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MRF 2018 AGENDA

PHYSICAL MEETS DIGITAL

Rethinking retail with the online-offline convergence

DAY 1 – OCTOBER 8

9:15-10am – Registration & networking breakfast

10:10-10:15am – Opening speech by Images Group chairperson

10:15-10:45am – Keynote addresses: What lies beyond 2020?

What lies beyond 2020 is up for imagination, but it is established that retail will become more engaging and immersive. Human touch will play a pivotal role, while robotics and automation will have its own importance. Transparency will be valued. Data will be used in smarter ways to tailor personalised experiences. Silos will break down between channels and departments within businesses. There will be more collaboration between companies of different expertise to put together an engaging shopping experience. Over the last couple of years many legacy brands have shuttered shops; however, retail isn't dead. It has been disrupted and will see more disruptive innovation. Our opening keynote address will set the pace for the two-day conference with a discussion on the culture of change to remain prepared for the unseen at the turn of the decade.

Confirmed speakers

- Marwan Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman, Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq)
- Mohammed Shael Al Saadi, CEO – Business Development & Strategy Sector, Department of Economic Development (DED)

10:45-11am – Presentation by Boston Consulting Group: Retail's road ahead

- Arun Bruce, Partner and Managing Director, Boston Consulting Group

11am-1pm – Retail Business Owners & CEOs Conclave: Going strong over decades

The current time in retail is very exciting and challenging. It's time for great transformation for businesses that have been around for decades. The rise of e-commerce, particularly, has rendered the business of retail more challenging for traditional retailers. Attracting and retaining customers have become more challenging than ever before. Sales strategies have changed drastically; time-to-market has become faster. Inventory management has become challenging. Consumers are looking for more engagement, necessitating retailers to ramp up their digital efforts as well as immersive in-store experience. This session will bring together companies and people that have been part of the regional retail market for over two decades. They will share what it takes to survive and thrive in a highly competitive retail environment like the Middle East.

Confirmed speakers

- Emma Banks, Managing Director, Jumeirah Restaurant Group
- Frank-Matthias Kuntermann, CEO, ABC Group
- James Le Gassick, CEO, MoRE Café / Intelligent foods
- Khurshid Vakil, Co-founder, Marina Home Interiors
- Raju Shroff, CEO, Regal Group
- Ramesh Cidambi, COO, Dubai Duty Free
- Raza Beig, CEO – Splash & ICONIC & Landmark international, and Director – Landmark Group
- Walid Hajj, Executive Chairman, Cravia
- Zaid Alqufaidi, Managing Director, ENOC Retail

2-3:30pm – Up Close with CEOs: Future-proofing retail

Retail will become stronger, channel agnostic and more agile to adapt to rapid, disruptive, changes. Stores will become inspirational spaces, morphed into lively, immersive environments. Retailers will engage with consumers differently, interacting with them at their preferred touchpoints. While businesses are being digitally-enabled, the key role of people will be at the heart of every organisation. This year we will chat with CEOs who have positively disrupted the regional retail landscape and how they are future proofing their businesses.

Confirmed speakers

- Debbie Stanford-Kristiansen, CEO, NOVO Cinemas
- Kanchan Kulkarni, Founder, KARA
- Kanwal Sarfraz, Co-founder, Wadi.com
- Kunal Kapoor, CEO, The Luxury Closet
- Matthieu Guinard, CEO, Glambox Middle East
- Mona Ataya, CEO and Founder, Mumzworld
- Nada Alawi, Founder, Annada
- Saad Umerani, Co-Founder & CEO, Protein Bakeshop
- Shafeena Yusuffali, CEO, Tablez Food Company

3:30-4pm – Fireside Chat: It's a mistake to stop believing

- Mohammed & Peyman Parham Al Awadhi, Co-founders, Wild Peeta

4-5pm – Panel discussion: Blurring the line between spaces

Store closures, overcapacity and non-engaging retail mix are among the big challenges faced by retail. However, it's not all gloom and doom, as retailers – and real estate developers – are endeavouring to breathe fresh energy into retail to stimulate growth. It could be leveraging in-store technology to spice up bricks-and-mortar – enabling online browsing, purchase and checkout from the store. It could be placing an engaging robot to interact with customers and even assist with navigation. Beyond digital, it could be placing the right mix of F&B and entertainment within the retail space. It could also be placing pop-ups to rejuvenate space. Events and iconic buildings add up to the mix. This session will focus on how the physical and digital channels are merging to create an enchanting shopping experience for the consumer.

DAY 2 – OCTOBER 9

Masterclass by: Michael Yacobian, CEO, Top-Line Solutions

10:15-10:30am – Exclusive report release: Future consumption outlook in KSA

- Adel Belcaid, Principal, AT Kearney Middle East

10:30-11:30am – Panel discussion: KSA & its many flavours

The recent taxation regime, opening of cinemas after 35 years and women's right to drive are among the far-reaching legislative changes that hit Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom is already making big strides to reduce dependence on oil revenues. Retail and leisure and entertainment sectors are witnessing significant changes, including increased job opportunities for the local Saudi population and widening of amusement portfolio. Our Saudi Arabia-focused session will bring together experts from the Kingdom for an engaging discussion on on-going and upcoming legislative changes that will have far-reaching impact on retail, leisure and entertainment, real estate and consumer behaviour.

Confirmed speakers

- Ahmad Bin Dawood, CEO, DanubeCo. Ltd & BinDawood Stores
- Amr Banaja, CEO, General Entertainment Authority
- Mazen Qandeel, Executive Director, Granada Center
- Mohammad IB Alawi, Chairman of the Board, Saudi Sand Souvenir Co.

11:30am-1pm – F&B conclave: Food business made 'smart'

Food is a true connector. If done well, food businesses thrive. And to do well, food businesses must offer great food and create memorable experiences. No wonder, in the retail real estate business, two words – dining and entertainment – are used incessantly. Smart utilisation of space, better guest interaction and a comfortable yet entertaining ambience are areas that food businesses look at keenly. In addition, food businesses are also using technology to their advantage to increase efficiency and better interact with customers. In the current retail landscape underpinned by high rentals, stiff competition and everyday disruption, what are food businesses doing to remain ahead of the curve? Our food conclave will focus on all the above areas and beyond. What's more, for the first time ever at MRF, we will have a select group of industry insiders at the conclave that will vote for the most interesting food business based on video presentations, which will be felicitated with the coveted RetailME Award.

Confirmed speakers

- Darami Coulter, Chief Marketing Officer, Sumo Sushi & Bento
- Faisal Yabroudi, Co-founder & Head of Operations, PINZA
- Ian Ohan, Founder, Freedom Pizza
- Nadine Benchaffai, Co-founder & Managing Partner, Taqado Mexican Kitchen
- Raki Phillips, Co-founder & CEO, SugarMoo
- Ramzi Nakad, Co-founder, BRAG
- Sajam Alex, Vice President, Tablez Food Company
- Samer Choucair, Vice President, CE-Creates

Jury for F&B Conclave

- Naveed Dowlatshahi, CEO & Founder, Kash Global Group

2-3:15pm – Panel discussion: Demystifying 'phygital'

The role of bricks-and-mortar is rapidly evolving in the current retail landscape. Online plays a pivotal role in retail sales. But one isn't replacing the other. While the Digital Native and Millennial customers seek a physical point of contact, the Gen X and even Baby Boomers are open to shopping online. The discussion has slowly shifted to evolving and adapting the physical environment, and products, with digital touchpoints to meet the current retailing – and consumer – needs. It is no longer about physical points of sale closing, but more about how 'smart', 'experiential' and 'differentiated' they are becoming to address the connected consumer. It is more about evolving and perfecting the business models, sometimes even disrupting them. This session will discuss how rules of retailing are changing, becoming more nimble and flexible to ensure preparedness for the next big change.

Confirmed speakers

- Ashish Panjabi, COO, Jacky's Retail LLC
- David Quafe, Head of Omnichannel, Home Centre
- Dharmin Ved, CEO – E-commerce, 6th Street
- Majed M Al Tahan, CEO, Danube Online
- Stephen Graham Holbrook, Deputy CEO, Kamal Osman Jamjoom Group
- Vic Bageria, Chief Visionary Officer, Xpandretail

3:15-3:30pm – Keynote address: Home-grown is the new flavour

Even a decade ago, the term 'entrepreneurship' was not fully understood. There weren't many people considering birthing their own concepts. Ideas existed! But the right channel to support the ideas scale up was lacking. Over the years, the full scale of creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem has been understood – by entrepreneurs themselves, government entities and financial investors. Gradually the region has started lending support towards home-grown concepts by setting up incubators and accelerators. Governments lend support to facilitate growth of entrepreneurial endeavours. Mentors come forward to share knowledge. Media creates awareness by talking about the 'from here, for here' phenomenon. In turn, entrepreneurs have built confidence in the existing support system, and success stories have emerged. This keynote will focus on the public-private collaboration in scaling up the regional entrepreneurial community.

3:30-5pm – Start-up conclave: Building an entrepreneurial nation

Idea is the starting point. That idea needs nurturing to germinate into a concrete entity. It takes grit, strategic thinking and honesty to build a business, irrespective of the size. Since the last few years, a lot of agencies – governmental and non-governmental – have come up to support the development of the local ecosystem in the region. But a lot is yet to be done. It is relatively expensive to start a business here. Bankruptcy laws and ownership rights could be challenging. Not to forget, the fear of failure, albeit much reduced now. While some failures might be stumbling blocks to overcome, others might even end up in shutting shop. However, the entrepreneurial spirit mustn't die. Our start-up conclave will focus on encouraging individuals to turn their dreams into reality, tackle the hard details of getting a licence and, importantly, getting financed. Even those who self-fund the business must take a long-term view around scaling up. That's not all; the best start-up concept will be felicitated with the coveted RetailME Award.

Confirmed speakers

- Anirban Basu, Co-Founder & Designer, Ryokō Bags
- Dana Alsharif, Founder, Urban RetrEAT
- Faraz Khan, Founder & CEO, souKARE
- Gaurav Sabharwal, Co-founder, Wok Boyz
- Malin Raman Delin, Co-founder, BonApp
- Mehdi Oudghiri, Co-founder, eyewa
- Mouna Abassy, Co-founder & Managing Director, Izil Beauty
- Omar Al Jundi, CEO, Badia Farms
- Rachel McArthur, Founder & Managing Editor, Digital Ink Media (Moderator)
- Sian Rowlands, Owner & Chief Storyteller, RETOLD

Jury for Start-up Conclave

- Dina Sidani, Head of Greenhouse Accelerator/ Innovation Lab, Chalhoub Group
- Paul Kenny, Managing Director, AYM
- Tarek Ahmed, Venture Growth Manager, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center – Sheraa

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CONTACT US

Partnership opportunities

Raja Swamy
+971 58 519 1087
raja@imagesretailme.com

Nikhil Gupta
+971 56 406 6722
nikhil@imagesretailme.com

Speaking opportunities

Rupkatha Bhowmick
+971 52 981 1183
rupkatha@imagesretailme.com

Delegate registration

Chelene Raath
+971 4 446 7553, +971 50 122 0017
chelene@imagesretailme.com