinity, trust and allegiance.

The store spaces may be smaller, the footfall will be lesser, but the impact of the store is going to be much higher. An Epson commissioned survey reveals that 92% of respondents in the UAE indicated they would change their shopping behaviour if more shopping destinations had an experiential element, rising to 94% of Generation Z and 93% of Millennials. The study also shows that such experiences in retail stores would attract increased spending. About 24% of UAE consumers say they would shop in a new store if it offered an experiential element.

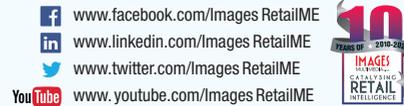
Watts says that retailers will need to think faster about how to attract new audiences and increase frequency. They will need to establish their own new paradigms to engage and remain relevant.

Even the rules of customer acquisition are changing. Earlier retailers may have spent considerable amounts to bring customers into their store. Future stores with live performances could have customers paying to experience what it has to offer.

Watch out for the January 2021 edition, a collector's piece, with the post-show reports on MRF 2020 and RetailME Awards.

*Lawrence Pinto*

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# THE MONEYSMAKING GREENS

## Uncovering the Middle East's vegan revolution

Story: Shruthi Nair

Today's on-demand streaming services are ripe with docu-series and explainer videos on the vegan revolution that is happening globally. When Kip Andersen's *Cowspiracy* came out in 2014, it did not just shock the world of the environmental impact of animal agriculture, but it started various mainstream conversations around livestock rearing. With more of these dialogues taking place in the media in the last decade, more people are adopting the vegan and plant-based lifestyle.

According to calculations, as of September 2020, there are approximately 78 million vegans in the world. As a result, there has been a progressive spike in demand for vegan products - from food items to cosmetics, and even clothing labels.

Vegan products are fast filling up and flying off the shelves of major department stores. For example, Waitrose in the UK reported that vegan and veggie barbecue food sales soared by 80% this year. Back in 2018, they had launched vegan sections in

More than **5%**  
of Israel's population  
claims to be vegan.

more than 130 stores after increasing its vegan and vegetarian product range by 60%. Tesco, the UK's largest supermarket, recently committed to boosting sales of meat alternatives by 300% within five years by 2025.