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September 2021

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Chairman & Editor-in-Chief

Amitabh Taneja
amitabhtaneja@imagesgroup.in

Chief Operating Officer

Justina Eitzinger
justina@imagesretailme.com

EDITORIAL

Executive Editor

Shruthi Nair
shruthi@imagesretailme.com

SALES & MARKETING

Sales Manager

David Vijay
davidvijay@imagesretailme.com

Marketing Manager

Frankline D' Cruz
partnerships@imagesretailme.com

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Graphic Designer

Satish Thapa
satish@imagesretailme.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Michelle Buendia
subscriptions@imagesretailme.com

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

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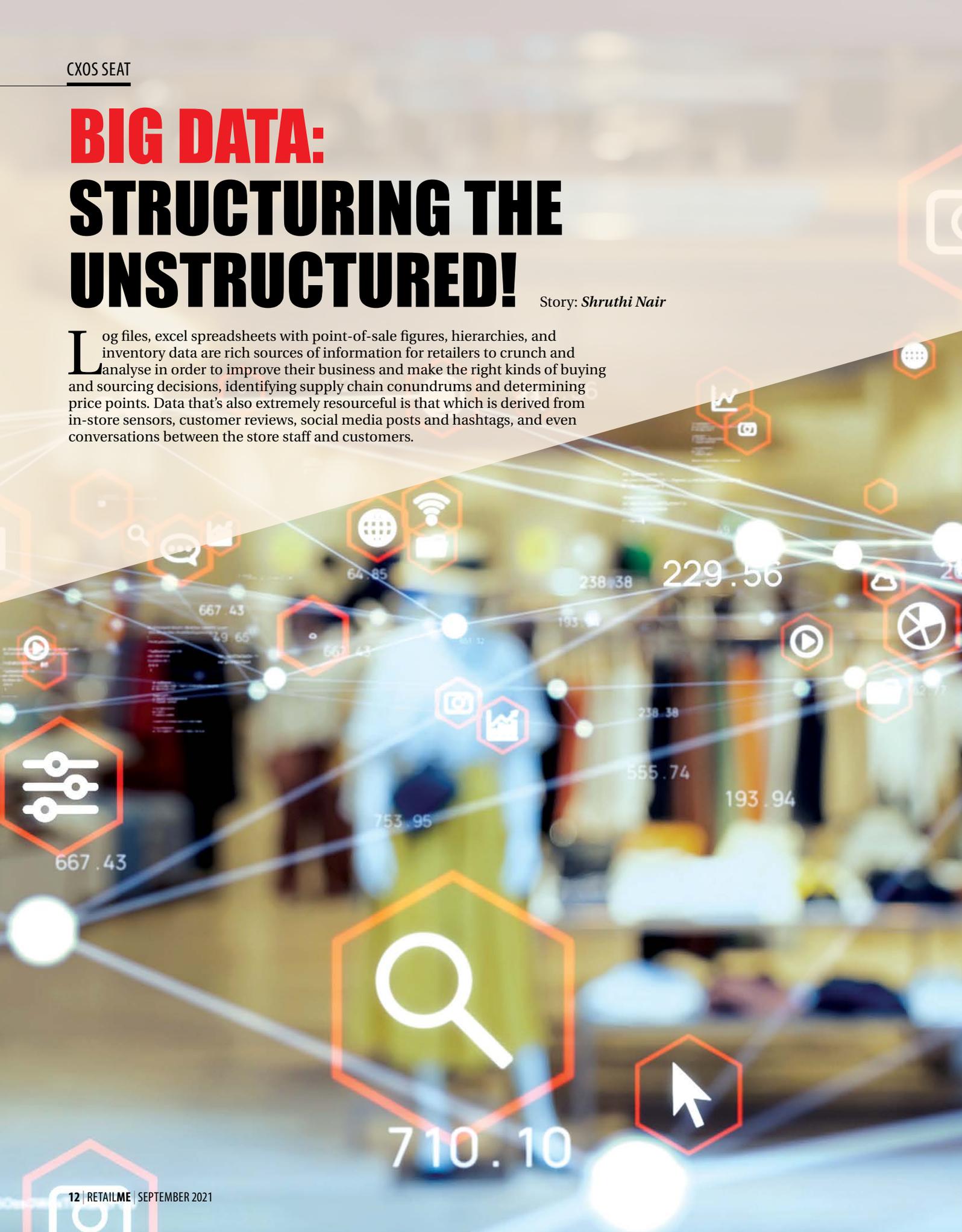
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BIG DATA: STRUCTURING THE UNSTRUCTURED!

Story: *Shruthi Nair*

Log files, excel spreadsheets with point-of-sale figures, hierarchies, and inventory data are rich sources of information for retailers to crunch and analyse in order to improve their business and make the right kinds of buying and sourcing decisions, identifying supply chain conundrums and determining price points. Data that's also extremely resourceful is that which is derived from in-store sensors, customer reviews, social media posts and hashtags, and even conversations between the store staff and customers.



DAMAC HILLS



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NOT EVERY COMPANY NEEDS TO BE A DATA COMPANY

Story: *Shruthi Nair*

Retailers today are seen to be taking pride in calling themselves a data or technology companies irrespective of the vertical they represent. From F&B brands like Starbucks to luxury retailers like Louis Vuitton, most companies today have been aggressively acquiring, accessing and using data to push their business forward. In fact, LVMH recently announced a partnership with Google Cloud to leverage the latter's artificial intelligence capabilities in order to provide its own wealthy customers a more personalised experience when they shop online.

According to Mordor Intelligence, big data analytics in the retail market was estimated at \$4.18 billion in 2020. This market is expected to reach USD 13.26 billion by the end of 2026, registering a CAGR of 21.20% during the forecast period of 2021-2026. This isn't surprising at all considering the different scopes and potentials of using data with the help of all the analytical tools retailers have at their disposal today.

With the hype around big data, it is easy to blindly jump on the bandwagon of being data-centric/data-driven/data-led, but are retailers really asking if that's what their customers want, and if that's what their business is about?





CUSTOMER LOYALTY THROUGH HYPER-PERSONALISATION

Words by Alasdair Kilgour, Strategic Partnerships CEEMEA at Tealium

While it might be tempting to consider that the boom in online shopping – enforced through Covid-19 restrictions – may wane significantly now that stores are opening its doors once again, I believe, there's instead a trend where both will flourish. This brings huge opportunities to retailers (and their holding companies), in the Middle East.

Undoubtedly, a regional mainstay of 'destination' shopping offline will return, but it won't be at the expense of online shopping, as habits born during the pandemic will remain in place. Instead, a combination of both digital and physical will bring a fresh opportunity to create a more detailed understanding of each shopper.

In doing so, holding companies can drive multi-brand loyalty through connecting the dots across multiple touchpoints of the customer journey. Walled gardens will be broken down, enabling retailers to better understand the buyers in different contexts, predict behaviours across their customer base, and anticipate upcoming changes.

Most importantly, it will allow retailers to achieve the level of personalisation that can start to mirror the 1:1 customer understanding that exists (and fosters the passion for) in-store. This will allow brands to underpin long-term loyalty, through hyper-personalisation developed from 360-degree customer understanding.

Fundamental to this success is the integration of a Customer Data Platform (CDP) such as Tealium's AudienceStream, which is capable of handling people's data across different brands, providing significant returns in the long run. The built-in Predict Machine Learning subsequently enables marketers to quickly unlock machine learning insights and turn these to their advantage when planning marketing programs.

Ultimately, the winners will be the retailers who best analyse, manage and implement insights from the data they collect from their customers, which will keep

INSIDE THE MIDDLE EAST'S RISING **D2C** REVOLUTION

Story: *Shruthi Nair*



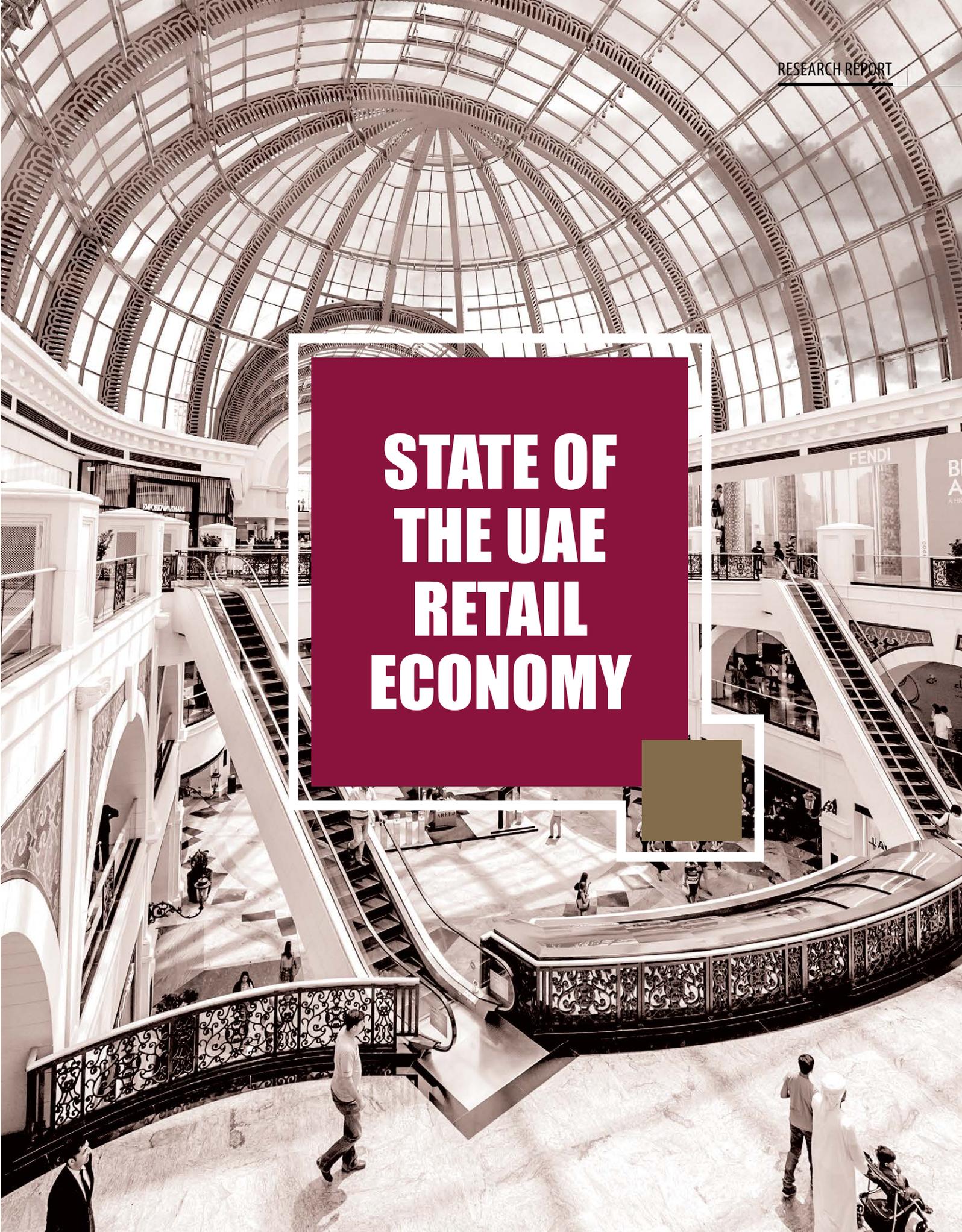
Direct-to-Consumer (D2C), Digitally Native Vertical Brands (DNVB), and brand.com serve as different variations of a similar concept that has blown up in the past few years fueled by factors ranging from a surge in online shopping, stay-at-home restrictions, costs and a general shift in consumer behaviour.

D2C sales were forecasted to account for \$17.75 billion of total e-commerce sales in 2020, up 24.3% from the previous year. While the Middle East might have been late in joining the party but the key players from across the board including brands that sold the traditional way via wholesalers and retailers or those that use online marketplaces such as Amazon and Noon, and the new

brands entering this nascent market today are all realizing the potentials of communicating with and selling to customers directly.

The Middle East has one of the highest youth population in the world with more than 28% of the residents aged between 14 and 29. This means that a great chunk of the population are inherently digital natives, who grew up with smartphones. These young tech-savvy consumers are more informed, are massively influenced by social media for their purchases, and are more value and purpose driven compared to the older generations, as a result of which are open to experimenting with newer brands that align with their ideas and ideologies.





STATE OF THE UAE RETAIL ECONOMY

IMAGES

RetailME ICONS

*The 100 most powerful retail leaders
of the MENA region*

RetailME ICONS 2021, a gala awards night where the legends, pioneers, visionaries, disruptors, and trailblazers of the MENA region's retail industry were felicitated for their contributions and achievements, was held at the JW Marriott Marquis on August 4th.

The biggest names of the retail industry were in attendance during the event, which saw about 200 fully vaccinated retailers, real estate developers, technology companies, government officials and other key stakeholders come together to honour those responsible for shaping one of the most important industries for the region's economy.

The event also marked the revelation of the MENA region's first-ever retail power list, where the top 100 leaders from the industry were recognized in the special edition of the magazine. The aim of putting this list together and revealing it in the presence of some of the most coveted names in the industry was not just to let the world know who the top retail leaders in the region are, but also to encourage them to continue putting their best foot forward to strengthen and grow MENA's retail ecosystem.





Justina Eitzinger



Puneet Mishra, Pranav Shankar and Mohammad Saad



Emilio Pera, Anurag Bajpai and Fahad Kazim



Sahil Dewan, Bhupinder Singh, Hanley Thomas



Justina Eitzinger, Amit Puri and Anisha Oberoi



Imad Bukhari and Anoud Bukhari



Khalid Al Tayer and Joy Alukkas



Sameera Sajan and Justina Eitzinger



Nawaf Al Ahmed, Zaid Alqufai and Mansoor Al Kaabi



George Kunnappally and Mita Sagar