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November 2021



UNVEILING TOMORROW'S RETAIL EXPERIENCES

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UNVEILING TOMORROW'S RETAIL EXPERIENCES

Cover Story:

Unveiling Tomorrow's Retail Experiences

Forecasting the future is perhaps one of the most crucial skills today. In this edition's cover story, we take a look at how the region's retailers have been incorporating futuristic experiences in the 4 key Ps of retail - People, Product, Process, and Purpose.



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Big Story:

Keeping up with the Holiday Season

How are retailers and e-tailers preparing for the holiday season surges? For Amazon, White Friday 2021 actually marks the beginning of the preparation for White Friday 2022. We take a look at Amazon's operations and preparations ahead of its busiest and most crucial time of the year.



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MRF 2021:

Middle East Retail Forum 2021

In this year's Middle East Retail Forum, we bring the region's trailblazers together to unravel the future of retail experiences and construct a cohesive plan of action by means of panel discussions, research revelations, and global expert keynotes. Find the agenda, RetailME Award nominees and more inside.

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KEEPING UP WITH THE *HOLIDAY SEASON*

Story: *Shruthi Nair*

It's almost that time of the year when people all over the world are beginning to feel the festive energy, preparing for friends and family to get together, exchange gifts, and celebrate the season of joy and lights. While people can be seen spending hours scrolling on different e-commerce sites picking and choosing the right products they want for the different festivities they have planned (clothes, decorations, gifts etc), there is a whole other world on the other side of the mobile screens (metaphorically) racing against time to both capitalise on the increased demands of the holiday season as well as facilitate smooth shopping journeys during what is expected to be the busiest time of the year.

According to a recent Deloitte report, holiday retail sales are likely to increase between 7% and 9% in 2021. Deloitte's retail and distribution practice projects that holiday sales will total \$1.28 to \$1.3 trillion during the November to January timeframe. It also forecasts that e-commerce sales will grow by 11%-15%, year-over-year, during the 2021-2022 holiday season. This will likely result in e-commerce holiday sales reaching between \$210 billion and \$218 billion this season.

In the Middle East, most e-tailers have enticing sales and promotions running from November onwards including the 11.11 Singles Days sales, White/Yellow/Red/Black Fridays, White/Black Novembers, Cyber Mondays and so on. While the colours and days might change depending on the brands and what it represents, the idea and crux remains the same – using deals, discounts and big baskets to get bargain-hungry consumers to buy more during the peak season.

While the concept originated in America, the phenomenon has gone global over the past few years and has found significant engagement in the Middle East. For instance, in a 2019 global survey, 45% of Saudis announced their intention to participate in Black Friday that year, spending an average of SAR 899 (US\$ 240).



BE THE GAME-CHANGER

How the gaming world is revolutionizing the retail space

Story: Zubina Ahmed

Shoppers running on a treadmill in a fantasy land, controlling an avatar of themselves and becoming the heroes of a game. Welcome to 'Reactland', an immersive video game experience installed in Nike stores around China where people could try out the new bouncy Nike shoes through a real-time video game. The experience is simple: scan yourself to create your avatar, put on a pair of Nike React shoes, jump on the treadmill and use a handheld button to navigate. The further you run, the higher you make it on the leaderboard. Campaigns like Reactland boldly challenge traditional shopping by turning a game into a real-life store.



TOGETHER FOREVER

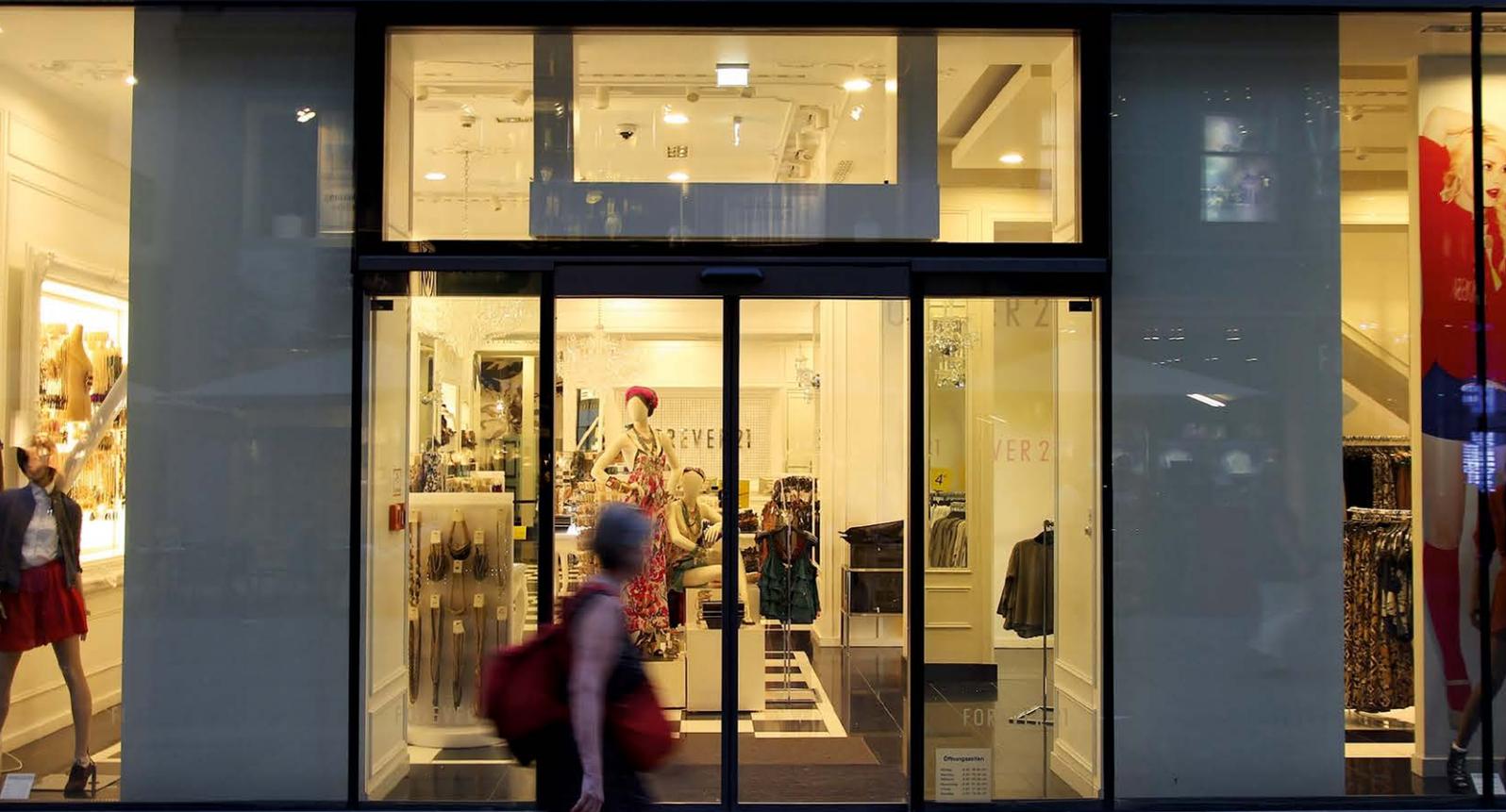
Story: *Shruthi Nair*

Authentic Brands Group recently signed a long-term licensing agreement with Sharaf Group for Forever 21, a brand that was seen to be struggling to stay afloat globally. How will this new partnership rejuvenate the beloved brand and what does it entail for customer experience in the Middle East?

What's common between Juicy Couture, Nautica, and Aeropostale? Apart from the fact that they are some of the strongest retail brands in the world, they have all had a 'rise, fall, and rise again' journey. Another common factor

for these brands is that its 'rise again' era was, in a way, steered by the behemoth firm, that is Authentic Brands Group, a brand development company headquartered in New York, responsible for over 30 consumer brands and properties by partnering with best-in-class manufacturers and retailers. Its brands have a global retail footprint across luxury, specialty, department store, mid-tier, mass and e-commerce channels and in more than 6,300 freestanding stores and shop-in-shops around the world.

FOREVER 21



BAKING A FUTURE

The story behind Belgian bakery chain Le Pain Quotidien

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

“It sounds like this, Luh Pan Koh-ti-dyan and means ‘the daily bread’, don’t be shy, it takes some practice”, Alain Coumont quipped. A Belgian chef and restaurateur, Alain is the founder of Le Pain Quotidien, an international chain of bakery restaurants known for its freshly prepared organic bread, baked goods, salads, sand-wiches and beverages. Alain flew in from New York and was in Dubai to celebrate Le Pain Quotidien’s 30 years in the bakery retail business.



HOW CAN BEAUTY BRANDS STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

Waste has been detrimental to the planet for years. The recent 26th UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP26 held in Glasgow from 31st October to 12th November had leaders, activists and delegates reflect on how to tackle climate change, reduce waste and enhance sustainability. At one of the events in COP26, the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action set out new targets to introduce sustainability measures faster in response to the climate crisis. Just like the fashion industry, the beauty and cosmetics sector also needs to embrace sustainability by creating products made out of eco-friendly and natural ingredients.





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