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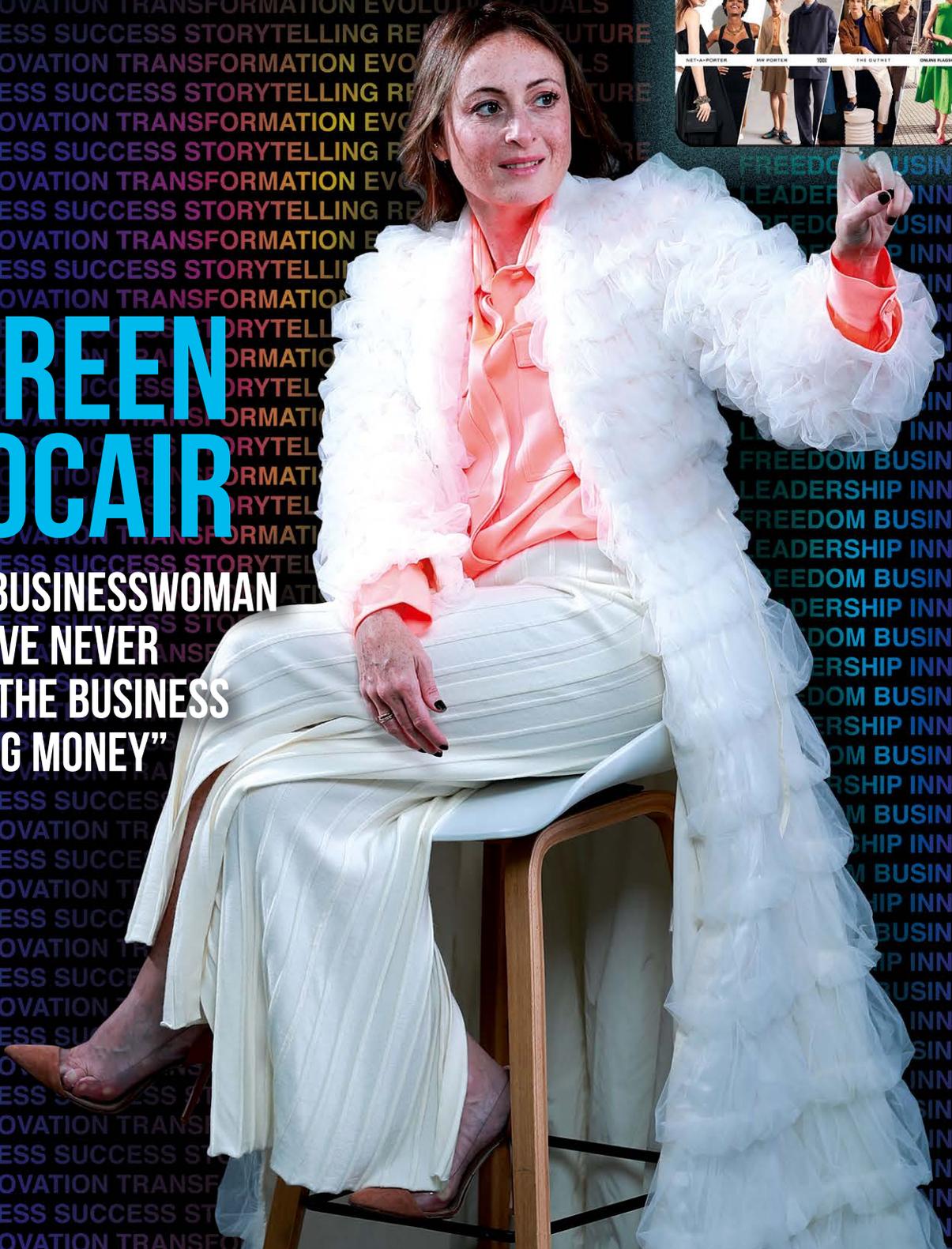
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March 2022



NISREEN SHOCAIR

**"I AM A BUSINESSWOMAN
AND I HAVE NEVER
BEEN IN THE BUSINESS
OF LOSING MONEY"**





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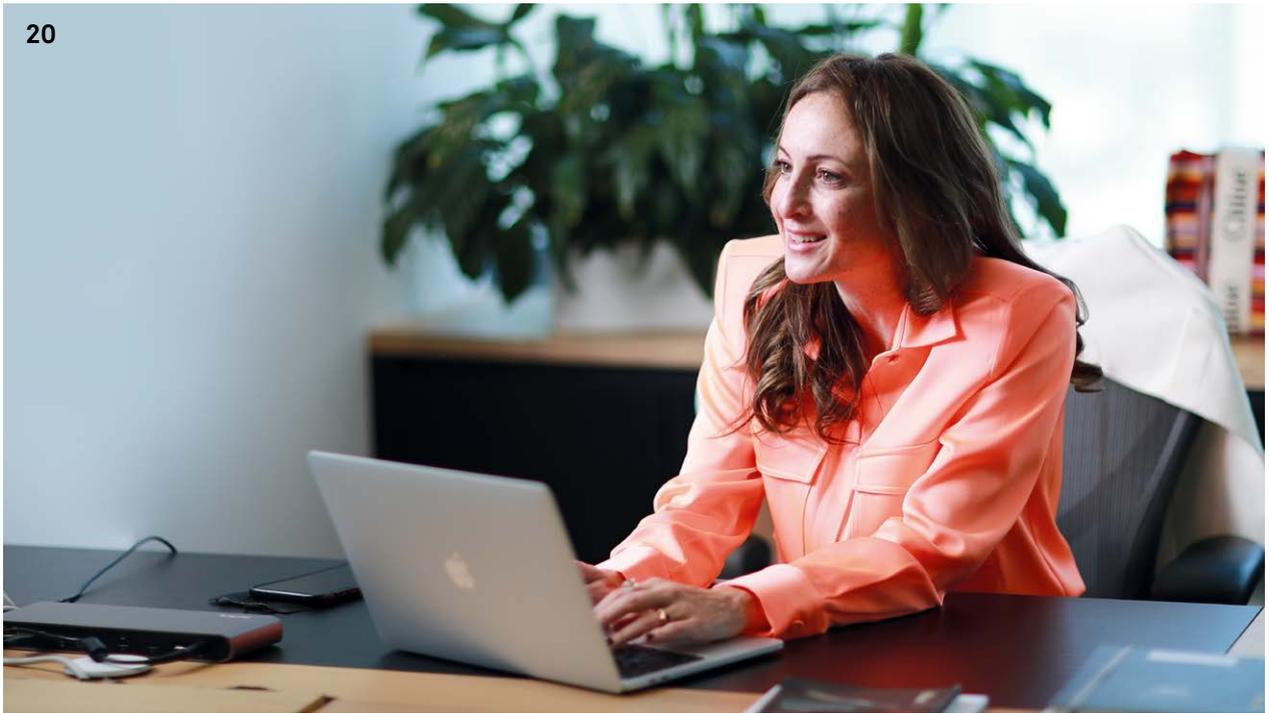
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COVER STORY:

Empowering Women In Technology, Retail, and Workforce

Nisreen Shocair, CEO of YOOX NET-A-PORTER Middle East walks her through her retail journey, sheds light on how she thinks women can navigate the Middle management dropouts and secure a space in the C-suite, and deep dives into YNAP's plans for the region in this exclusive cover story.

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F&B:

Sunset rises in the Middle East and West

UAE-based Sunset Hospitality Group (SHG), which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, has been sortieing into different verticals of the hospitality circle. CEO Antonio Gonzalez walks us through the group's diversification and expansion plans.

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FASHION:

The AI Armoury

Under Armour's largest store located in Dubai Mall highlights its commitment to providing the best products and shopping experiences to athletes by providing consumers with an elevated tech-infused fun shopping experience. But how is AI enhancing the overall retail experience for shoppers within the store?

SUNSET RISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND WEST

Story: *Shruthi Nair*

Diversification feeds Sunset Hospitality Group's global growth and expansion

It isn't new for hotels to diversify into opening their own chains of restaurants under various brand names, both within its properties and otherwise. Radisson, Marriott International, and Accor are just some of the hospitality giants that have forayed into the food service space and have massively reaped benefits out of it. Now, it is a whole other conversation of how hotel restaurants have been finding more success by standing alone. But, the fact of the matter is that hotels have realised that diversification may be the only way to not just find success, but – as seen during the pandemic – the only way to survive.

Speaking of diversification, UAE-based Sunset Hospitality Group (SHG), which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, has been sortieing into different verticals of the hospitality circle. What makes them unique, however, is that the group started with restaurants and slowly started expanding into lounges, beach clubs, and now hotels.

Renowned for curating contemporary hospitality experiences around the world, SHG is solidifying its presence in the Middle East and Europe by entering strategic markets like Spain and Greece and increasing its portfolio to over 50 operating venues, and extending footprints to 14 countries by the end of the year.

“There are two decisions we took to define the strategy for our business. One was to diversify geographically and by segments. The other decision was to be focussed on providing experiences. We took a conscious decision to stay away from anything that is transactional i.e QSR, deliveries etc,” said Antonio Gonzalez, CEO of SHG.

“We are going to see a big drive in the hotel business and service apartments. We aim to grow that segment exponentially and close that circle, because then we will be in all the key categories we want to be in. Our approach is fresh, as we come from F&B and then expanded into hotels etc. Usually hospitality groups





GRAND FINALE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SHOW

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

Expo 2020 lived up to its theme of “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future”

As Expo 2020 Dubai draws to a close this month, visitors from across the world have joined the making of a new world in a six-month celebration of human creativity, innovation, progress and culture. Through thoughtfully designed visual arts, sound effects, music, food, avant-garde architecture, heritage, culture and modern technologies visitors at the Expo 2020 Dubai experienced the best in the last five months. As hosts, the UAE offered the very essence of Arab hospitality, first by dedicating a pavilion to every participating nation, each with its own story—past, present and future. As a huge world trade fair it was home to more than 200 pavilions, including 192 belonging to participating countries despite an economic downturn the world has seen in the last two years. Dubai has made a powerful statement in its own right. And the time has come, as

this global stage will close its doors on March 31 after an impressive six-month run of activations, crowd-pulling concerts, guest appearances and memorable daily performances, all of which will expect to have high visitation. With less than 30 days to

go, scores of people have realised it's now or never until it's gone forever, with domestic visits increasing by 128 per cent in the past six weeks, and international visitation up 19 per cent, primarily thanks to the popularity of the new AED 50 Season Finale Pass.



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*The 50 most powerful
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OWNDAYS: A JOURNEY FROM JAPAN TO DUBAI

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

Transparency Market Research (TMR) has released a report that reveals the eyewear market in the Middle East is expanding at a CAGR of 8.8, where the opportunities in the regional market are expected to reach US\$5.86 billion by the end 2023. “The Middle East eyewear market is driven mainly by the rising count of consumers who need vision correction. People are not only price sensitive, but are also quality conscious and we meet that demand to ensure that a happy customer walks out of our doors, to

come back again. This kind of D2C brand is very rare in the market,” said Take Umiyama, the COO of OWNDAYS, one of the largest players in the fashion eyewear space from Japan. OWNDAYS recently launched its first store in Dubai Mall last month. Currently, the company has a global presence of 350 stores spread across 12 countries including Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and Cambodia.

Speaking on the launch, Také Umiyama said, “We now have more than 250 store outside of Japan. What sets OWNDAYS apart is that it has a wide stock of lens options and uses state-of-the-art machines operated by skilled and reliable opticians so customers can get their eyeglasses in as fast as 20 minutes. We are excited for our new store launched in Dubai Mall through which we will continue to provide a unique footprint for our customers in the region.”

UNDER ARMOUR



THE AI ARMOURY

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

How AI technology can boost the retail experience

Retail is on the brink of a new era defined, once again, by technological advancement. In a matter of years, today's futuristic technologies will become commonplace, with artificial intelligence transforming both back-end operations and the day-to-day customer experience in unfathomable ways. Foreshadowing retail's digital revolution, the industry's spending on artificial intelligence is estimated to grow to \$7.3 billion per year by 2022, up from an estimated \$2 billion in 2018. Most retailers are concentrating on the competitive advantages offered by embracing AI to automate time-consuming, routine tasks and increase operational efficiency. A recent report found 74% of the AI/machine learning technology used in retail targets back-end operations, while only 26% directly interacts with customers. Yet, according to IBM, intelligent automation has the greatest impact in retail when focused on improving the customer experience.

As retailers decide where to allocate their upcoming tech investments, they should consider the value of AI — not only in

automating back-office tasks for increased operational efficiency, but in personalising and simplifying the shopping experience of each individual consumer.

Under Armour's largest store located in Dubai Mall highlights its commitment to providing the best products and shopping experiences to athletes by providing consumers with an elevated tech-infused fun shopping experience. Founded in 1996 by former University of Maryland football

player Kevin Plank, Under Armour is the originator of performance apparel — gear engineered to keep athletes cool, dry and light throughout the course of a game, practice or workout. Today, the Baltimore-based company has become a \$1 billion brand by selling athletic wear and sports equipment to consumers. With \$5.3 billion (recheck figures) in global sales in 2019, Under Armour is ranked as the fourth leading athletic apparel, accessories, and footwear company.





A TRANSFORMATION LED BY CUSTOMISATION

Story: *Zubina Ahmed*

Custom making furniture is the next big trend for renovating, redesigning, and refreshing spaces to give it an aesthetic appeal. Be it timeless dining chairs, fancy upholstery, sophisticated sofa, lounge chair, monochrome or bright tones, classic or modern design, the appeal of custom, made-to-order furniture and decor has increased significantly.

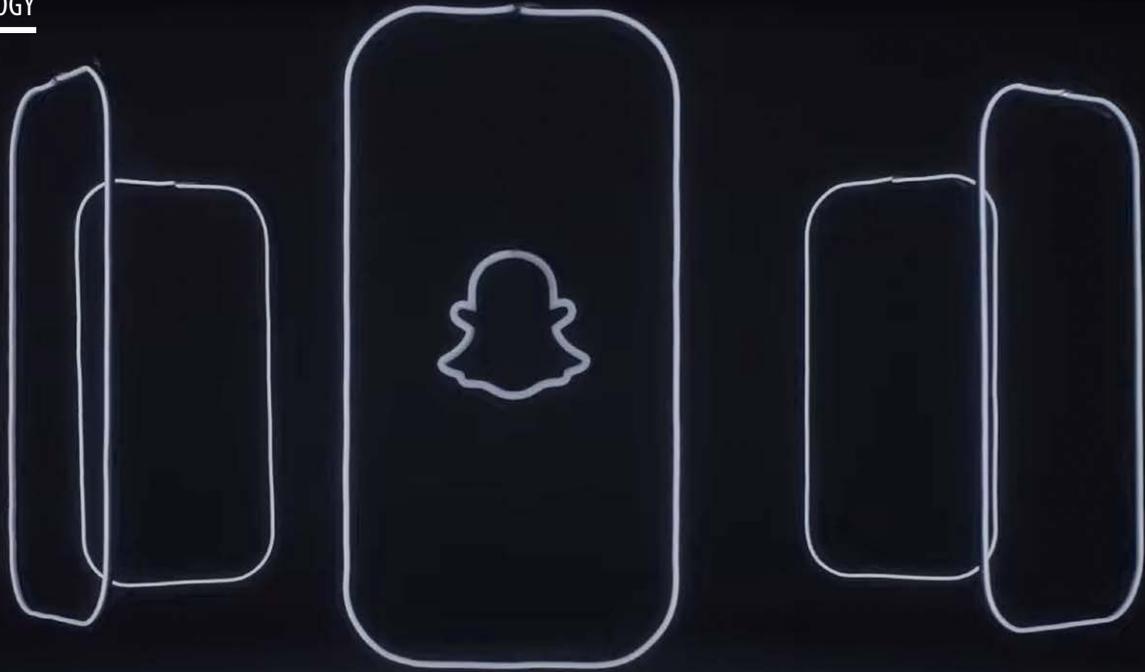
Royal Furniture, which has had a presence in the UAE for 30 years, has been offering a diverse portfolio of high-end furniture designs and its own manufacturing units. With a wide range of sofa sets, beds, and mattress design, they offer customisable

furniture in a variety of ways. “Customers can work with experts at Royal Furniture to select fabrics and their required sizes to create a unique piece of furniture. All the products are made with excellent craftsmanship in the UAE with the guarantee of outstanding quality at affordable prices,” said Richard Snowball, General Manager at Royal Furniture.

The brand is expanding into home accessories such as soft furnishings, wall décor, curtains, lighting solutions, kitchen utilities, and tableware. “We have fifteen retail stores in the UAE and three export stores primarily for the African market. They’re not

retail stores as such - an agent brings different people from Africa who usually buy one or two containers worth of furniture to take back with them,” added Richard.

In today’s furniture market, consumers are looking for greater choice, flexibility, and the opportunity for their own design input. The way they shop for furniture has dramatically changed in recent years. “People’s minds are much broader when it comes to furniture selection. They are always looking for different types of selection. With a variety of fabrics, styles, and a range of sizes and configurations, Royal Furniture has



A SNAPSHOT OF AR IN LUXURY

How Luxury Brands use Snapchat to create immersive shopping experiences

Story: Zubina Ahmed

Gone are the days when augmented reality was only used by gamers or surgeons or as a gimmick at events. Today, its found its place in the lives of consumers across the board and luxury brands seem to be exploiting the technologies many potentials to communicate with reach its customers creatively and effectively. Brands like Dior, Chanel, Armani, Burberry and Gucci have used augmented reality to build immersive and unforgettable experiences for its consumers. Snap Inc recently held its first international summit dedicated to luxury called 'Crafted for Luxury' where it showed how the platform is able to help fashion and luxury brands convey their messages and stories to the audience in a creative and immersive way with excellent results.

"Snapchat is a camera-centric company - a camera that millions of people use every day for personal expression and increasingly for augmented reality. Snap and luxury brands create a deep and meaningful connection. We both believe in storytelling and building customised experiences. My job is to help luxury brands reach their audiences

on Snapchat and create amazing experiences that drive tangible results," said Geoffrey Perez - Global head luxury - Snapchat

Through its AR enabled services, Snapchat can help customers discover incredible products and virtual test experiences that are changing the way consumers interact with different brands, reducing friction and bringing products to life before their eyes.

"AR enhances the user experience and enriches the real world. We are driven by the need to discover new and exciting territories to explore and embracing the new. We are convinced that there are enormous opportunities to create new, immersive and tailor-made experiences. Therefore, we believe that Snapchat is designed for luxury," said Evan Spiegel, Co-founder and CEO, Snap Inc.



FUELLING DUBAI'S EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Story: *Shruthi Nair*

Visitors to Dubai have a massive checklist to tick off today with more and more new attractions and activities being brought to the buzzing entertainment and leisure space in Dubai. Among them include Ain Dubai, Wild Wadi Waterpark, Global Village, Souk Madinat Jumeirah, Al Seef, and Box Park to name a few.

Dubai Holding Asset Management's retail portfolio includes some of Dubai's most iconic destinations that have elevated the city's position as a global centre for tourism and leisure. It operates 20 leading urban retail destinations and has a wide-ranging footprint that spans 3.7 million sq.ft of gross leasable retail space across the city.



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