

THE WORLD'S ONLY GLOBAL RETAIL AND LEISURE MAGAZINE

RLI



RETAIL & LEISURE INTERNATIONAL

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JULY / AUGUST 2022 ISSUE 174

GLOBAL FOCUS

KASPA'S DESSERTS CAPTURING THE IMAGINATION



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**Bursting with
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THE CONRAN SHOP
**Considered Design,
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Cover Story

Kaspa's Desserts is a chain of exciting franchise dessert houses that offers its patrons the world's favourite hot and cold desserts all under one roof. We speak with Founder & CEO Azhar Rehman to learn more.



Editor's Foreword

Summer is here, well, at least the UK version of it is and the RLI office is looking forward to a bit of a break before we begin to build up a head of steam for our annual RLI Connect and Global RLI Awards events. Before that though, our July / August issue features enough news, views and interviews to keep you entertained on any flight you may be taking for your summer holiday!

Till next time...

James Quinn, Editor



Publisher's Comment

As I write this, news of Boris Johnson's resignation is dominating the headlines, it's time to ask ourselves, 'What do we want from the next Prime Minister?' New ideas for the UK's future are plentiful and the new PM has the opportunity to build a new national consensus around issues that will unite the country and drive a new economic dynamism. We need to get the country back on track and revitalise the British Economy, this is a fresh start for Britain. Our July / August issue is bursting with lead interviews and exciting features for that perfect summer read. Our Cover Story this month captures our imagination as Azhar Rehman, Founder & CEO of Kaspa's Desserts, a chain of exciting dessert houses tantalises our taste buds with its poised expansion and infamous products.

As preparations heat up for this year's events in KSA, we are pleased to announce Diriyah Square, the commercial hub of the 14 square kilometre Diriyah giga-project in Saudi Arabia located only 15 minutes from Riyadh's city centre, as the 'Destination Partner' for this year's RLI Connect Global Deal-Making Forum to be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Riyadh Digital City, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 31 October - 1 November.

The moment you have been waiting for is here, this year's Global RLI Awards in association with Gold Partner Chalhoub Group releases its 2022 shortlist. Turn to page 16 to find out if you have made the cut. If you would like to align yourselves with RLI and Chalhoub Group as our Headline Partner please get in touch.

Now sit back with your favourite tipple and enjoy the read!

Happy Summer Holidays!

Jayne Rafter, Publisher

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RLI MEETS

Edie Rodriguez

MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT
GAUCHO GROUP HOLDINGS & SAUDI TOURISM
AUTHORITY

Q. Following the Covid-19 outbreak what would you say are the critical keys to success moving forward?

Covid-19 has taught the world and every industry, if they did not know it already, that Health and Safety must always come first. Every company and every leader must be positioned and structured to be nimble and flexible in an expeditious manner. They must keep the highest level of standards and train their teams appropriately to follow those levels of standards. They also need to adapt their policies as regulations get changed due to "emergency" changes such as an outbreak as an example that causes people to work from home, etc. I will say that "expeditious adaptability" needs to be a company and leader's mantra going forward.

Q. What key leadership skills do you feel are the most important in the current retail climate?

In retail or otherwise for me leadership is always about the clients/customers/guests and understanding their wants and needs as to your products or services and then delivering on that in the most profitable manner. It is also important to be a leader that takes care of their team members. If you take care of your team then they will take care of the clients/customers/guests. I think these leadership skills are more important in today's retail climate now more than ever.

Q. As a leader, when making key strategic decisions, what proportion of the decision do you feel is fact-based and what proportion is instinctual?

For me it is a 50/50 split. Data is the new oil, meaning the data and facts are the critical first step and foundation to making a cerebral and informed decision. Then I also do take instinct into consideration too. My instincts have served me well throughout my career, so I am comfortable including this in any evaluation and decision making process.

Q. Do you feel that CEOs and company leaders can continue to be transformational in the new retail landscape and will this actually be more important than ever now?

Yes, it will be paramount. Just as the customers and employees are perpetually transforming, a CEO must do the same. The global "climate" is constantly transforming too, and an exceptional CEO should always want to stay ahead and lead, never follow.

Q. What do you make of social media and its prominent rise in importance over the last few years, and how important do you feel e-commerce and online activities will continue to be?

Social Media is necessary today and will absolutely continue to be going forward. It holds a double-edged sword though with the negative side being trolls and activists. E-commerce and online activities will

absolutely continue to be important. However, back to being ahead of the curve, companies must focus on what the next iteration of social media and online will evolve to. This currently includes Web 3.0 for the metaverse, NFTs, crypto, blockchain, a digital first or digital only strategy, although I think retail will still need brick and mortar because you must deliver to the clients what they want in the manner they want it. Further, cybercrime will continue, so a company must ensure they perpetually invest to secure their technological assets.

Q. What would you consider to be your career highlights?

I have been blessed to have many and often say it is like asking the mother of five children to pick their favourite. My personal favourite though is being a Member of the Board of Directors for the Saudi Tourism Authority. When the KSA delivers on their Vision 2030 goals, it will be like nothing the world has ever seen before on so many levels including culture, luxury, travel, retail, regenerative tourism, urban aquatics, art, and so on. Pick a category and they will have it covered and given the most innovative and fresh approaches. The changes that I have seen there first-hand in these last nearly five years have been absolutely amazing. It is hard to fathom what they will further deliver on over the next seven years. The world needs to get ready. I am humbled and honoured, especially as an American woman, to be part of it with the fabulous team at the STA.

Q. How are you feeling about the 12 months ahead?

Very bullish! Challenges and economics tend to be cyclical. This too shall pass. Recession, inflation, Covid-19, war, the lists of challenges can go on and on. A great leader can adapt and pivot to any scenario to do what's best for their customers, their employees, their company and their various communities. A positive attitude is fundamentally important and during these temporary challenges a great leader and company will need to get creative until any crisis passes.

Q. Do you have any words of warning for the industry as we continue to move through uncharted territory?

Change is good. It leads to many new discoveries and opportunities. Try to look at uncharted territory in this manner. Stay calm and focused and carry on with a positive attitude. For all things luxury including retail, the wealthy are recession resistant and will always want to buy. These facts are good for retail.

Q. Any final thoughts or anything else you would like to add?

I'd like to thank RLI for inviting me to be a judge at their upcoming awards in Riyadh in November and look forward to meeting many of your readers in person then and there.



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BRAEHEAD SHOPPING CENTRE WELCOMES A HOST OF NEW BRANDS

Braehead, one of the UK's most popular retail and leisure destinations, owned by property company SGS and asset managed by Global Mutual Properties, is pleased to announce a string of recent and upcoming openings at the centre.

Renowned fashion and home furnishings retailer, Laura Ashley, has recently opened a new section in Braehead's NEXT Home store, selling a range of furniture and homeware products. The brand has taken over 2,500sq ft of space and the offer is the first for any NEXT in Scotland. Worldwide jewellery retailer Lovisa, meanwhile, is set to open a store on-site in the summer in a 780sq ft unit, selling its much-loved range of on-trend accessories.

In addition, the largest licensed sports retailer in North America, Lids has signed on a c. 1,000sq ft space and finally Suit Direct, the leading menswear retailer, has also signed on a c. 3,500sq ft store and will open its doors this month.



LONGMARTIN PROPERTIES LTD, A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN SHAFTESBURY AND THE MERCERS' COMPANY, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT GURA GURA, A BRAND-NEW ASIAN BAR AND KITCHEN CONCEPT, HAS SIGNED AT 19 SLINGSBY PLACE, THE YARDS, FOR ITS DEBUT RESTAURANT WITHIN COVENT GARDEN. THE 2,900SQ FT UK DEBUT RESTAURANT, DUE TO LAUNCH IN MID-OCTOBER, WILL SERVE A MIX OF SUSHI, SASHIMI, DIM SUM AND SMALL PLATES, WITH HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WOK MENU INCLUDING LANTERN CHILLI PRAWNS, THAI STYLE BASIL CHICKEN AND BULGOGI STYLE BEEF. GURA GURA IS SET TO BE STUDDED WITH ASIAN HERITAGE, DISPLAYING A DISTINCT AND AUTHENTIC INTERIOR.

HEAL'S ANNOUNCES NEW KING'S ROAD STORE

Sloane Stanley has announced the opening of the British furniture retail company, Heals' third London store, located at 324-326 King's Road, Chelsea.

Boasting a range of furniture, lighting, and home accessories, Heal's new outlet space spans 1728sq ft and contributes to Sloane Stanley's emerging tenant-driven Design Collective. Known for promoting innovative and modern designs for more than two centuries, Heal's is continuing its legacy within the borough of Chelsea and Kensington, supporting new and emerging designers whilst showcasing an array of home essentials.

Founded in 1810, Heal's opened its first site at Tottenham Court Road, which remains its flagship location, and has since celebrated several retail firsts and notable workshop alumni, including Sir Ambrose Heal, John Reeves and Anthony Dickens. Championing and commissioning emerging design talent, Heal's has selected the King's Road to continue its long-standing success via an outlet presence and to build upon its strong reputation.

CREAMS CAFE LEADS FLURRY OF LETTINGS

Manchester Arndale is delighted to announce that the UK's favourite dessert restaurant brand, Creams Cafe, will be opening a new 2,325sq ft store at the centre.

The store, which has been let on a 15-year lease, will offer the full Creams Cafe experience with the brand's menu of flamboyant and indulgent desserts – from sundaes and shakes to waffles and crepes – for dine-in, takeaway and delivery. Creams' arrival on-site follows news that Betfred has signed a 10-year lease for a 1,346sq ft unit within Manchester Arndale. The bookmaker has a well-known connection with the North West region, with founder Fred Done opening his first betting shop in Salford in 1967.

As well as Creams Cafe and Betfred, Manchester Arndale is due to welcome another leading multinational F&B brand early next year after it signed a 15-year lease for a new 3,700sq ft flagship store in the centre. Manchester Arndale has also agreed a new 10-year lease with jewellery specialists Pandora who have increased their space at the centre.

LABTECH COURTS F&B BRANDS AT CAMDEN MARKET HAWLEY WHARF

LabTech, owners of the world-famous Camden Market, and a leading London property investment company, has announced a quintet of new F&B brands at Camden Market Hawley Wharf, the 580,000sq ft retail, F&B, and experiential destination in the heart of Camden.

American pizza concept True Romance has opened its doors as a dedicated place for pizza by the slice, with cocktails. Canalside all-day café and bar, Americano has taken a 1,110sq ft space, while The 3 Locks Brewing Company will join in a 5,300sq ft unit later this summer. Completing the quintet is Naked Dough, and Jollof Mama.

Camden Market Hawley Wharf has also welcomed Babylon Park, the 35,000sq ft, three-floor leisure venue.



NEW META TO LAUNCH ITS FIRST GAMING ARENA

Cain International ('Cain'), the privately held investment firm, has let 3,000sq ft in its Islington Square development to leisure brand New Meta in a deal that strengthens the mixed-use destination's all-day shopping, dining and playing appeal.

New Meta aims to be the go-to place for PC gamers and e-sports fans to game on high-end equipment while enjoying a wide variety of food and drinks. The gaming arena will host regular tournaments and competitions which will be open to everyone, as well as broadcasting e-sports competitions and organising regular watch parties for big events in the e-sports world. It also plans to open an e-sports academy, for children of school age, with live coaches, a broad curriculum and regular competitions. New Meta will launch at Islington Square in August.

The gaming arena, which will be New Meta's first physical space, is the latest leisure concept to open in Cain's mixed-use Islington Square, where it will join a Third Space health club and an ODEON Luxe & Dine cinema. A neighbourhood retailing destination as well as a dining hotspot, Islington Square is home to notable names such as Anthropologie, Borough Kitchen, Arlo & Jacob, APC and Duck & Dry, and restaurants including Sprout, Megan's, Jiji, Prezzo and Omnom.

Ed Kim, Director at New Meta, said: "We can't wait to open our first ever store in Islington Square. Our followers have been waiting in anticipation for this moment and we are thrilled to be able to give them an answer – and one that is in such an excellent location where many will be able to easily visit"

DYSON REVEALS A NEW SITE

The immersive 130sq m space on the first floor of the shopping centre features a range of demonstration zones where Dyson experts are on-hand to assist customers. Indoor air quality demonstrations can show live air quality data and shoppers can vacuum up a variety of debris to help them decide which vacuum to buy.

LUSH STORE IS SET TO OPEN

A new Lush store is opening in Glasgow promising brand new products and a 'spa experience'. The cosmetics retailer has agreed a 15-year lease at 98 Buchanan Street which previously housed the fashion brand All Saints. The shop promises to deliver innovative new products.

CASTORE UNVEILS FLAGSHIP

Premium sportswear brand Castore, which counts tennis star Andy Murray as an investor, is boosting its retail offering by opening its new flagship store on Brompton Road in London. The new 2,300sq ft flagship is located on the Knightsbridge Estate at 59 Brompton Road.

66°NORTH TO OPEN FLAGSHIP

Icelandic B Corp outerwear brand 66°North has announced it is opening its first UK flagship on Regent Street in London. Slated to open in September, the 3,500sq ft store will the brands first store outside of Iceland and Denmark and will showcase its technical outerwear and apparel.

KERSHKICKS ADDS NEW UNIT

Liverpool-born siblings, the Kersh brothers, are continuing their UK expansion of their original e-commerce business, Kershkicks with its new Liverpool store. The new Liverpool store, situated on Slater Street will spread over 1,000sq ft, making it the biggest store for the brand to date.

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PRIMARK TO OPEN ITS TENTH STORE IN ITALY WITH STORE IN CHIETI, ABRUZZO

The Irish fast fashion retailer will open a new store in Chieti, Abruzzo. The shop, located inside the Megalò shopping center, is the first store on the Adriatic coast and the tenth in Italy.

"After the opening of our flagship store and Italian headquarters in Milan, the new store located inside the Megalò shopping centre in Chieti represents a real milestone in our expansion path in Italy as it brings the total of Primark stores in the country to ten," commented Luca Ciuffreda, Head of Primark in Italy.

With a commercial area of approximately 4,000sq m, the new Chieti space will offer the clothing collections for men, women, children, beauty, lifestyle and homewear. In addition, the store will also feature a wide range of clothing products and items from the 'Primark Cares' brand. In fact, currently 39 per cent of clothing is made with recycled materials or from more sustainable sources.



THE SUDOESTE RETAIL PARK HAS LAUNCHED IN PORTUGAL AND CONTINENTE BOM DIA, HÔMA, ESPAÇO, RADIO POPULAR, SPORT ZONE AND BURGER KING ARE SOME OF THE BRANDS PRESENT IN THIS NEW RETAIL COMPLEX, THE LARGEST OF ITS KIND IN THE ALGARVE REGION. THE PROJECT HAS A GLA OF 14,500SQ M, WITH 19 MAJOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BRANDS FROM A VARIETY OF SECTORS. THE COMPLEX HAS THE CONSUMER AND THEIR SHOPPING EXPERIENCE AS ONE OF ITS MAIN FOCUSES, WHICH IS REFLECTED IN ITS DESIGN AND LAYOUT, AS WELL AS IN THE MIX OF SHOPS.

GLUE STORE MAKES NEW ZEALAND DEBUT

Australian fashion retailer Glue Store is expanding its portfolio, opening its first store in New Zealand and two more in Australia.

Located in Albany Westfield, the inaugural New Zealand Glue Store was described by the company as "a huge step forward" as it seeks to establish itself as the go-to retailer for leading street, sports, and fashion brands in the region.

Meanwhile, across the Tasman, Glue has opened a flagship store in South Australia and relocated its Melbourne CBD shop, which offers a 400sq m retail space, to the second level of Melbourne Central.

"The launch of Glue Store in both South Australia and New Zealand gives customers an in-store experience that they used to have to travel for, bringing the magic back to bricks-and-mortar retail through an improved customer experience and exceptional service," said Head of Brand, Marketing & E-Commerce, Charles Moore.

Glue reports that it will continue to open new concepts and renovate existing doors during the second half of this year.

MAAP UNVEILS CONCEPT STORE IN MELBOURNE

Cycling apparel label MAAP has opened its first flagship concept store in Collingwood, Melbourne.

Dubbed 'MAAP Lab' the store acts as an inclusive space for experienced cyclists and cycling enthusiasts to come together as a community, as well as selling premium cycling apparel and accessories, along with cyclist-oriented items such as fragrances, skincare and grooming products, and books.

The first collection includes vinyl and player from Sound Merch, skincare for pre- and post-riding needs from Aesop, and accessories from Havn.

The development includes a coffee shop, workshop and an in-house team of experts to assist cyclists with their queries. It was designed by Clare Cousins Architects.

The store is located in the former industrial area of Collingwood, so the design makes the most of the former commercial building's concrete and blockwork shell.

MANGO TO OPEN IN WESTFIELD HAMBURG-ÜBERSEEQUARTIER

The store, which is expected to open in Autumn 2023, will be the first in Hamburg to feature the brand's 'New Med' image.

In a move that will strengthen the leading fashion group's presence in Germany, the new Mango store will have a rental area of around 800sq m that will be spread over two floors.

Portfolio Leasing Manager at Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, Anna Laura Riemann, commented on the news by saying: "With Mango we have gained another important partner for the fashion and lifestyle segment, which will move into a large representative store unit located on a highly frequented axis in the quarter. This will once more differentiate the mix of flagship stores in Westfield Hamburg-Überseequartier."



ADELAIDE PLANS \$250M RETAIL HUB ON CITY FRINGE

A \$250M development plan is set to transform a 3.6ha Adelaide plot into a modern food and retail-oriented mixed-use centre featuring apartments and a piazza-style market square.

The project, dubbed 'Locale', will be built on the former site of furniture store Le Cornu which ended operations in 2016. The land was then sold to German hypermarket Kaufland which planned to build a flagship store there before cancelling plans to launch in Australia in 2020.

The development, located 3.5km southwest of Adelaide's CBD on the Anzac Highway, is being led by South Australia's Commercial Retail Group, which owns and operates Frewville and Pasadena Foodland, with national property developer Peet Limited and local developer Buildtec. It includes open-air cafes, specialist

retailers, 199 high-end apartments and 106 townhouses, short-stay apartments for tourism, along with an Urban Green School where students will be taught about sustainable food production practices and an urban farm.

Spero Chapley, Director at Commercial Retail Group, described the space as a truly dynamic, inclusive community where people can live, work, socialise, shop, eat, learn and connect. "We have drawn inspiration from the small, bustling European towns where the homes, squares and markets, and their scents, colour, sounds and architecture entice you to linger and explore with a new experience around every corner."

The first stage of construction is expected to begin early next year with residents expected to move in to the development by late 2025.

JOTT LAUNCHES IN COLUMBUS

The French brand JOTT (Just Over The Top) has arrived at the Colombo shopping centre in Lisbon. With the opening of the new store, currently the only one operating in the capital, the brand now has three points of sale of its own in the Portuguese market. The brand was launched in 2010.

BULGARI UNVEILS NEW UNIT

The brand has recently launched a brand new boutique in Lucerne at Grendelstrasse 21. On a total of 160sq m spread over two levels, this store offers a wide assortment of fine jewellery but also watches and leather goods. This new store integrates the Peter Marino concept, a new architectural identity for Bulgari.

ANACONDA TO ADD CONCEPT

Outdoor retailer Anaconda is to launch its largest retail concept yet, dubbed the Anaconda Adventure HQ, within the next month. Located on the Hume Highway, the almost 8,000sq m store will feature extended product ranges and an interactive fishing simulator.

ROSSI BOOTS SET TO EXPAND

The Adelaide-based Australian boot maker Rossi Boots is planning to expand into international markets, under new owners and with fresh investment. Founded in 1908 by Arthur Rossiter, the fourth-generation family business creates premium-quality boots from Australian leather.

NEW EXPERIENCE TO LAUNCH

Tim Burton's Labyrinth, an immersive experience that takes visitors through the director's creative universe, is opening in September at Espacio Ibercaja Delicias. Each room will transport visitors to a unique Burtonesque environment. The exhibition is set to open its doors on 29th September.



americas

SUSTAINABLE SHOE AND CLOTHING BRAND ALLBIRDS OPENS NEW VANCOUVER SITE

Allbirds has recently opened the doors of its first Canadian store, located at 2262 West 4th Ave. in Kitsilano. According to brand co-founder Joey Zwilling, both the city and the chosen neighbourhood of Kits were a perfect fit for a first location.

"I think Vancouver is like the New Zealand or like the San Francisco of Canada," Zwilling, speaking via Zoom in advance of the opening, explained. "It's outdoor, it's health and well-being oriented. It's a beautiful coastal city, and I think the consumers and the people in the city embody the same kind of values that are found in the two homes of our company, which is the Bay Area and New Zealand."

In addition to aligned vibes and values, the decision to set up shop in the city was guided by ecommerce metrics, which told the Allbirds' team that its products do "really well" with Vancouverites.

San Francisco-based Allbirds launched as a sustainably-focused online-only footwear brand back in 2014, and the ultra-comfortable sneakers have gained a cult following in the years since.



RENOWNED HOTEL AND BRAND MANAGEMENT COMPANY DREAM HOTEL GROUP, HOME TO ITS DREAM HOTELS, UNSCRIPTED HOTELS, THE CHATWAL AND NEW BY DREAM HOTEL GROUP BRANDS, HAS ANNOUNCED PLANS TO OPEN A 155-KEY HOTEL AS THE CENTREPIECE OF THE NEW BALLPARK DISTRICT MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN WICHITA, KANSAS. SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN 2024, UNSCRIPTED WICHITA WILL FEATURE BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED GUEST ROOMS AND MULTIPLE FOOD AND BEVERAGE OFFERINGS, INCLUDING A SIGNATURE RESTAURANT ON THE STREET LEVEL AND AN IMPRESSIVE ROOFTOP BAR AND LOUNGE WITH SWEEPING VIEWS OF THE DOWNTOWN SKYLINE AND RIVERFRONT STADIUM.

SKECHERS LAUNCH NEW EAST COAST STORE

The athletic lifestyle footwear brand has opened a nearly 22,000sq ft "superstore" at The Mills at Jersey Gardens, in Elizabeth. It's Skechers' biggest East Coast retail destination to date.

Located on the second floor of the Simon mall, the new store features dedicated Skechers Performance and Skechers Work shop-in-shop areas, a 4,000sq ft dedicated Skechers apparel shop and a vast offering of casual footwear and athletic styles for men, women and children. The assortment includes shoes for the latest sports craze: pickleball.

Featuring an easy-to-shop circulation path, the store is designed as an interactive gallery of the Skechers experience, with engaging digital displays and fabric lightboxes featuring the brand's marketing. Other features include LED lighting, concrete and recycled vinyl flooring, energy-conscious ceiling fans, as well as recycled rubber seating throughout the store. The new store replaces the previous Skechers store at Jersey Gardens, which was just 2,900sq ft.

THE GIANT COMPANY TO GROW IN PHILADELPHIA

The grocer has opened a 50,700sq ft store at 501 N. Broad Street, on the ground floor of LVL North, a 410-unit apartment building complex. It's the first of two locations planned for the city, with a 49,800sq ft unit also opened at 1025 Second Street Pike. Both stores will highlight fresh departments, such as farm fresh garden produce, fresh meat and seafood, and bakery, along with a Beer & Wine Eatery.

The two new stores add to Giant's growth in the greater Philadelphia area during the past year. In 2021, the company, a division of Ahold Delhaize USA, opened four stores in the city, including its urban flagship store at Riverwalk, a Giant Heirloom Market in the Fashion District and two additional Giant Stores.

The company also opened a new store in Doylestown. And to meet the growing demand for online grocery shopping across the city and in southern New Jersey, Giant opened a state-of-the-art direct e-commerce fulfilment centre in Philadelphia.

news

NEW JONATHAN ADLER FLAGSHIP OPENS MULTI-LEVEL STORE

Customers can not only buy a vase, but might see one being made by an acclaimed potter and interior designer as they shop at a new store in New York.

Jonathan Adler has opened a three-storey hybrid space that serves as a multi-use retail flagship site and a pottery studio and headquarters on West Broadway in downtown Manhattan.

The new Atelier Adler brings the entire world of Adler - from creation to commerce - under one roof and back to where the company began (Soho). It is the brand's 11th store globally and its fourth in New York City.

"This retail concept is a dream come true for," explains Jonathan Adler when discussing the new site.



IT'SUGAR SET TO MAKE A HUGE SPLASH IN TIMES SQUARE

The specialty candy retailer will open a 20,355sq ft pop-up "candy department store" in New York City's Times Square. The opening is planned for fall 2022.

The new candy emporium in Times Square will take over space on W. 42nd St. that formerly housed sporting goods retailer Modell's. The store will combine It'Sugar's signature larger-than-life in-store displays and immersive candy experiences with thousands of varieties of sweets and fun candy-themed gifts. Favourite candy brands will be brought to life with shop-in-shops and giant branded characters will be located throughout the space.

In April, It'Sugar opened an 11,400sq ft pop-up on Chicago's Magnificent Mile, on a site that was recently vacated by Disney. It was followed by a 10,600sq ft foot pop-up in San Francisco's Union Square. The company

said its pop-up locations generally have lease terms ranging from 13 to 36 months.

It'Sugar also operates permanent locations, including a three-level, 22,000sq ft location at American Dream, the three million square feet mega-retail and entertainment centre in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The company is expected to open its first store in Canada in the fall, at the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta.

"At It'Sugar, we have one of the most expansive assortments of confectionery treats, alongside a curated collection of in-demand licensed merchandise. We created an environment that connects with our consumers and fosters the greatest feeling of happiness with over-the-top displays and a fun and playful vibe. Times Square shares our energy and spirit and is the perfect location for our next massive candy department store," said Jeff Rubin, Founder and CEO.

inbrief

VELVET TACO OPENS NEW SITE

The fast-casual concept has opened its 34th unit in the Grandscape development in The Colony, Texas, expanding its emphasis on drive-thru pickup and patio seating. The new restaurant has been opened in a space that covers 2,388sq ft and has seating for 44 in the dining room and 70 on the patio.

EMPORIO ARMANI ADDS UNIT

The Armani Group has opened its first Emporio Armani store in Toronto, Canada at Yorkdale Shopping Centre. The 390sq m space houses both the men's and women's lines, including Emporio Armani ready-to-wear accessories, and small leather goods.

MENDOCINO FARMS EXPANDS

The L.A. restaurant with the Blue Cow statues and the "Not So Fried" chicken sandwich is continuing its move into Texas. Mendocino Farms started out in 2005 at a failed Starbucks location in downtown Los Angeles, offering customers the chance to "Eat Happy" with a wide selection of sandwiches.

PUBLIX IS READY TO EXPAND

Publix Super Markets Inc. has reached an important milestone in its expansion to the Bluegrass State. The regional Southeast grocery retailer has broken ground on its first store in Louisville, Kentucky. Kentucky will mark Publix's eighth state of operation.

TARGET HITS NEW MILESTONE

Target Corp. has hit an important milestone in its ongoing effort to update its store and customer experience. The discounter has completed its 1,000th store remodel, featuring its latest in-store design. The company's 2022 remodel program is its most ambitious yet, with nearly 200 full-store remodels planned through the year.



middle east

MAJID AL FUTTAIM MALLS MARK 25 YEARS OF DUBAI SUMMER SURPRISES

For the 25th year, Majid Al Futtaiam malls across Dubai will be celebrating Dubai Summer Surprises. In partnership with Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), Mall of the Emirates, and City Centre's Deira and Mirdif will be offering a curated schedule of entertainment and shopping experiences for families, teenagers, foodies, residents, and tourists alike.

First up, from 5 - 17 July, City Centre Mirdif is bringing a regional first experience, Minions: The Rise of Gru to their Central Galleria's. Dubai Summer Surprises will see an exciting new gastronomic experience pop-up at City Centre Mirdif with home-grown food favourite, SALT from 1 July - 30 September. For the creative minds, a LEGO road show will be landing at Mall of the Emirates and City Centre Mirdif. Meanwhile, for those looking to keep fit whilst beating the heat, City Centre Mirdif in partnership with the Dubai Sports Council is launching a summer running series.



GET READY TO TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH KRIS KROS, A RESTAURANT BOASTING AN EXCITING SOCIAL DINING CONCEPT THAT HAS NOW REOPENED ITS DOORS IN DOWNTOWN DUBAI. SHOWCASING VIBRANT NEW INTERIORS AND NEWLY ADDED CULINARY FAVOURITES TO THE MENU, KRIS KROS IS A SOCIAL SETTING BEYOND COMPARE. DINERS CAN JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORLD WITH A SHARING CONCEPT THAT EVOKES THE ESSENCE OF SOCIALISING WHILE DINING & TUCKING INTO AN ARRAY OF HIGH-QUALITY COMFORT FOOD AND A SELECTION OF OTHER CLASSICS THAT ARE SURE TO REVIVE YOUR SENSES.

LULU GROUP'S \$2.9BN EXPANSION ON TRACK

The supermarket chain has a pipeline of 91 hypermarkets and stores lined up to open despite the Covid disruptions. Lulu Group International is on track with its \$2.9bn investment in its retail network, opening 91 hypermarkets between 2020 and 2023. It announced that 50 of these stores have already been opened during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The supermarket chain now has 235 hypermarkets, shopping malls and fulfilment centres across 12 countries including the GCC, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Egypt.

Nandakumar Vijayan, Director of Marketing and Corporate Communications at Lulu Group International, said: "Despite continued headwinds including Covid-19 and other challenges, we have continued to expand our operations across the world. We never stopped growing."

He made the announcement at the RetailME Tech & Marcoms Summit and ICONS Awards, revealing that Lulu will open 11 more hypermarkets this year and a further 27 hypermarkets and stores next year.

SMART FREE ZONE MARKET YIWU OPENS

The market will also offer 'Yiwu Connect', a dedicated area that allows cross-border networking and information exchange between traders in Dubai and factories in China.

Dubai's new Yiwu Market – the first smart free zone market in the Middle East – is set to open its doors on late last month. The market caters to both retail and wholesale industries. Yiwu Market is the first phase of the Dubai Traders Market in the Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza) that aims to revolutionise the trading experience for traders and consumers through its unique offerings.

Spanning over an area of 200,000sq m, the market houses 1,600 mainland showrooms spread across two floors. Ninety-nine percent of the showrooms are already occupied.

Abdulla Bin Damithan, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, DP World UAE and Jafza, said he was optimistic about how the new market would enhance the trading experience for the traders and shoppers.

news

DUBAI DEVELOPER TO DESIGN ZERO-CARBON SMART CITY

Dubai developer URB is designing a zero carbon "future city" in the Saudi Arabian capital. The smart city of ALNAMA will promote sustainable living in a 10sq km community with various hubs including residential, educational, commercial, tourism and medical.

Derived from the Arabic word "thrive", ALNAMA is planned to provide 11,000 residential units for a population of 44,000 people. It will use 100 per cent renewable energy and water recycling. The 1,000ha development in Riyadh will create 10,000 green jobs and include 44.5km of dedicated running, cycling and equestrian tracks.

The project is being spearheaded by Dubai-based planning and design consultancy URB which has a long track record of building smart cities.



ARADA MARKS COMPLETION OF SHARJAH PROJECT

Spread over a five million square foot landscaped master plan, Nasma Residences boasts an array of amenities including a retail and lifestyle hub at the heart of the community linked to an adjoining park.

Arada has started handing over homes in the sixth and final phase of Nasma Residences, the integrated community in the Al Suyoh district of New Sharjah.

Homes, which include 124 units within the overall 1,117-residence masterplan, are currently being handed over. This includes two-bedroom townhouses to five-bedroom villas. This means that construction activity is now complete at Arada's first community, which was Sharjah's fastest-selling project when its first phase sold out in less than a month after its launch in 2017.

The Group CEO of Arada, Ahmed

Alkhoshaibi, said: "Our promise to buyers when we launched Nasma Residences was simple; beautifully designed homes, great facilities, competitive pricing and timely delivery. As construction nears conclusion, I am happy to say that Arada has fulfilled that promise, ensuring that Nasma Residences is now regarded as one of Sharjah's most sought-after and popular communities. At the same time, we are committed to ensuring an exceptional lifestyle for everyone who lives in Nasma Residences, and we will continue to arrange regular family-friendly entertainment and events as well as maintaining the beautiful green spaces and facilities to the high standard our residents expect from us."

Other facilities within Nasma Residences include two smaller parks plus a second shopping centre along with a mosque.

inbrief

SONY SHOWROOM LAUNCHES

Ashrafs Bahrain, one of the most popular shopping destinations in the Kingdom, is showcasing Sony's wide range of products at its new electronics showroom at Bahrain City Centre. The new outlet offers customers a cutting-edge shopping experience as they get to browse the latest Sony technology and electronic products.

B&Q OPENS FRANCHISE UNITS

Al-Futtaiam Group has launched B&Q KSA, with the first two stores now open in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, following the announcement of a franchise partnership with Kingfisher PLC, the international home improvement group and B&Q's parent company, in 2021.

FIVE GUYS ADDS SECOND SITE

This is the award-winning burger joint's second location in Abu Dhabi, and its 12th in the UAE. Situated on level two of The Galleria Al Maryah Island, close to the cinema, this new location offers the same high-quality Five Guys menu that customers have come to know and love.

BARBAR SET TO EXPAND MORE

The Lebanese favourite Barbar has seen immense success in the Emirate, opening its second branch in Dubai and has plans to expand in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The brand, to keep up with demand, has launched a second Dubai location at Bay Avenue in Business Bay.

TANISHQ PLANS GCC ENTRY

The jewellery arm of India's Tata Group, Tanishq, is lining up expansion plans in UAE and entry into the GCC. It is set to open two new exclusive showrooms - the first one recently launched in Dubai's Karama neighbourhood, while the second one is slated to be opened in Abu Dhabi soon.



RALPH LAUREN HAS OPENED A RALPH'S COFFEE SHOP IN HONG KONG

Ralph's Coffee opens in Hong Kong on the mezzanine floor of the Ralph Lauren Landmark Prince's flagship. Building on the success of Ralph's Coffee Ocean Terminal, it is the first Ralph's Coffee permanent location on Hong Kong Island.

The shop serves Ralph's Coffee along with a selection of teas. Some of Ralph Lauren's favourite sweet treats are also available, including Ralph's signature brownie and The Polo Bar's New York Cheesecake in addition to a selection of savoury options. Customers will also be able to purchase Ralph's Coffee merchandise from canvas totes and baseball caps, to coffee mugs and dessert plates, and of course a bag of Ralph's Signature Roast.

Building upon the unique, lavish art deco details within the flagship, the café offers a pleasant interlude for the luxury fashionista to enjoy a cup of Ralph's signature coffee. Walking through the mezzanine floor storefront, a rich material palette is displayed throughout.

Ralph's Coffee has locations globally, including shops within flagship stores in Tokyo and Beijing.



SMOOR, A BANGALORE-BASED LUXURY CHOCOLATE BRAND OPENS ITS FIRST STAND-ALONE STORE AND CAFE IN BANDRA WEST. THE NEW CAFE, WHICH IS THEIR FIRST SIGNATURE CAFE IN MUMBAI, WILL OFFER THE FINEST RANGE OF UNIQUE COUVERTURE CHOCOLATES, CAKES, PASTRIES, DESSERTS, MACARONS AND A LOT MORE. THE CAFE OFFERS UNIQUE CHOCOLATE TASTING EXPERIENCES FOR CUSTOMERS TO KNOW WHAT TRUE COUVERTURE CHOCOLATE IS. EXCLUSIVE ON THEIR LIST IS THEIR RANGE OF INDIAN ORIGIN ARTISANAL CHOCOLATES, AS THE 'BEAN TO BAR' CONCEPT GAINS POPULARITY INTERNATIONALLY AND THE SOUTHERN PART OF INDIA IS A MAJOR CHOCOLATE PRODUCER WITH ITS IDEAL CLIMATIC CONDITIONS.

BLUESTONE LAUNCHES OBEROI MALL STORE

BlueStone has launched a new store at Oberoi Mall, on the western express highway at Goregaon east in Mumbai. The store is spread across 1,000sq ft, offering an elevated shopping experience with 400+ hand-picked styles from over 8,600 designs spread across BlueStone's 100+ collections which includes necklaces, pendants, rings, earrings, solitaires, and jewellery for men and kids.

Sudeep Nagar, COO, BlueStone, speaking on the launch, said, "Mumbai is one of the foremost markets for us in the country and we are extremely delighted to have established a strong customer base in the city. Our 10th outlet here stands testimony to our success and growth prospects. Mumbai's cosmopolitan culture and the conglomeration of millions of people from different cultural backgrounds has prompted us to add a wide variety of designs at the Oberoi Mall store with exquisite new designs and latest collections. We hope to serve a large section of both existing and new customers from here."

SUNWAY CARNIVAL MALL EXPANDS FOOTPRINT

Sunway Carnival Mall has opened its doors to shoppers in Malaysia at its soft opening on 24 June. The launch came with a committed occupancy of 95 per cent and more to come in its official launch targeted in the following months of 2022.

Since the start of the expansion and refurbishment in 2018, Sunway Carnival has doubled its retail space to one million square feet, with an anticipated annual visitation and footfall to reach 12 million by year end.

The USD113.5 million expansion now accommodates a total of 350 shops and an expanded parking area with as many as 3,200 parking bays. With improved access via a dedicated ramp from the highway, shoppers now have more points of entry and egress to the newly upgraded mall.

The mall is also equipped with various family-friendly facilities such as a kid's toilet, baby room with private nursing rooms for shoppers' convenience and a children's play area.

ADIDAS HAS UNVEILED ITS LARGEST STORE IN BENGALURU

Leading sportswear giant adidas unveiled their largest store in Bengaluru, located at Brigade Road.

The store is a blend of multiple digital touch points and embodies the future of retail experience for consumers. The store is spread across 6,500sq ft of retail area across four floors, the store focuses on three important pillars which are Experience, Sustainability, and Credibility.

The store provides the consumer a glimpse into the world of adidas, offering a wide variety of products for men, women & kids across categories like running, training, sportswear, football, basketball, golf, tennis & outdoor. The store also has multiple sport & experience zones like an exclusive football floor with an extended terrace play area.



RELIANCE BRANDS CONFIRMS PRET A MANGER DEAL IN INDIA

Indian fashion and lifestyle retail operator, Reliance Brands, has confirmed the launch of the UK-based premium coffee chain Pret A Manger in India, marking the retailer's first foray into the F&B sector.

The India launch is part of Pret A Manger's strategy to further expand its presence globally, which will see the brand launching into several markets, including Spain, Portugal, the Republic of Ireland and the Middle East.

"RBL closely follows the pulse of Indian consumers, and there is an increased consciousness of what we eat - rapidly making food the new fashion," said Darshan Mehta, MD, Reliance Brands.

"Indians, like their global counterparts, are seeking fresh and organic ingredient-led dining experiences which have been

synonymous with Pret's core offering."

Pret A Manger's India debut, reported by Inside Retail last month, comes at a time when the competition in the country's cafe market heats up and is dominated by Starbucks and Cafe Coffee Day, which run more than 500 and 250 outlets, respectively, across the country. Canadian coffee chain Tim Hortons struck a deal with a joint venture earlier this year to establish its first store in India this year with a plan to roll out 300 locations across the country over the next decade.

"Two decades ago, we opened Pret's first shop in Asia and it's been an inspiration for all of us to bring our freshly made food and 100 per cent organic coffee to new cities across the continent," said Pano Christou, CEO of Pret A Manger.

SEPHORA ADDS INITIATIVES

Over the past few years, Sephora has consistently introduced new brands to their Chinese-speaking customers. This has aided the retailer in expanding both its global model portfolio and awareness of the Chinese language luxury market. They have unveiled three new beauty initiatives as part of its commitment to Chinese-speaking customers.

GUESS IS SET FOR EXPANSION

The company is expanding its retail presence with the opening of its sixth store in DLF Saket, Delhi. The mall offers more than 50 global brands attracting shoppers from all around. The store brings to life the young, contemporary and sexy vibe of the brand that is renowned around the world.

LENSKART BUYS BRAND STAKE

India's largest eyewear retailer Lenskart is buying an approximately 75 per cent stake in Japanese eyewear chain Owndays. The company has around 460 stores in 13 countries and regions. Lenskart has about 1,100 stores in India, Singapore, and other countries.

LUK FOOK TO ADD 500 STORES

Jeweller Luk Fook has revealed plans to add a net 500 retail stores during the coming year, as it reports a 32.5 per cent increase in sales during the latest financial year. Around 50 stores will open under Luk Fook's new diffusion brands. Last year, the jeweller added a net 443 stores.

LULU GROUP EXPAND IN INDIA

Global retail conglomerate Lulu Group recently announced its expansion in three more Indian cities, namely Chennai, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad. After successfully entering with the North Indian retail market with Lucknow, Lulu Group announces its entry Western India with Ahmedabad.

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CCCC Jimei Center, Xiamen, China
Diriyah Square, Diriyah, Saudi Arabia
Fourth Mile, London, UK
Solitaire, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- 2. RLI MOST ANTICIPATED OPENING 2022***
*The Shortlist for this Category will be announced the first week of August
- 3. RLI BEST PLACEMAKING SCHEME**
Distrito Armida, Monterrey, Mexico
The Boulevard at Outlet Park, Banbridge, Northern Ireland
Weihai Huafa Newland, Weihai, China
Wuhan Huafa Zhongcheng Mall, Wuhan, China
- 4. RLI MOST INNOVATIVE RETAIL & TOURISM DESTINATION**
Hengqin Village, Zhuhai, China
Shoppes at Londoner, Macao, China
Steen & Strøm, Oslo, Norway
- 5. RLI INTERNATIONAL SHOPPING CENTRE - NEW BUILD**
Al Plaza, Shanghai, China
CIFI Mall, Chengdu, China
MixC Ningbo, Ningbo, China
Shoppes at Londoner, Macao, China
- 6. RLI INTERNATIONAL SHOPPING CENTRE - RENOVATION**
Joy Breeze, Beijing, China
Link Central Walk, Shenzhen, China
Neighbourhood Centre 'Mesto Vstrechi Sofia', Moscow, Russia
Neighbourhood Centre 'Mesto Vstrechi Vysota', Moscow, Russia
- 7. RLI INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD - RETAILER**
Abdullah AlOthaim Markets
Alshaya Group
Chalhoub Group
Rituals Cosmetics
- 8. RLI INNOVATION IN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD - PROJECT**
Abdullah AlOthaim Markets
Chalhoub Group
Rituals Cosmetics
- 9. RLI GLOBAL RETAILER OF THE YEAR**
Alshaya Group
Bateel
Giordano

- 10. RLI MIDDLE EAST RETAILER OF THE YEAR**
Alshaya Group
Bateel
Chalhoub Group
GMG
- 11. RLI ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE OPERATOR OF THE YEAR**
Alshaya Group
Flip Out
Gravity Active Entertainment
- 12. RLI MOST IMMERSIVE ATTRACTION & EXPERIENCE**
Flip Out
Gravity Active Entertainment
Yas Mall Experience
- 13. RLI HOSPITALITY OPERATOR OF THE YEAR***
*The Shortlist for this Category will be announced the first week of August
- 14. RLI DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR**
DAMAC Properties
Futureal Group
Marakez
Zhuhai Huafa Properties
- 15. RLI DESIGNER OF THE YEAR**
Aedas
Benoy
Design International
Quadrant Design
- 16. RLI CONTRACTOR OF THE YEAR***
*The Shortlist for this Category will be announced the first week of August
- 17. RLI INTERIOR EXCELLENCE**
Al Musbah - King Abdulaziz Airport Intl, Departures, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia by HMY Group
Bründl Kaprun, Kaprun, Austria by umdasch The Store Makers
IMAR - Hamad Intl Airport Doha, Qatar by HMY Group
Lustro Kingdome Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia by umdasch The Store Makers
- 18. RLI INNOVATION IN TECHNOLOGY AWARD**
Etele Plaza
Yas Mall Experience



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Bursting with Belgian Heritage

Inspired by the passion and craftsmanship of its founder, Belgian master chocolatier Pierre Draps, and the fierce determination of its namesake Lady Godiva, GODIVA has built an authentic and legendary business centred on its premium-quality chocolate. Here, RLI speaks with the company's Global CEO Nurtac Afridi about how the business has evolved and what new delights customers can expect in the future.

Encompassing a rich history of almost 100 years, GODIVA has maintained an unwavering commitment to quality in their premium products, its signature packaging and their time-tested production techniques that have earned the highest honours from the Belgian Royal Court.

What makes GODIVA stand out is the taste of their couverture chocolate – a rich, well-balanced, indulgent taste that come from their chocolate's high cocoa content and the peerless recipes that have been handed down from the founder.

That dedication to chocolate artistry endures today, thanks to the work of their master chefs and their dedicated employees. Today, extraordinary GODIVA products are available in more than 100 countries worldwide, and the journey they are on to exceed consumer's expectations continues.

GODIVA is a global icon in the world of chocolate and in addition to its presence in e-commerce, in mass grocery and in retail stores across the globe; they also operate brick-and-mortar locations in select markets, tapping into local needs and cultures to delight consumers.

"For example, our GODIVA Delight locations are a unique offering of our business in Asia, using a combination

of GODIVA's signature soft serve ice cream combined with local flavours, like black sesame and matcha," explains Nurtac Afridi, Global CEO of GODIVA. "Likewise, our signature GODIVA Cafes across our Middle Eastern markets provides favourite gathering spots where consumers have the opportunity to linger and enjoy the regional ritual of coffee or tea with GODIVA chocolate. In addition, we've long been present in the global travel retail sector, which we consider an invaluable gateway to winning the hearts of new consumers from around the world."

In recent times the company has experienced strong household penetration and continued growth in new channels, particularly in North America, Greater China and EMEA. Examples of this include a 31 per cent growth in North America and how last year saw the strongest household growth gains from millennial consumers, with sales increasing in the double digits for that target range.

When we ask Afridi about the company's

development pipeline for the next couple of years, she explains that their growth strategy is built upon their investment in innovation. They are continuing to increase the availability of their premium quality chocolate. An example of this is that, recently in the US, they launched individually wrapped artisanal caramels coated in GODIVA chocolate and they have made a version of their iconic Classic Gold box available in their Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) channels.

In addition, they are expanding their offerings of GODIVA biscuits (cookies in the US market) to global grocery retailers, making them individually wrapped for sharing and easy to find on market shelves. Of course, premium gifting will always be at the heart of the brand offer, and they are always finding new ways for consumers to celebrate life's most special moments with GODIVA.

Speaking on a longer term basis, Afridi says they are looking at expanding their offerings in the health and wellness space, tapping into different dietary needs while always maintaining their signature quality.

"For the rest of 2022, we have plans to expand in Germany and France and increase our footprint in the Middle East. We are also developing our omni-channel approach in these regions while continuing to invest in locally relevant brick-and-mortar formats, like GODIVA Delight or GODIVA Cafes, across the rest of EMEA and Asia."

To maintain their position in the market, first and foremost the company listens to their consumers as this helps and informs them on what they want and then the business acts on them insights. They are creating an expanded network of availability of their chocolates across different channels, and this strategy is working.

In addition, they are engaging with their younger consumers on social platforms, expanding their footprint with new retail and licensing partnerships, continuing to re-invigorate their product selection and grounding themselves in purpose.

Their recent innovations have also included expanding the wonder of GODIVA through licensing partnerships. This has included expansions into the world of retail ice cream, bake-at-home cookies, holiday decoration

kits, and even luxury 'chocolate diamonds'. "Our Global Executive Chef Thierry Muret collaborated closely with each partner to ensure that GODIVA's commitments to innovation, premium ingredients, and quality were reflected in every offering that boasts our partnership," Afridi explains.

Launched just recently was the GODIVA is Chocolate campaign, which signalled an important expansion of the GODIVA premium appeal to the global marketplace with exciting, relatable, creative concepts that help position the brand as part of their consumer's daily lives. As part of this campaign, the brand has partnered with acclaimed internationally-renowned actor Chris Evans to be the voice of the new GODIVA is Chocolate global marketing campaign.

The company's vision for a sustainable and thriving cocoa industry is one where farmers prosper, communities are empowered, human rights are respected and the environment is conserved and enhanced through regenerative practices.

This starts with ensuring traceability and transparency throughout their cocoa value chain. To date, GODIVA has been able to source 97 per cent of its supply through just two countries: Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, and they have made key investments with on-the-ground partners to ensure smallholder farms are empowered to build both sustainable agriculture and achieve a diversified income stream.

"In the coming years, we are excited to share more as we support our suppliers in the creation of Living Income and labour remediation programs. Through our partnership with Earthworm Foundation, we've seen the landscape of cocoa growing communities transformed through training programs and the establishment of innovative credit-building programs like Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)," explains Afridi.

"These cooperatives dovetail with GODIVA's mission to empower women globally, as VSLAs give women in cocoa-growing communities' access to financial resources to pursue their own projects and become entrepreneurs building a more wonderful world," Nurtac concludes.





Dongtan, South Korea

Considered Design, Curated Living



The Conran Shop offers a unique and distinctive blend of design classics and future collectibles, whilst its innovative selection has inspired and excited visitors for generations. Here, RLI sits down with Peter Jenkins, CEO of the company to discuss how it is undergoing a comprehensive transformation plan that will stand the business in good stead for years to come.

Founded by the late Sir Terence Conran in 1973, his early inspiration for his retail spaces came from the continental hypermarkets of the 1950s, and each of their stores offer a unique, design-led experience. The Conran Shop has a heritage that spans almost 50 years and in that time it has established itself as a brand synonymous with all areas of design.

Today they operate two flagship stores across Chelsea and Marylebone in London, along with a concession in Selfridges, a flagship in Paris, France, four franchise stores across Japan and their most recent additions to the

store portfolio, two flagships in South Korea which are situated in Dongtan and Gangnam respectively.

Due to all the market alterations and changes in consumer trends in the past couple of years, the company has reviewed its entire business model, and has developed a comprehensive transformation plan that will see them invest in a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. This new ERP will become an essential component as they seek to better understand their customer and improve their journey with them, both digitally and across their physical store environments.

“The pandemic has truly created some never-before-seen circumstances, and leading a business through this period has been a real challenge,” explains Peter Jenkins, CEO of The Conran Shop. “As this was an unprecedented period, no rule book existed so as a leadership team we looked to stay ahead of the situation, stay as close as possible to our teams and continue to lead by the company’s core values.”

The store portfolio of the company expanded to a new country in 2019 with the opening of their award-winning South Korea flagship site. Following this, the entire business was thrilled to open its most recent and highly anticipated second location in the country in Dongtan, which is a rapidly growing area situated 40 kilometres south of Seoul.

The new shop is situated on the ground floor of the ultramodern eight-storey Lotte Department Store and it was designed and realised by the in-house Creative Team, resulting in a condensed version of the Gangnam flagship: a steel frame encased in obscured three-metre vertical glass fins. The fixtures within the store are in white powder-coated steel using simple materials throughout, while raw concrete columns are clad with four floor-to-ceiling video screens featuring content by their in-house Graphics Team.

With a collection of stores that spans two continents, the brand continues to look for additional sites and they are currently entering into several new partnerships that will assist them in the growth of the brand, the creation of a new audience and increased brand awareness.

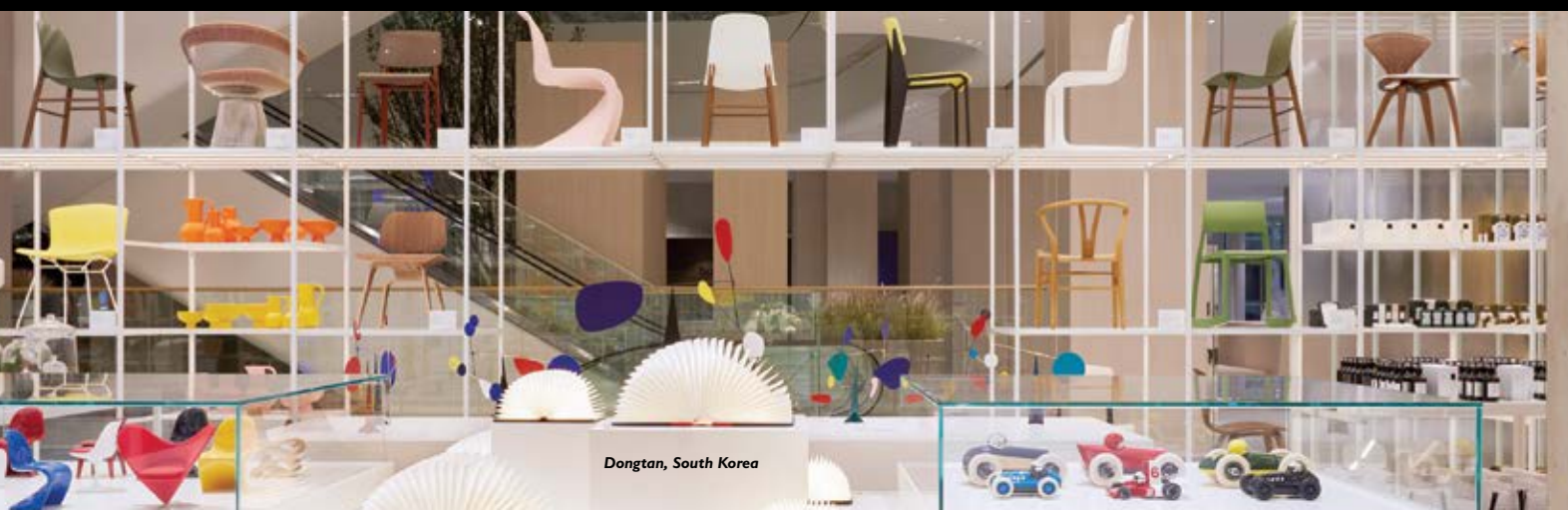
“Working with the right partners will provide fresh insight and ideas which will help us to learn and improve as a brand. We will continue to focus on our customer, delivering the best possible service and evolving our range and overall offer,” explains Jenkins.

When discussing the future of retail and how they engage with their customers, Jenkins explains that they are focused on putting the customer and their experience at the centre of everything they do.

“Whilst we have seen significant improvements over time, we still have so much more to do in this area. Another thing which helps us to build relationships with our customers is events; we host brand events in our flagship stores in London and Paris that give great experiences and help inspire our guests to curate their homes and lifestyles.”

Doing their part in the global sustainability drive, The Conran Shop has partnered with Positive Luxury who are helping them to build their full Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy as the company works towards being carbon neutral by 2030. They have in place now a clear map of how to reach this objective, and have passionate colleagues to make it happen.

“As we look to the future, Sir Terence Conran’s founding vision of championing plain, simple, and useful design objects from established designers and emerging talents across the globe, continues to inspire us to create unbeatable shopping and cultural experiences,” Jenkins concludes.



Dongtan, South Korea



Chelsea, London, UK



Marylebone Basement, London, UK

Inspiring a Lifetime of Rare Experiences



Soneva are creators of luxurious and sustainable resorts. They are a thriving community working hand in hand with the environment to craft beautiful, beyond bespoke experiences where discovery is a way of life. Here, RLI spends some time with the CEO & Co-Founder, Sonu Shivdasani to learn more about the concept behind the brand and why its operating model has brought such tremendous success.

The story behind the brand began back in 1987 when Sonu Shivdasani first visited the Maldives with his wife Eva – Soneva Co-Founder – and he immediately fell in love with the picturesque views and simple way of life.

Together, after considerable time and effort, the couple launched their first resort called Soneva Fushi in the Maldives' Baa Atoll in 1995 where it redefined tourism in the Maldives and soon became known as the country's premier island destination.

This original site was followed by Soneva Kiri on the island of Koh Kood in Thailand in 2009, the 23-metre luxury yacht, Soneva in Aqua in

late 2015 in the Maldives and then the opening of Soneva Jani came the following year, which is also in the Maldives in the Noonu Atoll.

"At Soneva, we have always endeavoured to be a pioneer in the hospitality industry, whether that is through the opening of some of the first spas in resorts in Asia, introducing private pools to villas and open-air bathrooms, or including observatories and private cinemas at all of our resorts, we always strive to offer the very best to our guests," explains Sonu Shivdasani, CEO & Co-Founder of Soneva.

The company's latest initiative, Soneva Soul was launched in December last year and this transformative wellness brand combines ancient healing

with modern science to reconnect mind, body and soul. It is guided by the principle of 'lifestyle evolution, tailoring personalised care plans to help guests realise their utmost potential and achieve their long-term wellness goals. Soneva Soul offers each guest a truly personalised pathway to health, happiness and fulfilment – meaning that no Soneva Soul journey will look the same.

In the months to come, the company has a number of exciting new projects that they will be introducing, including new one-bedroom beach villas at Soneva Jani as well as some new family experiences at the Jani site which are due to launch in July.

"Soneva Soul will also be introducing some new specialist wellness treatments such as Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapies and Traditional Chinese Medicine treatments. Next year we will also be hosting a wellness festival – Soul, which will be held over a ten-day period and

feature some leading Indian practitioners for a series of insightful talks, presentations and specialist wellness offerings."

On the topic of new properties, Sonu explains that the first thing they look at is the location itself and what, if any, infrastructure is in place, or is it a place where they need to build from the ground up. Next, they look at what experiences they could potentially offer their guests – whether they are getting to enjoy the local marine life up close or does it embrace their Slow Life philosophy and commitment to operating sustainably. Finally, does the location or property have a sense of place and culture? By this Sonu means does it embrace its local surroundings and people and integrate them into the overall resort experience.

The company are all about offering customers what they call 'rare' experiences. They have a lot of repeat guests, so it is also about offering them a reason to return to the resorts year after year.

Soneva Soul Island Spa at Soneva Jani
Medhufaru Island, Manadhoo, Maldives



"Throughout the year we offer a rich array of guest activities and experiences to ensure that every stay is unique, whether this involves gazing at the stars through one of the largest telescopes in the Indian Ocean at our observatory, learning to free dive or snorkelling with our Marine Biologist," Shivdasani explains.

Both e-commerce and social media are important aspects of Soneva's overall marketing mix. They maintain a strong presence on social media to attract Millennials and Generation Z consumers and they do this by engaging on a regular basis with high-profile celebrities, sports stars and influencers from around the world, and their Instagram following has recently hit 1.1 million.

In addition, they also maintain a presence on LinkedIn which focuses primarily on disseminating our business news and high-priority projects whilst for younger audiences; they are starting to grow their TikTok engagement as well.

The Soneva.com website accounts for around half of their bookings and they continue to invest in this area to make the guest online booking experience easier and more seamless. With this in mind, over the coming months, they will be launching a new online retail platform as well so that their guests can experience Soneva at home. Finally, they are exploring the Metaverse to

identify if there are any synergies or avenues for them to work within.

The topic of sustainability is more relevant than ever, and this is part of the DNA of the company, and they ensure that in all aspects of the business they operate in the most sustainable way they possibly can.

"At the resorts for example, we are proud to say that 90 per cent of our solid waste is recycled. We view waste as a valuable resource and have created a sophisticated Waste-to-Wealth programme. Since its inception the programme has generated over USD 2.5 million in value from waste handling and vegetable production," says Shivdasani.

As owners and operators of their resorts, Sonu and Eva can focus on their philosophy and enhancing that. They are able to evolve and innovate rapidly as the world changes. He feels this is a key driver of the Soneva brand and that a visit to a Soneva resort will clearly show how different they are from any other luxury experience that exists in the market where they operate.

"We believe that luxury is defined as something that is rare or uncommon for the consumer and with this in mind, the experience we have created for our guests is as far removed from an urban scenario as possible, letting them indulge in things they rarely get to do in their daily lives."

Soneva Kiri, Thailand



Soneva Kiri, Thailand



Soneva Soul Island Spa at Soneva Jani
Medhufaru Island, Manadhoo, Maldives



Soneva Fushi, Maldives



Didcot, UK



Capturing the Imagination

Kaspas's Desserts is a chain of exciting franchise dessert houses that offers its patrons the world's favourite hot and cold desserts all under one roof. Here, RLI sits down with company Founder & CEO Azhar Rehman to learn more about its infamous products and discuss the expansion of the business and what keeps bringing people back for more.



Launched in the UK back in 2012, the mission behind Kaspas's Desserts is to create an environment where enjoying authentic desserts with family, friends and loved ones is an unforgettable experience. The business strives to continuously provide their guests with irresistible products and unrivalled customer service.

Their menu boasts a mouth-watering selection of ice creams, gelatos, waffles, crepes, milkshakes, smoothies and sundaes and their parlours will change the way customers view a dessert.

By the end of this summer, Kaspas's Desserts will have a portfolio of over 90 stores, and will be present on three continents. "We have opened a double-digit number of stores in the last year, despite the difficulties the ongoing pandemic has presented," explains Azhar Rehman, Founder & CEO of Kaspas's Desserts. "Our tenth anniversary is at the end of the year and we would like to celebrate this by reaching the century mark. Whilst this would be a massive achievement for a business of our size, we are setting in place the groundwork to increase the number of openings over the coming years."

In terms of its recent expansion, the company launched a site in Southampton at the beginning of May and in Surrey at the beginning of June. Both of these sites received an overwhelming response and were opened by existing franchisees, one now operating five sites with the other now running two locations.

Meanwhile, last winter they launched their second store in Bristol and this has also achieved tremendous success. This particular site opened up a new retail park model which the chain is now looking to expand to other locations.

The aim for Kaspas's is to open an additional 25 to 30 stores in the UK within the next 24 months whilst continuing the positive discussions with partners in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

"We are currently exploring international markets with the view of issuing Master Franchise Agreements. We are already operational in Pakistan and our first store in Marrakesh opens in August. We have a very high level of interest from various countries and we are fairly flexible in our approach, but having a single interface with a partner helps and offers more benefits to the Master franchisee," says Rehman.

When looking for new locations, the most important aspect for the team is to study the demographics and shopper habits in the surrounding area, but they also take into consideration the overall outlook of the premises as its visibility and accessibility are pivotal to a memorable customer experience.

The customer experience is more prevalent than ever, and the Kaspas's business model is based around an experience that is memorable, therefore they make every effort to create the right ambience for their customers to enjoy and come back.

The company has recently invested in a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to remain close to loyal as well as new



customers and they provide engaging material on social media to ensure the memories remain alive after a visit.

"In addition, we are always looking to develop new products through our experienced and innovative team. We frequently travel across the UK and further afield to bring back inspiration and new ideas. We also have regular meetings with our suppliers and have brainstorming sessions to keep up with new trends. Some old favourites can be revised and modernised, but we always maintain an open mind and the bravery to try something new. We are not afraid of failing – as long as we learn something and get it right next time."

Technology has rapidly advanced within the hospitality industry in terms of the way companies interact with their guests. From delivery services, table ordering, self-service kiosks to click and collect, Kaspas's have adapted in order to remain up-to-date with current trends.

A new Kaspas's Desserts app has just been released with more functionality, but Rehman says that the momentum in technological innovation never stops. He feels that the key is to find the next opportunity, which is something that they did during the pandemic when their online sales grew by over 80 per cent.

"We engage with our customers through regular online activity, loyalty programs, offers and incentives such as partnering up with theme parks, holiday operators, movie launches and more. But above all else, we need to be consistent throughout our growth," Rehman comments.

Sustainability is a hot topic in the world of hospitality, and this matter is an important one for Kaspas's. From banning single-use plastic, like straws,

to opting for paper-based options and materials, to using heat recycling dishwashers, it is engrained in all that they do. Rehman feels that everyone associated with the company is all in it together and in the past decade they have seen some of their guests grow with them. He goes on to say that the new generations that are coming through have clear ideas about protecting the environment, and that they make choices about where they eat based upon these views. He is proud of the work that they do in this space and vows that they will continue to break new ground moving forward.

So what does he feel are the key drivers behind the brand's success in the last ten years?

"I feel that the excitement that we create in our parlours is a key part of our success. Our proposition always wants to be exciting, we always want to keep up with current trends and we always want to be ahead of the curve for new trends."

As the interview reaches its conclusion, Rehman explains about what comes next and what challenges the business faces in the future by saying that cost of living and inflation could be a challenge for every business and that Kaspas's tries to keep the costs down for their guests through economies of scale.

"We are also concerned about the environment and global warming in general and we are continuously striving to improve our carbon footprint. But we remain excited and committed to following our growth plan and continuing our UK and international growth in the right and most sustainable way."

www.kaspas.co.uk



Mellow, Mall of Egypt
6th of October, Egypt



Jooj, City Centre Almaza
Cairo Governorate, Egypt



The Journey of a Lifetime

Baraka Retail Group was formed in 1979 and their mission is to offer their customers the best retail journey in Egypt through their brand stores and ambassadors. Here, RLI sits down with company CEO Ahmed Ragab to talk about the growth of the company and its expansion into different industries in recent years.

Launched 43 years ago as a wholesale business, Baraka Retail Group originally focused on optics within its home nation of Egypt. Today, they are proud to be operating in an array of different industries.

Over the years, the company has expanded its presence within Egypt and the Middle East, and today they have more than 15 brands retailing across 70 stores in Egypt and the GCC. They operate across three divisions, optics, fashion and e-commerce and this is soon to expand with their private labels in regional markets.

"Currently we operate 47 optical stores across Egypt, and 20 fashion stores in Cairo and Alexandria, and recently we launched five new e-commerce brands that are available in Egypt, UAE, and Saudi Arabia along with a minimal presence in European markets," says Ragab.

While recent times have been difficult for companies across the globe

because of the pandemic, the DNA of the group since its foundation has been built on a structure that allows them to be very flexible and adapt and absorb any new market conditions and continue their growth patterns. This method has proved successful over the past decade that has included four years of political unrest, two currency devaluations and two years of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"To sustain the business through these testing times, firstly we tackled how to sustain our cash flow under severe trading conditions that included a forecast of a 70 per cent drop in turnover. Next, we analysed our brand and store profiles, digging deeper into structural operations and filtering growth operations in-line with the new conditions in which we found ourselves. We fully believe that every crisis offers new opportunities, and we are set to grab them with both hands," explains Ahmed Ragab, CEO of Baraka Retail Group.

The business has launched three new concepts recently based on the strategy above. Within the optics division they launched five new People Optics stores, which serves the sophisticated fashion eyewear segment and is driven by limited editions. This concept enables them to capture the missing puzzle in the optics industry, engulfing the market with four different concepts beginning with value eyewear, through to branded eyewear and sophisticated eyewear. This has expanded their market share to 40 per cent of the Egyptian eyewear share.

Meanwhile in the fashion division, they have launched Mellow, a private label that offers entry-level women's fashion. The company grasped an increasing gap in the market, which has more dependence on local manufacturing, to align with their strategic scope of increasing their local manufacturing contribution compared to their imported goods contribution in the fashion division.

Within e-commerce, Baraka has unveiled four new brands, linked to celebrities and influencers through a drop model which is a limited, non-repetitive drop cycle that is altered every three months to ensure continuous hype and freshness in their offering which is especially important in e-commerce spaces.

When discussing the future and potential new markets, Ragab explains that the next year or two will be all about delving deeper into these three new launches and searching for more retail concepts and trends.

"As for new markets, with our retail brands we have a far-reaching strategy and the decision to expand internationally is reached once we mature the brands in their local markets. While for online brands, expansion and launches into new markets is already in the works, with a logistics centre having opened in Dubai to support GCC markets running in parallel to fulfilment centres in Egypt," Ragab comments.

To maintain their position in the market, they are always ensuring flexibility in their structure and their financial strategy to enable the company to adapt and develop with new trends. They do this through a lean structure and maintaining deep cash reserves to adapt and react quickly.

The role of social media cannot be underestimated in today's retail world, and the business has leveraged this segment to tell their stories and they have started a trend of creating tailored drops for social media influencers which are exclusive to Baraka's platforms.

The latest drop launched for one of their influencers is a double sided project, which also incorporates sustainable fashion that has begun a trend in the Egyptian market and through social media mediums, these trends are gaining traction faster.

Baraka Retail Group has enjoyed fantastic success across its brand portfolio and its three main pillars that support its journey are diversity, resilience and growth. Real diversity is reflected in the width they have within their brand portfolio, segments, pricing positioning and retail solutions offered, whether this be online or offline. Their resilience has been shown through their ability to absorb any market challenge and grasp any additional benefit from these challenges, whilst they have always had the mind-set of growth, which has been highlighted in the group's journey and expansion over the years.

As our time with Ahmed comes to a close, we ask him what the ethos of Baraka Retail Group is and what lies ahead for the business?

"Our ethos is to remain relevant and preserve growth patterns regardless of any market shifts. As for the greatest challenge, I would say this is the global supply chain crisis. We continue to work on solutions and tactics to adapt to the worst case scenarios and we remain positive about our future expansion and growth," Ragab concludes.



All store pictures are of London, UK

Think, Act and be Different



Since launching in 2015, Duke + Dexter (D+D) has expanded from its London roots into a global community that works with athletes, musicians, artists, designers, photographers and pioneers who do things differently. In this interview, RLI speaks with company CEO & Founder Archie Hewlett about how the brand does things its own way and why this will continue moving forward.

“There’s a lot of bad footwear out there – made by worse practices,” says Archie Hewlett right at the outset of the interview. “I started D+D seven years ago with a mind-set to bring quality and comfort that comes from transparent supply and production,” the CEO & Founder of D+D explains.

An example of this is that they only use sustainable materials, they know exactly where they’re made, who they are made by and they know why they are making them.

“That ‘why’ is really important, we’re making footwear that exists for a reason, and we’re making it to go against the norm, and to give more than what people expect from them.”

Currently an online-only brand, plans are in place for this to change,

as a flagship store in London is currently under construction and the brand will be launching pop-ups in the US in New York and Los Angeles and across Europe.

There has also been success in the wholesale sector through the joining of forces with the likes of Selfridges, Harrods, Nordstrom & Farfetch. The success of their Wilde penny loafer has cemented this – while the brand has become known for their sneakers – their roots are firmly in the creation of loafers.



So while their planned upcoming stores & retail partnerships are new avenues for the company, from a more commercial aspect they have started to develop the brand within the Australian market and have partnered with Zalando to service Europe more efficiently.

Having created a niche for itself in the sustainability sector, D+D continue to develop new products and initiatives to remain at the forefront of this space, and they do this through their design team that is based in their London lab and Hewlett highlights that they are connected to life in the city, and a lot of their more progressive products stem from that.

“For example, they’re working on the new D+D ECO+ sneaker that will release this winter. It uses a sole unit that actually reduces CO2 levels in its production, uses highly breathable recycled bamboo fibres for the lining and leather that’s 100 per cent biodegradable from one of the world’s most energy and water efficient tanneries.”

The D+D community is one that is always growing and developing and is now built out across multiple sub-groups all across the world and this is something that the team are most proud of. “From direct outreach by the team to wearers of the brand, to events and invites to exclusive projects, like our seasonal campaigns, we’re very much an open shop to the people who follow us and wear our products. Even our offices & design studio have an open-door policy, so that our clients know they can come by whenever.”

Hewlett feels it is this transparency that sets them apart, this sense of originality and ownership – rather than just being another faceless label manufacturing products for the masses.

Their latest social media campaign, Time + Place is a sound example of their approach to online activities. As much as they like to highlight their product, the quality of production and the unerring attention to detail, they also like to show how they want a product to be worn, and to inspire what it should be worn for and with. Their Instagram page has become a shop window and a view inside D+D that includes genuine moments behind the scenes that a lot of other brands try to cover up to feel polished and perfect, this is simply not how D+D operate.

The brand’s upcoming winter collection shows how they are pushing forward with the development of enhanced digital strategies and incorporating these within their physical sites.

“This collection will see us create a very real experience for some friends of the brands, that will in turn be part of our campaign – the release will see some installations at our pop-ups, so we’re taking this analogue and digital approach and making it very tangible, watch this space...”

When asked about the key drivers behind the brand’s success and what differentiates them, Hewlett feels that it is this approach to being real, and not being perfect that sets them apart. They don’t hide their team from the world and they don’t hide their practices as a brand either. They are a subversive brand, and that brings with it risk and mistakes, but the CEO & Founder welcomes this, as he couldn’t think of anything worse than being just another shoe company.

“We’re always open, always honest, and always aiming to make our products the very best they can be. We’re not afraid to delay releases if they’re not perfect, we’re not governed by rules and regulations like a lot of other brands. We sit together, we develop the brand together, and we make great products, together.”

The ethos of D+D is to fight convention and the normal way of doing things. The company is committed in its stance against fast fashion, its impact on the planet, on people’s mindsets, and how people interact with clothing and footwear to serve their lives.

D+D is all about making a commitment against this, and against following the crowd and they want their community to think, act and be different.

As he looks to the future, Hewlett explains that maintaining growth and hiring the right people are the biggest challenges for the company because with growth comes more complex production and hiring needs.

“For me, personally, the greatest challenge will be keeping consistent and not deviating from the mission we’re on.”





Following the Money

Mark Faithfull crunches the numbers as he looks at analysis and expansion that reflects changing markets.



#CuthBack as Aldi and M&S Settle Caterpillar Wars

In one of the UK's most hilarious legal cases, German discounter Aldi has brought back its popular Cuthbert the Caterpillar cake after a legal battle with Marks & Spencer was settled. And in a typically cheeky dig – after a Twitter campaign to free Cuthbert from behind bars – Aldi made the announcement by parking a truck with an advert on the back in a car park outside a branch of M&S.

The comeback follows a settlement in February of this year; after M&S brought a copyright row with Aldi over accusations the German discounter copied the design of its Colin the Caterpillar cake. Both supermarkets confirmed an agreement has been struck but said they could not release details of the “confidential” deal.

H&M and IKEA Launch London Community Store

It all felt terribly Swedish in a small corner of west London recently when Ingka Group – the property arm of Swedish furniture giant IKEA – and Scandinavian fast fashion colossus H&M came together to introduce Atelier100, their first maker-based concept store for local creatives.

This first is in London but could be in Stockholm or Paris, Berlin or Barcelona, and despite the fact that it is the community-based lovechild of two enormous global retail corporations; the idea is that it is the antithesis of corporate.

This Swedish smorgasbord has taken residence in Livat, a former shopping centre in London Hammersmith that Ingka this year converted into an urban, community-based retail centre. That means a city-format IKEA, convenience stores, plus community spaces, a for hire store and Sook – a pop-up host specialist.

And now Livat includes Atelier100, showcasing businesses within 100km of London from the design and creative industries representing a sustainable and ‘hyper-local’ approach to retail. The project initially launched in April with a call for creatives, makers and manufacturers to share their ideas and the aim is for the first selected to begin selling their products from Autumn 2022. In the meantime, the shop will showcase items designed and manufactured by London-based creatives.

The Atelier100 funding and mentorship program means that the designers are receiving financial help and assistance with everything from accounting and creating a business plan through to manufacturing and bringing the products to market. The space has been designed to host workshops, talks and events.



Primark to go Online at Last with Limited Ranges

Fast fashion retailer Primark is to trial a click-and-collect service in the UK in its first significant move into online shopping. The retailer said that it will launch the trial at 25 stores in the north-west of England by the end of the year, but added that the pilot would only include children's apparel and accessories.

This move reflects the company's aim to attract more families into its stores and George Weston, Chief Executive of ABF, said the trial was about “giving more customers more reasons to come to our stores”.

Weston said shoppers would be able to immediately try on items they had ordered online in designated collection areas and pick up additional items from the store if they wished. Click-and-collect and in-store returns will be offered free as part of the trial.

ABF said its new website, which launched in April, has seen online traffic rise by around 60 per cent, and customers who live nearer a smaller Primark store will have access to a much wider range of items.



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How Extended Reality Could be the Saviour of Retail

In this month's Retail Insight feature, Johan Walters, Lead Consultant - SSA, Incubeta takes a moment to discuss with us how extended reality (XR) can be a shining light for retail in the years to come.



The retail sector has fallen on hard times in the past few years. Even before COVID-19 it was starting to struggle, with more customers heading to e-commerce.

Online retail offers convenience and choice but it also lacks some of the areas that in-person retail excels at. For example, trying on clothes and makeup or being able to hold a physical product and experience your goods before you buy.

Enter extended reality (XR). XR is the collective term for various immersive technologies including augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR). It also represents the future of retail, combining the ease and convenience of digital shopping with the advantages of the physical environment. With the sector forecast to reach \$17.8bn in value in the next five years, now is the time to embrace the benefits of the new technology.

What role does XR play in the future of retail?

Customer expectations are higher than ever, and the onus is now on retailers to provide a memorable experience that encourages repeat custom and increased sales. XR provides the tools to build a greater experience, quicker purchases, fewer returns, and improved brand efficiency. It allows consumers to engage and interact with products in a tangible, yet virtual environment.

One example is Shopify AR - a digital store add-on that allows the shopper to create a 3D version of a product on their device, which they can then view from all angles, giving the shopper a better sense of the product. According to Shopify data, this boosts purchasing confidence, increasing conversion rates by up to 250 per cent.

How are retailers embracing XR? Augmented Reality

AR can bring the world of e-commerce to life whilst retaining convenience. It enables users to try on clothes, and makeup and even take a glimpse into remodelling their homes. L'Oréal, for example, uses artificial intelligence (AI) and AR technology to let consumers 'try on' makeup products from their devices by superimposing the selected makeup onto an image.

The Metaverse

It's highly likely you've heard of 'the Metaverse' - a virtual world, where people can interact, play, attend events and work. What you might not be aware of are the potential opportunities it opens for retailers. According to a recent study by JP Morgan, \$54bn is spent

on virtual goods every year, which is why a number of major brands including Nike, Ralph Lauren and Coca-Cola are making big investments in AR and XR.

Fast fashion brand Forever 21 has seen significant results with a virtual store in the platform Roblox. Launched in 2021, the virtual store, which sells outfits for avatars, was so successful the brand has created physical items to mirror those sold in the virtual store.

Content commerce

Shoppable media platforms, such as AiBUY, turn advertising into a shoppable experience. With such technology, shoppers can complete their purchase directly from an ad or social media content, without having to leave the platform. This not only adds an interactive element to your content but also shortens the path to purchase. According to an Impact.com report, eight in ten businesses believe that commerce content will contribute to a larger portion of their publishing revenue in the future and 45 per cent have seen a higher total revenue since its introduction.

The challenges to overcome with XR

The first challenge that retailers are going to face is the price of XR. However, the cost of implementation isn't necessarily as high as some would think. Whilst VR and MR require expensive equipment and a lot of development to position a brand, AR remains relatively easier to adopt - even more so if you create a filter for social media.

There is also the issue of market readiness, with many retailers seeing XR as more of a gimmick. But the success XR has had in boosting conversion rates is hard to argue with. As consumer interest continues to rise with 22.5 per cent of global consumers looking to invest in a standalone VR headset over the next two years, it's becoming apparent that this is a growing trend.

The future of retail and XR

There's no right or wrong way for a retailer to adopt XR. But one thing stands, as the world of XR grows, now is the time to make a move. Brands should consider the solutions that are right for them, and the time and resources needed to leverage this technology.

Importantly, as retailers include XR in their marketing and retail strategies, they must continue to stay focused on customer experience. Brands should remember that XR is an addition to their existing offerings and shouldn't be introduced simply to be "on-trend". Tailor any solutions to help problem-solve or enhance the journey and you will reap the rewards.



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Why design is the differentiator in creating hospitality spaces



In this month's *Leisure Insight*, Nick Stringer, Co-Founder and Partner at London-based design, architecture and brand agency, Shed, takes some time out to highlight why design is such an important attribute in the creation of future hospitality spaces.

The hospitality industry has been amongst the hardest hit by Covid and as leisure, hotel and food & drink establishments hit back to regain what's been lost, many are realising that design is sometimes the secret weapon in their armament that supercharges ambitious business plans for the future.

Never underestimate the value of quality design. It's a differentiator when it comes to designing successful interiors for hospitality and leisure venues whether that be a hotel, restaurant or socialising space. It creates memorable, well thought-out spaces that people enjoy spending time in and ultimately, spend more money in, as things simply just make sense.

Good design doesn't just happen, there's an in-depth process that runs at the start of every project that involves research into consumer behaviour such as buying, socialising and eating habits as well as lifestyle factors that all play a crucial part in the final design. The pandemic dramatically shifted how customers engage with a hospitality or leisure venue and operators have had to adapt in response.

They also had to respond swiftly to lead the fightback. Suddenly some vulnerable F&B brands disappeared; locations became available which had previously been prohibitively expensive. The smart operators capitalised on site potential and amplified it with re-imagined versions of their brands. It was a death knell for some and simultaneously an opportunity for the more progressive.

Having a good narrative is king in design and was key to the fightback. Consumers today do not want to compromise on a mediocre experience at a venue when so much has been missed in the last few years. Every experience counts and many hospitality brands have recognised this and are building even more immersive experiences for their customers to encourage repeat custom and the all-important social sharing. This industry is changeable and is very much about 'being in the know'. Pop-ups lead that charge but additionally, collaborations and residencies add a layer of the 'here and now'. Social sharing amplifies the exposure further.

In today's hospitality world, before a customer walks through the door the social experience has started with the online check-ins and bookings driving the experience prior to arrival. Designed interiors are an extension of the brand language and visual identity used online, building trust, intrigue and excitement amongst customers in the run up. Take Birdies Crazy Golf, who lead the trend for a new breed of hospitality venue known as competitive socialising, merging game-play with food and drink. Birdies brings 'illuminate chaos' that instantly stands it apart from other hospitality brands and runs seamlessly online through to their venues. When designing their new venue that opens July 2022 in Angel, London, each strategic design choice from materiality to lighting and game play had to not only support the brand identity of 'Illuminate chaos' but was the brand identity, heightening the game-playing experience.

Lighting is another crucial design aspect that can define a space. If done well and appropriately, strategic lighting design, when combined with the right design approach, creates a mood, dare we say 'vibe', which sets the entire tone for a hospitality space. It can create calm in relaxing spaces such as an intimate dining experience

or a tranquil spa. Whereas in a different space that is high octane and energetic, as is the case with Birdies Angel in London, lighting is used to make a bold statement. By using exaggerated colours, movement and mood and moving from dark to light, an amplified sensory experience can be created that heightens the competitive socialising experience. People are in it to win it! The absence of light should never be underestimated too. For a restaurant brand such as MEATliquor, known for kickstarting the 'dirty burger' revolution, the lack of lighting aligned with the brand's maverick punk personality and offer, creating shadow and intrigue. It worked and they've expanded rapidly in recent years putting design at the heart of their growth strategy.

Good design also means being able to adapt to the parameters (and sometimes limitations) of a venue whether the location be a shopping centre, a bustling high street, a warehouse or even cliff-top! Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, it's important to recognise the beauty and potential in every space, taking into account public access and natural light as well as how the site needs to perform.

Sustainability is also now a key requirement in hospitality design, driven not only by the need for businesses to report on their sustainability commitments but on consumer demand. This is particularly true when designing hospitality venues for young adults or Gen Z, with 45 per cent stopping purchasing certain brands because of ethical or sustainability concerns, according to Deloitte. By sourcing responsibly, and searching out sustainable materials for interiors, we're designing spaces that will last through the years and have the least damaging impact on our environment.

The last few years have been challenging, but with many brands already recognising that intelligently designed interiors & brand are the future of the hospitality industry, the resurgence will remain.



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Future Ready Retail

Portland Design is a global place branding and retail strategy and design business specialising in airports. Their projects are varied in scope and they partner with airport investors, operators and retail, F&B and vendor brands. In this article, their Managing Director Ibrahim Ibrahim discusses how the travel retail sector is responding to the new passenger demands and the rapidly changing consumer landscape.

Our approach is driven by a deep understanding of passengers and place, where we focus on the trends that drive passenger and consumer behaviour and that imbue airports with truly authentic experiences. Our mantra at Portland is 'People and Places not Buildings and Spaces'. This is really important to us as it gives us a brutal focus on what we refer to as the 'Transumer', the travelling consumer and what is unique about their behaviour and expectations.

Expectations have shifted as a consequence of Covid-19. However, many of the challenges faced by airports were already present before the pandemic, but they have been magnified. This presents airports with a unique opportunity and one that gives permission to be radical. The 'do as before' strategy is no longer an option, the pandemic has led to the death of precedent, and what has gone before is no longer necessarily a reliable guide.

Retail has always been, and will always be, about four things: (customer) recruitment, transaction, fulfilment and retention. But transaction and fulfilment are gradually shifting away from the physical store, which will increasingly focus on customer recruitment and retention. Therefore, the physical store will behave less like a distribution channel and more like a media platform to recruit and retain customers. This will greatly impact the customer experience, the service proposition, design of the space, its location within a master plan of the terminal, the CAPEX AND OPEX and the revenue and rent models.

In essence we will see a gradual shift of emphasis from 'stores > shelves > sales' to 'stages > stories > shares'.

Physical stores in airports have the potential to be the most powerful media platforms available to a brand, where the opportunity is to monetise not only the experiences but the data that these experiences generate. We must therefore plan to deliver data responsive environments and experiences. The key challenge will be to capture the data that demonstrates the value of the physical space to a brand in generating media impressions, social media engagement and online sales. We refer to this as 'Media Impact Value'.

In my recent book, Future Ready Retail, I refer to the four pillars of 'future readiness' in retail - these apply as much to airports as they do to shopping centres and high streets.

Re-Invent Convenience

Convenience is at the heart of consumer expectations, who live increasingly transient and complex lives and they demand experiences that are fast and seamless. Convenience is about simplicity, ease and 'nowness' – 63 per cent of global consumers are willing to pay more for simpler brand experiences, according to research by Siegel + Gale. This trend has been magnified by the pandemic. So we must strip out complexity at all touch points of the passenger journey.

Re-Connect to Community

Airports have the opportunity to host brands that attract 'communities of interest'. Focussing on experiences that drive participation, sociability and entertainment will engage passengers' interests and passions and will get them flocking back!

We must consider how to shift the emphasis from a functional 'super-market' model that passengers are finding increasingly boring to an inspiring experiential model that drives engagement, sharing and serendipity.

Re-Imagine Place

It is no longer sufficient to tick the 'sense of place' box. We must shift from 'theming' to imbuing every touchpoint of the airport experience with an authentic 'Spirit of Place'. It must run through the DNA of the airport, through its architecture, commercial offers, communications, tone of voice, the five senses of experience and most critically, how passengers are served.

When considering specifically the airport commercial offer, this can no longer be seen just as channels of distribution, but as moments of experience. We call this S.W.E.L.C.H - a data-driven curatorial approach that blends Shopping, Co-Working, Entertainment, Learning, Culture and Hospitality.

Covid-19 has accelerated 'working from home'. This represents a great opportunity for airports. As part of the commercial offer, airports could develop a compelling co-working facility which activates the IDL and blends with F&B, retail, entertainment and physical and mental wellness. Passengers could arrive at the airport very early to work, if the facilities are world class, passengers may prefer this to working from home.

Re-Position Value

We need to re-think what value means to passengers beyond convenience and price. Post-Covid, consumers are seeking experiences that put wellness front and centre. Wellness is no longer a category; it has to run through all aspects of the airport passenger experience. Covid-19 has also accelerated the

demand for tranquil spaces. We must develop biophilia strategies to ensure that passengers are connected to nature whilst in our airports, airport environments need to be softer and more 'human', more natural, and more human in scale.

Value is also about truly authentic airport experiences, here localism is key. The challenge is to blend local and independent brands with national and international brands.

Consumers also value personalised experiences, and in future DNA levels of personalisation will be commonplace. Consumers also have an increasing thirst for learning and they are happy to have these experiences in-store.

A recent URW (Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield) survey found that one third of people are interested in attending lifestyle classes in-store.

Consumers are also turning their attention to brands and airports that prioritise ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), these are becoming priorities that drive preference.

Research by Accenture found that 40 per cent of consumers have stopped using a brand due to the way it behaves.

In working with our airport clients, our aim is to help develop commercial strategies and designs that bring together a mix of experiences, both retail and non-retail, ephemeral and permanent, international and local. It is essential to have diverse occupiers and revenue models to build in flexibility in the design, masterplan and mix to allow airports to respond to rapidly changing passenger expectations and an increasingly disrupted consumer landscape.

For the airport commercial experience to be 'future-ready', it must speak like a magazine, change like a gallery, build loyalty like a club, connect like a community, share like an app, seed like an incubator and entertain like a show.

Serendipity is the most powerful consumer emotion that drives footfall, surprise, engagement, sharing and spend. Our aim is to help create 'serendipity machines'!

Hamad International Airport, Doha, Qatar, the Official Airport Partner for the FIFA World Cup 2022 was voted the World's Best Airport 2021, as travel hubs worldwide were impacted by the pandemic, Hamad International Airport was undeterred by the global travel disruptions and continued with its expansion plans while introducing additional airport health and safety standards.





Jiaxing Train Station
Jiaxing, China

Reaching New Heights

Over the past few years, the combined revenue of the Travel Retail market across the world has seen growth that is double that of any other offline retail channel. Over the coming pages, RLI takes a deep dive into the travel sector to explain its exponential growth in recent times, what its key drivers have been and put forward some locations that highlight why the industry has seen such an increase in popularity.

According to Goodflow Global, the Travel Retail market is projected to skyrocket to USD154bn by 2025. The sector presents a tremendous opportunity for brands to substantially increase their visibility, customer loyalty and recruit new customers across different geographies.

The travel industry incorporates airplanes, cruise ships and train station retail and today it is seen as a highly attractive market with more than four billion airline passengers alone annually, a number that is expected to double between 2019 and 2037 according to the International Air Transport Association.

While terminus retail still leads the way, particularly as international travel continues to rebound; train station retail is rapidly becoming the next frontier for retailers as it drives a new type of transit design that is no longer tethered to the commuter consumer. The pandemic is offering a fresh start for transport hubs and it brings with it a new type

of customers, the domestic tourist.

This was not always the case, but what started out as duty-free items, souvenirs and basic travel necessities has now become a multi-million-dollar industry. Today, retail is a thriving and growing source of profit for cruise lines. From designer brands to retailtainment, the face of retail is constantly evolving to keep up with passengers' ever-changing demands, says Eloise Boyd in her article 'The Changing Face of Retail on Cruise Ships'.

Boyd goes on to explain that retail accounts for a third of consumer dollars spent on board cruise ships. Going far beyond the small shops first seen on cruise, passengers can now visit large shopping spaces and choose from a variety of their favourite land-based brands all in one place. Here they can find unique deals, one-of-a-kind experiences and exclusive items. This, paired with sales staff's ability to foster relationships with guests throughout the cruise has led to retail's considerable success.

Airport Retail

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) has announced that 60 regional, national and global brands have been confirmed for the new Terminal A at Newark Liberty International Airport. The one million square foot, US\$2.7bn terminal is in the final stages of development and is scheduled to open later this year. New Jersey brands will feature prominently in the food & beverage line-up. Those who have signed agreements include Jersey Mike's, Smokehouse BBQ, Office Tavern & Grill and W.B. Law Coffee. PANYNJ noted that it has also invested US\$3M to build out retail space within the new Terminal A to accommodate the inclusion of local businesses from the cities of Elizabeth and Newark. Replacing the existing Terminal A, the new terminal will have a capacity for approximately 14 million passengers annually and 33 common-use gates.

At the Las Américas International Airport in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, DUFY and HMY have teamed up to reinvigorate the site, and the airport concluded the expansion of the central atrium of the passenger terminal and Phase I of the DUFY collaboration in March 2022. The expansion project was 1,523sq m which included the construction of a new shopping plaza, recreational spaces, duty free shops, restaurants, and bars. This new plaza serves as a new retention zone where the commercial and gastronomic offer is concentrated, to benefit the passenger experience. The HMY Group is the preferred Global Supplier for DUFY Global, withstanding a credible 16 years valued partnership. In 2021 HMY was commissioned to deliver

DUFY's new concept flagship store at Manchester, UK Airport and based on this success HMY was further commissioned for the Santo Domingo project.

Situated in Changi, Singapore, Jewel Changi Airport is a nature-themed entertainment and retail complex surrounded by and linked to Changi Airport in one of its passenger terminals. Its centrepiece is the world's tallest indoor waterfall, the Rain Vortex, that is surrounded by a terraced forest setting. This one-of-a-kind airport attraction may have launched in 2019, but such is its unique nature that people are still discovering new elements and enjoying experiences on-site that you do not find in a regular airport terminal.

Frankfurt Airport Retail (FAR), the operator of all Duty Free and Travel Value shops as well as various mono- and multi-brand brand shops at Frankfurt Airport, opened a 316sq m space dedicated exclusively to the Fashion, Accessories & Watches, Jewellery (FAWJ) categories. It is integrated into the 1,934sq m Duty Free & Travel Value Shop in Terminal 1, Pier A Schengen at Frankfurt Airport. The multi-brand fashion concept, rolled out for the first time in a Duty Free shop in Frankfurt, stands out visually from the rest of the shop area: selected materials such as oiled oak, brass and white marble create a luxurious shopping ambience. The generic furniture concept developed by Gebr. Heinemann and realised by umdasch presents the different brands and product groups from ready-to-wear to sneakers and bags to sunglasses as well as watches and jewellery in a correspondingly high-quality and uniform environment. The design frame brings the design and



Shopping Boulevard
King Abdulaziz International Airport
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Image courtesy of HMY Group



Frankfurt Airport Retail
Frankfurt Airport, Germany
Image courtesy of umdasch The Store Makers

atmosphere of international department stores to the most important international airports and makes shopping for passengers a special travel experience from now on also in Frankfurt. This is the first time that the multi-brand fashion concept has been implemented in a Duty Free shop under the worldwide umbrella of Gebr. Heinemann.

The new, upcoming King Abdulaziz International Airport three-stage development in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia is designed to increase the airport's yearly capacity from 13 million to 80 million passengers and with an impressive floor area of 810,000sq m, the new terminal will be considered one of the largest airport terminal buildings of its kind in the world. The airport shops combine a traditional and commercial design and HMY has been entrusted with the mission of designing and executing the exciting new 2,125sq m Shopping Boulevard in the International Terminal. The already developed phase of the Boulevard has seven spaces dedicated to different categories: Confectionery, Sports, Toys, Beauty, Gold, Exclusive Gifts (sunglasses, watches etc.), and the most original Souvenirs Shop in the country. The stores present innovative solutions, but also reflect aspects closely linked to the territory. The commercial offer is complemented by an excellent gastronomic offer, with the aim to turn travel into a unique experience for the passenger.

A popular transit destination for flights connecting from and to Europe, Asia, North America, and beyond – Bahrain International Airport's new terminal is also home to the magnificent Bahrain Duty Free. An entirely immersive and engaging retail arena has been created to welcome all passengers visiting or travelling via one of the Middle East's most important traffic hubs, Bahrain International Airport. Set across more than 4,500sq m, the outstanding Bahrain Duty Free is a space that truly offers an elevated shopping experience with thoughtfully crafted areas that cater to the new era of travel. The Store Makers from umdasch have helped to create an extraordinary world of travel retail at Bahrain International Airport. umdasch has worked on The Pearl Lounge as well as a number of other stores throughout the duty-free space. The spacious terminal has been transformed into an exciting, and enticing, shopping destination. The goal was also to give premium brands a fitting platform on which to showcase their offerings.

Al Maktoum International (DWC) will not only meet Dubai's growing passenger traffic projections, but will also be the base for global aviation innovation. It will showcase a new era of smart airport systems and passenger-centric facilities, taking travellers to worldwide destinations in the most awe-inspiring and comfortable way possible when it opens its first phase in 2030. Intuitive way-finding will guide all transfers, while an abundance of offerings, including retail, food and beverage, relaxation and entertainment, will provide travellers an unparalleled experience. In its final configuration, the platform is designed to handle 260 million passengers per year and 15 million tonnes of cargo. The multi-modal cargo hub will enable air, land and sea connection with dedicated freight storage space on the airside, land-side and by the seaport.

Cruise Ship Retail

Shipboard retail used to consist of cramped spaces that offered duty-free merchandise and toiletries. Today's mega-ships, however, feature big-name stores, high-end items and thousands of eager shoppers ready to buy. Space allocated to retail has been steadily increasing as cruise lines introduce huge vessels each year.

MSC Virtuosa is earning high praise for her food and beverage and onboard entertainment but should also be recognised for her record-breaking retailing facilities. Dubbed 'the largest shopping area at sea', MSC Virtuosa's retail space spans an impressive 1,168sq m and features 250 brands. Its central promenade, Galleria Virtuosa, lies at the heart of the ship. Here, guests can navigate through the vessel's 11 retail outlets with ease, following temporary one-way systems under an impressive 93-metre LED screen. The two standout venues are the Virtousa Boutique and the Luxury Plaza.

Meanwhile, one of Costa Cruises' latest vessel's, Costa Firenze, has a Florence inspired interior that beautifully complements its Italian destinations. This Italian style has also been applied to the vessel's shops, which serve as a perfect backdrop to Costa Firenze's authentic, Italian-style shopping experience. Costa Firenze hosts several Italian brands ranging from jewellery to handbags, with shop designs reflecting these brands' Italian heritage. This immersive retail design allows passengers to enjoy Italy even on sea days. The

Galleria Shops onboard span 13 stores offering categories from fine jewellery and apparel to handbags, trip souvenirs and travel essentials. Key features include the ship's rotating Italian collections, with merchandise refreshed twice on each voyage. These include Florentine keepsakes such as pottery, magnets, miniatures, keyrings and more. The shops also offer a Retail Concierge service, enabling stateroom shopping, private retail appointments and concierge-led store outings.

Harding, the global travel retail and cruise retail specialist, revealed thrilling details last year about its collaborative partnership with Virgin Voyages, creating an innovative approach to cruise retailing, with Scarlet Lady's maiden voyage from Portsmouth taking place back in August. Set over 550sq m of retail space, the immersive on board experience sets out another radical step-change for Harding within cruise retail including a pioneering approach to sustainability. Harding also aims to make the most of their unrivalled market insight to target an entirely new cruise customer that's right and relevant for the Virgin Voyages brand. Exclusively targeting a curious and 'craver' experience-led demographic, the spaces are unlike any immersive brand solutions that Harding has created before, coming as of a direct result of extensive guest surveys, focus groups and key brand roadshows and partnership discussions.

Train Station Retail

In the last couple of years, as the travel retail sector has gone through some difficult and challenging times, train stations are coming out of the pandemic with a new mind-set and refreshed opportunities as airport retail continues to find its feet again.

In China, where a rise in sustainable mind-sets aligns with a new generation, a record 18.83 million passengers used the country's railways during the 2021 May Day holiday. In response, Chinese architects are designing future transit hubs to cater to increased demand. Train Station in the Forest is situated in the heart of the Southeast city of Jiaxing. Its design, by MAD Architects, encompasses not just the concourse and commercial plazas, but a renovation of the adjacent people's park. With the station having reached full capacity – and the surrounding area in

decline – the architects saw an opportunity to transform the space into a green space for travellers to share with the city's citizens.

Architecture firm BIG has updated its plans for a transport hub designed for Swedish city Västerås, which will feature a building with a dramatically sweeping roof. BIG envisions the Västerås Travel Center as a hub that brings together all of the city's transport infrastructure under one roof and in one continuous landscape. The building will serve as the central station for trains and buses while providing a bridge between the city centre and the nearby Lake Mälaren — areas currently divided by train tracks. BIG first revealed a preliminary plan for the site in 2015. Key to the updated design is a more distinctive, flowing roof that extends beyond the edges of the 17,000sq m building to invite people in from multiple points. The shape is similar to a billowing sail or a sheet attached to a line at multiple points. As well as doubling the size of the current bus terminal, the hub will have a bicycle garage, travel services, commercial areas, restaurants, offices, event areas and exhibition spaces.

A great example of urban regeneration within train stations is the project for the whole Roma Termini station. The refurbishment will comprise of: bringing to light the remaining of Mura Serviane in the historical Atrium; the refurbishment of windows and facades of "Galleria Gommata" and the introduction of two new holes on the floor to improve the connection with the underground floor and facilitate customer journey. The underground floor will be completely redesigned too thanks to the refitting of floor, ceilings, lighting and windows. Set to launch next year by developer Grandi Stazioni Retail, the total GLA will be 47,800sq m and the number of stores and brands will reach 170.

Construction and infrastructure services firm Kier Group has secured a contract from Network Rail for the next stage of a £65M modernisation project at Oxford railway station in the UK. Under the contract, detailed design and enabling works will be carried out by Kier at Oxford railway station under the Oxford Corridor Phase 2 Project. An additional platform and overhead canopy, new western station entrance, ticket office, waiting room, toilets, café and shops will be covered under Phase 2D platform 5 and station improvement works. A subway will also be built to link the western entrance to the new platform.



Newark Airport
New Jersey, US



Galleria Virtuosa
MSC Virtuosa



Apple Tower Theatre
Los Angeles, US

Responding to Changing Customer Preferences

On its most basic level, retail real estate properties are sites that are bought and sold exclusively to market and sell consumer goods and services. In this Special Feature on the Transformation of Retail Real Estate, RLI will take a closer look at the meaning of this transformation, how it affects retail, and how it is being incorporated in schemes around the globe.

Retail real estate is one of the largest and most diverse categories within the commercial real estate sector, and unlike the commercial sector, which encompasses land and developments used to generate profits, retail establishments are used exclusively to market and sell consumer goods and services explains Jeff Bartel, Chairman and Managing Director of Hamptons Group, LLC in his article 'The Future of Retail Estate: What to Expect'.

He goes on to say that retail real estate allows investors to rent, lease, manage, buy or sell spaces that range from shopping centres to individual stores and pop-up shops. Bartel also mentions that the effects of Covid-19 on retail real estate were swift and widespread, causing the highest number of retail bankruptcies in over a decade. Apparel retailers and department stores, in particular, felt the brunt of the Covid-19 pandemic, with analysts predicting 20 per cent less retail real estate by 2025 he explains.

Within their article 'The Future of Shopping: Creating Customer Value with Retail Real Estate' for Deloitte, Stephen Rogers and Jim Eckenrode highlight that even before the pandemic, shopping centres and retailers were facing many challenges such as the rise of e-commerce, shrinking foot traffic, and changing consumer shopping preferences threatened a way of shopping that existed for decades. Covid-19 accelerated these trends, and created a more digital-centric consumer who expects frictionless transactions, personalised experiences, and elevated conveniences. These

new purchase drivers highlight the need for shopping mall transformation, but also create unique opportunities for the industry.

They continue by saying that, this, along with other factors will likely require retail real estate owners to adopt a more holistic view of the "jobs to be done" in retail spaces. It is no longer enough to offer the physical space for consumers to find goods; retailers should entice consumers with a more enriching experience that fosters a sense of community. Retail real estate owners should embrace these consumer shopping preferences; they highlight the value retailers that have a brick-and-mortar presence with integrated omni-channel capabilities can bring.

Transformative Projects Around the World

Last year Apple previewed and opened a new retail location at the historic Tower Theatre in downtown Los Angeles. One of Apple's most significant restoration projects to date, Apple Tower Theatre is inspiring even more creativity in the heart of downtown. Apple also launched Today at Apple Creative Studios, a global initiative that will provide hands-on experience and mentorship to young creatives, which kicked off with the opening of the new store in Los Angeles. Apple Tower Theatre is Apple's 26th location in greater Los Angeles. The store's nearly 100 talented retail team members joined more than 3,000 Apple Store employees across the region. "At every corner, Los Angeles bursts with



American Dream
New Jersey, US

creativity across the arts, music, and entertainment, and we are thrilled to build on our relationship with this special city," said Deirdre O'Brien, Apple's Senior Vice President of Retail + People. "Apple Tower Theatre honours the rich history and legacy of this entertainment capital." Apple Tower Theatre anchors the corner of Eighth Street and Broadway, where visitors will immediately recognise the fully restored clock tower, recreated Broadway marquee, clean terra cotta exterior, and renovated historic blade sign. After walking through the Broadway doors, guests enter the monumental lobby inspired by Charles Garnier's Paris Opera house, featuring a grand arched stairway with bronze handrails flanked by marble Corinthian columns.

The American Dream mega mall in East Rutherford, New Jersey, just a heartbeat away from New York City, will debut a new, 10,000sq ft dining area that includes seven luxe boutique-style food concepts. One of three planned food halls at the Meadowlands centre, the new addition officially launched this month in its latest push and expansion drive. First proposed back in 2003, the American Dream mall went through many stages of development struggles before finally opening its doors across 2019 and 2020. Throughout its gigantic space, 70 per cent of the installations are entertainment facilities, whilst the remaining 30 per cent of space is set aside for retail locations. American Dream is an unparalleled mix of world-class entertainment, retail and dining.

The centre is comprised of over three million square feet of leading attractions that include DreamWorks Water Park, Nickelodeon Universe, Big SNOW, Angry Birds Mini Golf, The Rink, Blacklight Mini Golf, Mirror Maze, SEA LIFE Aquarium, LEGOLAND Discovery Center and a wide range of premier dining and retail stores.

Launched in December last year was the Hengqin Village development by Shun Tak Development Limited and design architect JERDE. The Hengqin Village development serves as an attraction for all as well as a solution to the lack of space in Macau. Designed as a gateway attraction between Macau and Mainland China, the project provides a variety of retail, entertainment, wellness, and food & beverage options, while adding connectivity to planned office and hotel/serviced apartment towers, as well as the adjacent immigration facilities building. Located at a prime location with direct access to the port and commercial facilities at the border of Hengqin and Macau, the site enjoys a premium transport network, directly connected to the Hengqin and Macau light rails and the extension of Guangzhou-Zhuhai Intercity-Rail in the future. As the podium for two towers, their 4-level village is the heart of the project and the main connective tissue between the various programs, both vertically and horizontally. The southwest corner serves as the primary face of the project as visitors arrive from the bus depot and the immigration port building.



Hengqin Village
Zhuhai, China



The Londoner
Macao, China

Amid much fanfare and spectacle, Sands China Ltd. launched The Londoner® Macao integrated resort last year. The Londoner Macao is developer Sands China's bold British-themed reimagining of the Sands@ Cotai Central integrated resort, offering the best of British history and culture alongside a traditional yet contemporary hospitality experience. In addition to the Crystal Palace, the first-phase launch features new dining options, interactive London-themed attractions, and the opening of The Londoner Hotel – an all-suite tower featuring approximately 600 luxury suites. Designed by Hong Kong-based Steve Leung Design Group, suite interiors are bright and contemporary with an upscale British ambience, and feature marble nightstands, custom beds with plush fabric headboards, elegant chesterfield sofas, high-backed leather armchairs, and Victorian-style bathtubs. Representing an investment of US\$1.9bn, The Londoner Macao introduced additional integrated resort offerings progressively throughout 2021, including the Suites by David Beckham; Londoner Court, a luxury residential-style all-suite hotel; the re-themed Shoppes at Londoner retail mall which incorporates over 150 fashion and lifestyle boutiques and stores, from high street to haute couture; and the Londoner Arena.

Local developer SDC Imobiliare, along with overseas investment funds, has launched what they claim to be the biggest real estate project in Romania. The Transilvania Smart City mixed-use, estimated to require an investment of €700M, would see the construction of 10,000 apartments, a shopping centre, schools, supermarkets, a hotel and an

aparthotel, office space, parks, and conference rooms in Cluj-Napoca. Work on the project began earlier this year. The entire project will be built on a plot of 35ha on a hill close to the Iulius Mall shopping centre. The project's first stage will be developed on 3ha of land and will include 800 apartments, an aparthotel, nursery, shops, cafes, restaurants, a gym, a bank, a Lidl store and a park. The construction work for this first stage is expected to be completed in 18-24 months. The shopping centre, which will be developed in a later stage, will have an area of 100,000sq m.

Nivy mall in Bratislava, a new shopping centre developed by HB Reavis that also includes the city's new international bus terminal welcomed almost 330,000 visitors in the first week following the centre's opening on 30 September. With 130,000sq m of GLA, the multifunctional project is part of the Nivy zone in Bratislava, certified with BREEAM Communities at the Excellent level. It was developed by HB Reavis as a multifunctional modern city district totalling 23ha of land in a former (brownfield) area neighbouring Bratislava's Old Town. Almost 90 per cent of the 70,000sq m shopping centre is now taken, and the mix of stores includes a number of famous international brands. The project includes a 3,000sq m dining area and a 12,000sq m green roof, divided into several recreational areas, including a 500m running track, two workout zones, functional terraces and a playground.

With a GLA of over 200,000sq m for innovative retail space, spectacular entertainment, top-notch recreation and remarkable leisure



Mall of Qatar
Doha, Qatar

options, Mall of Qatar in Doha has introduced a brand new shopping concept that is capturing the imagination and hearts of the entire nation. Visitors have been captivated by over 500 varied retail, dining and café options – which are connected to the five-star Al Rayyan Hotel Doha operated by Curio, a collection by Hilton. Every section of the mall, from its distinctive façade to its exciting interiors, holds an element of surprise that makes it an experience like no other. Ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 later this year, the location is undergoing a transformation that will see it enhance its current site, as well as adding multiple elements to the overall area such as residential elements and a new Welcome Park at the main entrance of the mall which will become a prime point for the entire community with the first sky fountain in Qatar, and 2,000sq m of multi-purpose space, with food and beverage outlets and leasable areas to accommodate upcoming brands.

The New Town of Edinburgh, master planned in the 1700s by James Craig after he won a competition to design the area, possesses a distinct energy and an ongoing history of mixed-use spaces. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the New Town became a haven for writers, printers and publishers, and the W Edinburgh at St James Quarter references this legacy with its ribbon design that alludes to paper unspooling as it runs through the printing presses of times gone by. More than 350 years after Craig designed the district which would become New Town, St James Quarter is continuing the legacy he founded with new spaces for visitors to discover. Opened last year, St James Quarter is a new retail

led, lifestyle district that fully integrates into and enhances Edinburgh's City Centre providing an inspiring, attractive, and vibrant destination for locals and visitors to live, shop, eat, sleep and play. St James Quarter houses an enviable line up of restaurants, cafés, bars, shops, public spaces and leisure venues covering 1.7 million square feet. St James Quarter is a welcoming cultural and lifestyle hub for art, culture and fashion that complements the city's world-renowned cultural offering and supports its vibrant events calendar.

Taking over a previous Debenhams space, Gravity Wandsworth is London's first active entertainment venue, spanning over three floors; the location provides state-of-the-art entertainment all day round and is perfect for families, individuals and corporate events. Some of the capital's most thrilling indoor experiences include Gravity GT, the UK's most powerful multi-level electric go-kart race, bowling, an impressive 14-lane augmented reality bowling alley, and Urban Street Golf, the unforgettable golfing experience featuring iconic New York sights – plus pool, digital darts, shuffleboard, Gamebox Arcade, Esports Gaming Arena and much more. Opened last year, Gravity Wandsworth also offers three bars – authentic Japanese street food on the ground floor, a welcoming sports bar upstairs, and Newton's, a trendy New York loft bar. The aim of the site is to bring together children, friends and work colleagues through interactive fun. For Gravity Active Entertainment, Wandsworth was their most ambitious site yet and brings together a multitude of activities into one exceptional location.



Transilvania Smart City
Cluj-Napoca, Romania



St James Quarter
Edinburgh, Scotland

A Region on the Rise

The cultural region of the Americas, Latin America comprises multiple nation-states and an area that stretches from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego and includes much of the Caribbean. A melting pot of ideas, customs and social behaviours, Latin America is a group of countries that is undergoing unprecedented growth across retail real estate, leisure and hospitality. Over the next few pages, RLI takes a closer look at the region and the sectors that are more prevalent than ever.

One of the main collateral effects of the pandemic that is now in remission has been, without a doubt, the new paradigm of consumption, which is not only explained by the significant changes in consumer purchasing behaviour but also by the new business models and growth strategies that began to transform the value chain of the retail industry, affecting everything from manufacturers and wholesale companies to distributors and retailers, highlights KPMG's

'Consumer and Retail in South America 2022 Trends'.

In this context, the Latin American region was one of those that saw the most growth in online commerce during this period, reaching a growth of close to 37 per cent (especially in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, where the increase was 79 per cent, 35 per cent and 27 per cent respectively).

The accelerated use of e-commerce forced retailers to make significant

changes in operations, strengthen logistic networks, and in some cases create partnerships to optimize delivery. The successful development of omni-channel offerings, such as ease of payment, delivery times and return policies, will be a differentiating factor for sector participants moving forward.

Meanwhile, the 'Fitch Ratings 2022 Outlook: Latin American Retail' explains that revenues for non-essential Latin American retailers, such as department stores and specialty retailers, will continue to grow in 2022 after a recovery in 2021. Median revenue growth for 2022 is expected to be in the high-single digits for non-essential retailers after showing a median increase of 18 per cent in 2021.

Away from the retail industry, the attractions industry in Latin America is also growing according to the Blooloo report: 'The Top 15 Amusement Parks in Latin America' by Bea Mitchell. The region is home to many theme parks and amusement parks, the most popular being Six Flags Mexico in Mexico City. Visitor numbers at the top 10 theme parks in Latin America totalled 15.7 million in 2019. Three key factors play a particularly important role in the success of attractions in this area. These are politics, economics and safety.

According to research from TOPHOTELNEWS, in the coming years, 528 hotels with 130,422 rooms will open across Latin America. Their predictions highlighted that 2021 was a busy year for the region, as 219 were planned, that would bring 44,128 rooms into play. In 2022,

another 146 projects with 36,143 rooms are due for completion. Things will slow down in 2023, however, as only 65 projects with 14,567 keys are currently on the development slate. For 2024 and beyond, another 98 new properties and 35,584 rooms are on the cards at present.

Projects Across Latin America Brazil

With the launch of Rosewood São Paulo earlier this year, Cidade Matarazzo by developers Groupe Allard is now fully open and is a quiet, green refuge in the heart of the Paulista Avenue region, one of São Paulo's most lively neighbourhoods. The charming village of historic, landmark buildings, designed in 1904 and being restored by developers Groupe Allard, is an unprecedented venture in Latin America's largest economic and cultural capital. The unique destination is home to a 45,000sq m park (including the urban requalification project), a 135,000sq m building area, the 56,000sq m six-star hotel complex operated by Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, a 10,000sq m House of Creativity, a 4,000sq m office building, a 28,500sq m retail village featuring 70 exclusive international brands, 34 restaurants that is capable of serving up to 15,000 meals a day and 2,200 parking spaces. To live in or visit Cidade Matarazzo allows one to revel in the serenity of an oasis while enjoying every bit of the glamour of São Paulo.

Parque Tepeyac
Mexico City, Mexico
Developer: Fibra Danhos



Chile

Mall Vivo Santiago, the most ambitious development planned by the commercial centres operator VivoCorp, from the Corpgroup Holding, is expected to open its doors this year. Located in the Vicuña MacKenna Avenue in Santiago de Chile and fueled by the convergence of two metro lines, will have an investment of over \$200M and will contain over 100,000sq m GLA distributed over six levels of commercial space plus an apartment block, an office tower, a food court, restaurants, a supermarket and several entertainment areas. With main offices in Santiago de Chile, VivoCorp already owns seven commercial centres and operates three more, plus four outlets spread around the whole country. The project features different types of uses, services, retail and entertainment and a parking offer that is in accordance with what is required by the city of Santiago.

Colombia

A project being designed by Chapman Taylor for its client Provalor is Parque Oeste. While it is still in the design concept stage, it will seemingly

be an innovative, large-scale mixed-use project in Cali, a beautiful city in western Colombia near the foothills of the Cauca Valley. Located close to the university in the city centre, the scheme, which includes a shopping centre and offices, is designed and landscaped to merge seamlessly into its locality. Responding to the river and the natural, green environment that characterises much of the city, the architecture takes advantage of the terraced valley location and draws inspiration from the local, rocky landscape as well as the city's river. Chapman Taylor's Madrid studio was appointed to provide architecture and interior design services for the 110,000sq m project, which includes a vibrant mix of uses, such as an office block, 186 retail units, a supermarket, a cinema, a children's park and a food court alongside 5,000sq m of green spaces.

Reaffirming its commitment to the region and potential growth, Mallplaza has announced, during its shareholders' meeting, the resumption of construction of Mallplaza Cali in Colombia after it was paused in its initial construction phase back in 2020 to the restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. "Growing is part of Mallplaza's DNA, and that is why today, given the business conditions and projections, we believe

Parque Oeste
Cali, Colombia
Developer: Provalor



it is time to resume our project in Cali. Colombia is a market with high potential, where we are consolidating our proposal. We believe that Mallplaza Cali will be a winning proposal in its market with attractive commercial partners and multiple options for people. We expect it to become a unique destination in the city and the Valle del Cauca," explained Fernando de Peña, General Manager of Plaza S.A. Mallplaza Cali will have a central location in the city, with important north and south connectivity, which will attract Cali residents. It will feature a great fashion proposal with national and international brands, such as Inditex (Zara Berskha, Pull&Bear, Stradivarius), Decathlon, Homecenter, and Cinemark. In line with the proposal for multiple uses and visiting purposes, the new urban centre will also have an Urban Rooftop that will incorporate a complete gastronomic offer. This new project will add 67,000sq m to the company's leasable area and is scheduled to open in the first half of 2024.

Mexico

Distrito Armida is a new multi-phase mixed-use community in the upscale city of Monterrey, Mexico, masterplanned and designed by

JERDE and developed by GM Capital. The first three phases of the project are clustered at the southern end of the site and provide the neighbourhood with office and residential towers, a hotel, retail, and a wide array of public spaces for the community. The neighbourhood of San Pedro Garza Garcia stands somewhat separated from the city centre of Monterrey and is an upscale district for young professionals. Phase I was launched last year and features an iconic office tower atop a commercial podium full of shops, restaurants, and outdoor spaces. The 20-floor office building - branded Torre Malva - a WeWork, and a 170-key hotel are currently under construction. The commercial podium full of shops, restaurants, and attractive outdoor spaces, will help activate Phase I beyond the typical workday. Phase 2 combines the programs of an extension to the adjacent hospital with both high-end medical offices and a hotel. Elegant connections of adjacent programs are made through organic forms and pedestrian friendly pathways. The architectural design is clean, modern, and iconic while the scale feels elegant and welcoming. The third phase delivers three residential towers with over 400 combined units, in addition to a



Galerías Metepec Mallertainment
Metepec, Mexico
Developers: GICSA & Liverpool

Mallplaza Cali
Cali, Colombia
Developer: Mallplaza





*Mall Vivo Santiago
Santiago, Chile
Developer: Vivo Corp*

28-storey office tower. The tower facades are an articulated grid of concrete and glass, giving the buildings texture while providing lots of natural light and balconies for the units. At the base of the towers lies a vibrant, kinetic retail podium - filled with food & beverage destinations, amenity programs, and boutique retailers. Scattered with a range of dining options, this permeable podium will be a local destination for apartment dwellers, commuters, and more.

Another project by JERDE, for client Grupo DLG is Peninsula. Launched last year in Tijuana, Mexico, Peninsula is more than a place to shop, it is an experiential destination for locals and visitors alike to engage and explore. Poised to become the new heart of Tijuana, this New Town Center of fashion, fun, and leisure will be the epicentre of a dynamic mixed-use neighbourhood district that offers state of the art retail and dining concepts, entertainment, offices, residences, and hotels. Peninsula is a 750,000sq ft, next-generation mixed-use project in Tijuana located at a prime gateway site just south of the Tijuana International Airport at the crossroads of Via

Rapida Poiniente, Via Rapida Oriente, and Highway 2. The massing is very porous from the perimeter, opening up multiple sightlines and inviting people in. The buildings have been designed to create strong identity for individual tenants and eliminate the feel of the traditional mall in every way. The Central Plaza space has abundant shade, with seating, picnic, and viewing areas, whilst the Sky Terraces Zone contains multiple decks on all three levels arrayed amongst vertical tree canopies, which extend the useable roof space. This signature vertical urban oasis space anchors the centre of the project.

Creating an all-inclusive, mixed-use environment in Mexico, developers Fibra Uno, along with architects Pelli Clark Pelli and a world-class team, have embarked on a mission to create an unparalleled experience unlike anything in Mexico. Mitikah - described as "the city alive" - will be a premier urban neighbourhood set in the cultural heart of Mexico City. It's designed to encourage a new way of living, and will be a place where people can gather to socialise, build new traditions, and share experiences for generations



*Peninsula
Tijuana, Mexico
Developer: Grupo DLG*

to come when it opens its doors to the public in September. Mitikah will be comprised of five unique towers including Torre Mitikah, Torre Churubusco, Torre Universidad, and Torre Coyoacan. With over a million square meters of construction development, it will feature an assortment of residential, commercial, and retail space, as well as a hotel, conference centre, shopping complex, and movie theatre. Outdoor plazas will be complemented by several landscape amenities to create an engaging—and all-inclusive—mixed-use environment.

Under construction by developer Thor Urbana, The Park is a mixed-use project that will be a central attraction of San Luis Potosí. The project, by the renowned firm Elkus Manfredi Architects, combines offices, hotels, residential towers and a Town Center format shopping centre. It will have more than 65,000sq m of GLA divided into two phases and pads for the development of offices, hotel and residences. The project is located south of the city of San Luis Potosí, in the zone of greater economic development, bordering

strategically with the Tangamanga Park and the Convention Center of San Luis Potosí, the most important meeting point in the city of Potosí. Set to have more than 2,000 parking spaces, the project will be home to boutiques with the best brands, the most outstanding culinary offerings and entertainment and all of this will be in one place to give customers a complete experience with outdoor spaces that will be perfectly integrated with cutting-edge architecture. The Park, San Luis Potosí is set to join the iconic Thor Urbana projects that stand out for their unbeatable locations in the main cities of the country when it opens in winter this year.

Parque Tepeyac is another project under construction in Mexico and it is estimated that the project will be completed during the final quarter of 2022 by developer Fibra Danhos. They are part of a 50/50 joint venture in the new project with the Gustavo A. Madero Delegation. Fibra Danhos will be responsible for the design, construction, marketing and operation of the property. The project reached 70 per cent completion in its construction, as disclosed by



*Distrito Armida
Monterrey, Mexico
Developer: GM Capital*



*Mitikah
Mexico City, Mexico
Developer: Fibra Uno*



The Landmark Tijuana
Tijuana, Mexico
Developer: Thor Urbana

the developer in its Q4 2021 report. Parque Tepeyac is located in the northeast of Mexico City and it has an area of approximately 55,000 square meters. The shopping centre will have more than 120,000sq m of commercial area including the participation of “Liverpool, Sears, Cinépolis, a self-service store and they are in the process of defining the anchor concept of entertainment”.

With a construction start date that slipped into 2021 from its original start date of 2020 due to the effects of the coronavirus, the renovation of Galerías Metepec Mallertainment shopping centre is ongoing, but it will become the new shopping centre of the Toluca Valley when it does finally open its doors. Upon completion, it will have an area of 55,220sq m, which will make it the largest shopping centre in Mexico. Galerías Metepec Mallertainment is a new concept that was developed by the construction company GICSA in conjunction with Liverpool that will combine the experience of ‘shopping’ with entertainment. It will be located in the Municipality of Metepec, it will be made up of a totally new construction that is located just behind the Costco shopping chain and the current Galerías Metepec shopping centre. Once the Galerías Metepec is remodelled, it will be joined with the new construction through a bridge that will be located on Paseo del Agricultura street. Galerías Metepec Mallertainment will be the first mixed-use development

that will include firms that will come to this area for the first time and its main tenants will be department stores, self-service stores, restaurants, cinemas, gymnasium, as well as offices from local companies or for personal use.

Another project under development by Thor Urbana is The Landmark Tijuana, which is a project that is located in the Golden Zone, the area with the highest real estate growth in the city of Tijuana in Mexico. The Landmark Tijuana will bring together the best shopping, dining and entertainment offerings unlike anywhere else in the area. It will be complemented by an exclusive residential tower, luxury hotel and class A+ office spaces to become the new place to live, work and play. The lifestyle centre will feature 308,000sq ft of leasable area, whilst the surrounding facilities within the scheme will include 154,000sq ft of A+ office space, 190 residences, a brand new hotel with over 200 rooms, more than 2,000 car parking spaces and all this will open to the public in spring of next year. The upcoming project will offer a unique mixture of cultural diversity from the region, integrating itself into an existing, bicultural, vibrant community in search of exceptional experiences. The Landmark Tijuana will transform the lifestyle of every person who has the chance to experience this most innovative development in northern Mexico.



Pacifico Town Center
Panama City, Panama
Developer: London & Regional Properties

Panama

Nestled between a leisure coastline to the south and surrounded by green rolling hills in all directions, Pacifico Town Center is inspired by the majestic, natural beauty of its surrounding as a place of wonder, discovery, and urban refuge. The project by JERDE for its client, developer London & Regional Properties is conceived as an “outdoor playground” with a strong emphasis on entertainment, nature and creative art as a catalyst to bring people of all ages together. The ongoing development is adjacent to an Air Force base and Pacifico Town Center is part of a larger live-work-play vision plan conceived by JERDE. Phase I of the Town Center development is located along the main Town Center Drive corridor and will bring over 200 units of housing and an office tower, along with an abundance of retail, F&B, and entertainment options. Visitors will be treated to a unique and simple, rustic architectural sensibility that was inspired by nature, through the usage of natural materials in combination with creative building composition. A creative Art Walk forms the main street, enlivening the project with local arts and culture, whilst The River Walk is an “outdoor playground” for all age groups. Together, the Art Walk and River Walk complete a continuous pedestrian loop and promise new exploration for residents and visitors alike. An opening date is not currently listed.

Peru

Being redeveloped by Parque Arauco and Grupo Centenario to modernise and extend a well-known retail institution, the Camino Real shopping centre in San Isidro, one of Lima’s prime commercial and residential zones, will be refurbished and extended to transform the existing centre and bring a modern retail, office and hospitality hub to Peru’s capital. Being designed by Chapman Taylor, who were invited by the two leading Latin America retail developers to develop the concept design as part of an international competition, the vision for the extension includes a three-floor department store, a food court, a hypermarket and a cineplex, served by seven floors of car parking. The reconfiguration will respect the district’s history and urban environment while adding a contemporary flavour. The dynamic interior spaces will incorporate a design motif which references the nearby Bosque el Olivar, a highly cherished green space in the bustling city. Sustainability is also a key design feature. An adjacent plot of land will be used to create a brand new shopping centre, with four floors of retail set around a central atrium. A hotel will also be provided, and three office towers in the existing centre will be refurbished, bringing modern and high-quality workspace to the development, all connected by a green roof. Construction is ongoing with no completion date given for the renovation.



The Park
San Luis Potosi, Mexico
Developer: Thor Urbana



Camino Real
Lima, Peru
Developers: Parque Arauco & Grupo Centenario



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