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Inflation vs SMEs | Majid Al Futtaim tackles supply chain conundrums

Exclusive interview with Subway's Global CEO | Retail Technology and Innovation



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Retailers around the world are under tremendous pressure due to supply chain constraints. The importance of efficient supply chain management can't be stressed enough especially when businesses are to operate in a world faced with geopolitical issues, rising costs, bottlenecks due to shipping congestion, global shortages. Many retailers have resorted to measures such as turning to experienced logistics operators, hiring the best chief supply chain officers and so on to mitigate the risks. Some steps that have proven to be useful in reducing the troubles include integrating retail systems, accounting for reverse logistics, and increasing accuracy of forecasting.

Majid Al Futtaim have been making strides in implementing advanced technologies within their supply chain to improve efficiency, exploring innovative fulfillment solutions, opting for local-for-local sourcing options when feasible, and adopting a responsible procurement policy in line with its ESG commitments.

Jean Luc Graziato, Chief Commercial Officer, Majid Al Futtaim – Retail discusses logistics and supply chain in an exclusive Q&A with Shruthi Nair



Navigating Supply Chain Conundrums

What are the key measures Majid Al Futtaim Retail undertook to tackle the supply chain and logistics challenges post-covid?

Since the arrival of the pandemic, food security has been one of the more challenging aspects of grocery retail, not only in the United Arab Emirates but worldwide. And although the global situation is adapting, the immediate outlook remains chaotic. Here at Majid Al Futtaim, we continuously seek new and innovative ways to manage the logistics and supply chain challenges we face and double down on our dedication to cost control to ensure that rising prices are not passed on to our customers. We do this by sourcing for multiple countries, mainly within the GCC, in our negotiations and direct farm sourcing from one country's operations



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Subway Hits Refresh

Story: Shruthi Nair

Anuclear physicist and a college freshman came together over 50 years ago to start what would become the world's largest restaurant brand. Over the years, the submarine sandwich brand has grown and expanded rapidly in the U.S. as well as the 100+ other countries it has a presence in, with the help of its many established franchise partners.

After seeing a healthy growth streak for decades, the brand's firm footing started wavering circa 2014 marked by declining sales, store closures, and a considerable amount of bad PR.

And then in 2019, former Burger King chief executive John Chidsey was hired to helm the operations of Subway, which was the first time the company hired someone outside the founder Fred DeLuca's family. John came in with a vision to "refresh" the brand, revamp operations and reimagine the business plan.

He made some loud and bold moves soon after taking over the role – firing hundreds of old staff and hiring new ones, consciously closing more stores, investing heavily in marketing campaigns and TV spots with celebrities, and raising startup investment costs for new franchises.

While rumours in the market have been ripe about Subway's deteriorating relationship with its franchise partners, even before John took over, the GCC (specifically Dubai) doesn't seem to be complaining.





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Aref Yehia, Head of Retail & E-Commerce Business Partnerships, Global Business Solutions, MENA - TikTok sheds light on how brands can embrace community commerce

Media Beyond Marketing



What role does TikTok play across the retail customer journey? At what stages of a shopping journey does the platform become most relevant?

When we think of the traditional steps of a shopping journey, we usually refer to a traditional marketing funnel that start with awareness moves to consideration and then ends with a conversion. What we are seeing today is that TikTok's customer journey is actually collapsing this funnel. The way our community engages is not a linear path to purchase, but is more like a flywheel. Everything starts with our community at the center, actively discovering and engaging with content that is relevant to them which is brought to them on the For You Page. They engage and co-create with brands that they find relevant to their community and take action in the moment. We find that this resonance leads to passionate community commerce, which brings the stages of discovery and purchase closer together. It is an evolution of product placement and an acceleration of word of mouth, and one of the best examples on it is the #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt community which has garnered over 22 billion views globally.



Words by Mark Thomson, Director, Retail Solutions, EMEA, Zebra Technologies



Avoid the Hidden Pitfalls of Giving “Deskless” Retail Workers Consumer Devices

According to a global survey published in July 2022, 37% of “deskless” workers could quit within the next six months. The survey, by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) included responses from 7,000 “deskless” workers in Australia, France, Germany, India, Japan, the UK, and the US. BCG defines “deskless” as employees who need to be physically present to do their jobs, which includes retail shop workers. In fact, retail and consumer service workers are at the highest risk (41%) of quitting.

There’s no silver bullet to solve this challenge, but employers can and should look to build a front-line first culture with leaders listening to and acting on worker views, says the survey. But being “deskless” shouldn’t mean being

“techless.” There are ways to bring the capacities and benefits of the “desk and laptop job” to the shop floor.

Retail associates need devices that are reliable, as they are the ones who must explain to customers why they can’t pull up product, pricing or shipment information in a split second when a consumer device is sluggish, offline due to a dead battery or accidental drop or struggling to connect to wireless networks or back-office systems.

In Zebra’s 14th Annual Global Shopper Study, 85% of retail associates worldwide said they feel they could provide a better customer experience if they had handheld mobile computers with built-in scanners to use on the job. Not smartphones, but enterprise-grade

handheld mobile computers. And nearly two-thirds of associates said the same of rugged tablets.

Retail associates aren’t the only ones who feel this way, either. Delivery drivers, merchandisers, and others constantly on the move want devices that can connect to any cellular or Wi-Fi network, support fast and accurate barcode scanning, and handle the bumps and bruises that devices experience when used all day, every day.

Consumer V Enterprise

VDC Research analysts have spent years studying the performance of consumer and enterprise rugged tablets in real-world settings. They want to make sure you know which ones have proven to perform better in certain scenarios so

Inflation versus SMEs

Inflation has been the biggest subject for both consumers and businesses alike, brought about by a range of political and economic factors, far beyond an individual's control. While IMF expects inflation to average 7.5% globally this year, the GCC states are faring far better with the forecast standing at 3.2% albeit up from the projection of 2.8%.

Now, while GCC inflation is expected to ease in the second half of 2022, inflationary headwinds will weigh on household consumption and the non-oil recovery into 2023.

Rent, food and transport comprise the majority of consumption in the GCC. There has been over a 20 per cent rise in fuel prices over the past few months, as motorists are staring at a double-digit increase following Russia's military aggression on Ukraine.

As the cost of doing business increases due to global price increase, the question then is whether local businesses are going to pass on these costs to customers or are they going to take it upon themselves.

"We have not yet increased the prices and are doing everything we can to manage the situation without passing on the increase in costs to our consumers. We understand that it is already tough for people to absorb the increased prices of petrol, groceries and so forth," said Erika Doyle, founder of Drink Dry, a non-alcoholic drinks marketplace based in the UAE.

Inflation is particularly hitting small and medium business hard. Data from MetLife and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce found that 85% of small-business owners surveyed expressed concern about inflation. And 1 in 3 listed inflation as their top business concern.

"Inflations and rising costs of living are making people think twice about spending on 'nice to have' items. Petrol, costs of schooling and property/rental prices are going up and therefore people are becoming more conscious



Words by Shehbaz Shaikh, Chief Retail Officer, REDTAG



Shehbaz Shaikh
Chief Retail Officer, REDTAG

Data to enable Unified Commerce

How retailers can deliver superior CX with unified data view and platform



Retail is unequivocally a service industry today. That is to say, even if you are a product-driven company, how you approach, engage and render a service — the customer experience (CX) you stand for — will ultimately determine your success. In recent years, heightened consumer awareness, evolved expectations and rapid digitalization have reshaped the contours of CX. Customer experience is no longer an unquantifiable holy grail that you chase after; it now accompanies robust KPIs and data-driven strategies. How are forward-thinking retailers assimilating into this reality?

If customer-centricity is the determinant of retail success, then understanding the customers takes precedence. That is where data comes in.

Thanks to high internet penetration in the Middle East, there is a deluge of data at your disposal. So, the question is, how do you harness the full potential of data? If you are operating with siloed legacy systems, under-equipped to integrate, cleanse and label data, you need to start from scratch.

So, from the get-go, you need a comprehensive strategy and pertinent technologies to maximize the potential of data. The first order of business is creating a cloud-enabled data lake by consolidating information from across channels, devices, and departments. In a recent survey, siloed data was found to be the primary roadblock to good CX. Around 57% of respondents said their customer data is not unified in a single customer view (SCV).

Single customer view: Making sense of data

By definition, SCV — also called unified customer view — is an integrated and holistic representation of customer data possessed by an organization. It enables decision-makers to view the customer data in one place, get a comprehensive understanding of purchase behaviours and leverage it to personalize messaging and engagement.

As opposed to a system where the data on a customer's previous brand interactions lie in isolation across departments, SCV characterizes unification across all channels and devices. Following data integration, brands have the opportunity to cleanse it and segment it for future use. For example, if a customer started the



How Retailers Can Succeed at Omnichannel

Words by *Stéphane Pignard* General Manager, Altavant

The dramatic rise in e-commerce has challenged the position of traditional retailers. Consumers now willingly embrace the digital experience, offering more convenience and comfort. As per Harvard Business Review, about 73% of consumers prefer shopping through different channels, and such omnichannel customers can offer a 30% higher lifetime value.

Let's understand the importance of omnichannel presence for retailers today and explore how these businesses can efficiently implement a successful omnichannel strategy.

Omnichannel is a multichannel sales approach aiming to fulfill customer needs at every touchpoint. Retail channels can be traditional brick-and-mortar stores, websites, mobile apps, social media, email, or over-the-phone. The key benefits of an omnichannel strategy are that it can offer a fluid and flexible shopping experience and capture lucrative markets through emerging channels.

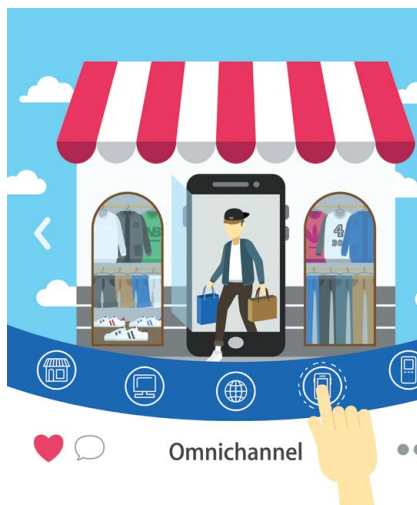
Modern-day customers use multiple channels for their purchasing decisions. With a wide range of technologies and online resources, they can access different platforms like social media, e-marketplaces, retailer websites, review sites, and other digital touch points to make a purchase. Retailers can use these platforms best and create a unified shopping experience for their customers through better interaction and promotion.

Omnichannel opportunities for retailers

Retailers can utilize omnichannel opportunities to expand their customer base and offer an increase in choice and convenience. Besides, business models can be optimized with a broad online presence and integration of data and

systems. Channel diversification also improves operational efficiency for retailers, strengthens the brand image, and increases the likelihood of more purchases.

However, embracing the omnichannel trend without a well-strategized approach can offer little value to retailers. Therefore, it is crucial to have clarity on the objectives behind such initiatives. Investing time and resources in the right fundamentals can help retailers achieve omnichannel excellence.



Augmenting Omnichannel Retail Capabilities

For omnichannel success, the laser focus should be on improving the customer experience. Recent reports show that the purchase frequency is 250% higher on omnichannel compared to single channel retailers. Therefore, businesses should realize this opportunity and embrace omnichannel retailing while focussing on some essential points such as:

* Customer-centered strategy

Understanding consumer behavior and accommodating different sales channels is essential to create maximum impact. Also, synchronizing the physical and digital worlds can be highly beneficial.

* Holistic approach

Retailers must also align their operations to develop an integrated platform with more advanced capabilities. This integrated culture must be promoted across the organization to optimize omnichannel performance.

* Strong technical framework

Investing in a myriad of tools and applications cannot guarantee



7 Stores in 7 Months

Lenskart launches “do more, be more” campaign displayed on the iconic Ain Dubai

Following Lenskart’s \$50 million (Dh185m) investment commitment into the Middle East last year, Lenskart opened its first store in UAE in December 2021. Asia’s biggest eyewear brand is now celebrating a milestone opening at its 7th retail store at The Dubai Mall, continuing the aggressive expansion that has seen existing stores open already in BurJuman, Dalma Mall, Dubai Festival City, Ibn Battuta Mall, Dubai Hills Mall and Bawadi Mall.

The brand recently projected its values of “Do More, Be More” on the iconic Ain Dubai. Given its strong lifestyle position, Lenskart is bringing its audience yet another refreshing fashion association that is set to inspire the

wardrobes of every fashion enthusiast. Lenskart has collaborated with Rhea Kapoor, the coveted stylist, producer, trend-setter, and one of the biggest fashion revolutionaries in India, to launch the ‘Be Your Own Style EYECon’ campaign.

The ‘Lenskart X Rhea Kapoor’ collection as part of the campaign will bring an array of select eyewear to all 7 stores in the UAE for a year. Customers can also purchase the collection online or via Lenskart’s mobile app.

Sudhir Syal, Chief Business Officer (Middle East) at Lenskart said: “We are extremely honoured to be associated with such an iconic landmark to commemorate this milestone. At Lenskart, our purpose is to transform



Sudhir Syal
Chief Business Officer (Middle East)
Lenskart



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