

THE WORLD'S ONLY GLOBAL RETAIL AND LEISURE MAGAZINE

# RLI



RETAIL & LEISURE INTERNATIONAL

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JUNE 2023 ISSUE 182



GLOBAL FOCUS

## GRAVITY ACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

AL TAYER INSIGNIA  
**A Leader in  
Luxury**

LITTLE VENICE CAKE COMPANY  
**Baked to  
Perfection**

EDITION HOTELS  
**Blending Luxury  
and Lifestyle**

DAISO | DAVID GANDY WELLWEAR | ICONIC RETAIL DESTINATIONS | IMMERSIVE ATTRACTIONS & EXPERIENCES | LEISURE, WELLNESS & HOSPITALITY | PLACEMAKING



# THE Point

## A NEW DESTINATION IN ABHA

The Point represents a strategic partnership between the Red Sea Markets Company Ltd. | Asir and the Tourism Development Fund.

The Red Sea Markets Company a member of the SEDCO Holding Group, owns one of the most important shopping and entertainment projects in the Kingdom, Red Sea Mall in Jeddah and it is working to replicate this success in Abha and position The Point as Asir Region's leading tourist destination for shopping, entertainment and recreation.

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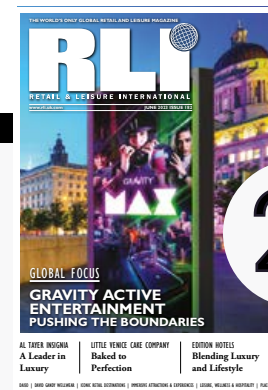
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## Cover Story

Gravity Active Entertainment was founded back in 2014 with a vision of providing safe and exciting family fun on a mass scale. We speak with Michael Harrison to learn more about the business and its growth.



Editor's  
Foreword

It is an exciting time in the RLI office as we approach our two annual events in London. Before we turn our attention to them, we bring you the June issue of RLI which has all the news, views and interviews from across the industry to keep you up-to-date with everything in the retail and leisure sectors. I look forward to catching up with industry colleagues in London before we begin work on the July/August edition.

Till next time...

*James Quinn, Editor*



Publisher's  
Comment

As you read this I am knee deep in schedules for our forthcoming RLI Connect Global event in only 10 days... so no pressure!

Our June issue has lots of exciting features to keep you entertained prior to our events, starting with this month's Cover Story on Gravity, who are leading the way in the extremely fast-paced competitive socialising sector. RLI sits down with Co-Founder and CGO Michael Harrison to learn about the origins of the business, what has propelled the company to unprecedented levels of success and what plans are in place for the future.

Lead Interviews this month include 'A Leader in Luxury' - Al Tayer Insignia; Little Venice Cake Company - 'Baked to Perfection'; Daiso - 'Enriching Peoples Lives'; David Gandy Wellwear, where we 'Step into the World of Wellwear' and this month's hotel lead 'Blending Luxury and Lifestyle' with EDITION Hotels.

We also take a look at Placemaking; Leisure, Wellness & Hospitality and Immersive Attractions & Experiences. This month's Voyager ties in perfectly with our events as we focus on Iconic Retail Destinations, many of which feature in this year's Global RLI Awards.

On that note I am looking forward to catching up with many of you in London...

Until then enjoy the read!

*Jayne Rafter, Publisher*

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# WHO'S WHO IN RETAIL

**RLI** MEETS

## Kurt Zdesar

FOUNDER - CHOTTO MATTE

### What are the company's key objectives for the next 12-18 months?

Moving forward, our key objectives for Chotto Matte revolve around both consolidation and expansion. We aim to further establish our current locations, ensuring that we continue to deliver exceptional and unique dining experiences, building on our existing foundations and maintaining our high standards of quality and service.

### Would you say events around the world in the last few years have affected the business at all and has it had any effects on future plans?

Undoubtedly, the global events of the past few years have had a significant impact on the industry as a whole, including Chotto Matte. Temporary closures, changing regulations and shifting consumer behaviours have all presented challenges. Within hospitality, there's always a new challenge that arises at any given time, whether that's a global pandemic or a new competitor, success in this everchanging industry is never a certainty.

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

Adaptability, agility and innovation are crucial leadership skills. The ability to swiftly respond to changing consumer demands, market trends and technological advancements is essential. Effective communication and collaboration skills are also vital, as they enable leaders to align their teams and foster a shared vision. Building strong relationships with both internal and external stakeholders is key to navigating challenges and seizing opportunities.

### As a leader who makes key strategic decisions, do you prefer to rely on facts and figures, your natural instinct, or a combination of the two?

I believe that strategic decision-making should be based on a combination of facts and figures as well as intuition. Data and analytics provide valuable insights into market trends, customer behaviour and financial performance. They offer a foundation of knowledge that is essential for making informed decisions. However, it is equally important to trust one's instincts, especially when evaluating new opportunities or navigating uncharted territories. Successful leaders often have a deep and intimate understanding of their industry and possess a certain natural intuition that comes from experience and a strong connection with their customers.

### 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?

Absolutely, I firmly believe that CEOs and company leaders can continue to be transformational in the new retail landscape. In fact, it is now more important than ever. The retail industry is experiencing rapid changes driven by evolving consumer preferences, technological advancements and global events.

### What do you make of social media and its importance in the world of retail and how prominent is e-commerce and online activities within the business?

Social media is undoubtedly a powerful tool. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to connect directly and instantly with customers, build brand awareness and engage with a broader audience. It has transformed the way consumers discover, interact with and share their experiences with brands. We use various social media platforms to showcase our culinary offerings, share behind-the-scenes content and communicate our brand values. It allows us to create a sense of community and connect with both loyal patrons and new customers.

### Taking a step back from right now, what would you consider your career highlights to date to be?

Firstly, being headhunted for Nobu was a pivotal moment for me. Renowned worldwide for its exceptional culinary offerings and iconic brand, being sought after to join their team validated my skills and expertise in the industry. It was an invaluable opportunity to work alongside some of the most talented individuals in the field and learn from their innovative approach to hospitality. Secondly, leaving a secure and successful job to launch my first concept, Ping Pong, was a bold move that paid off. Ping Pong was a unique dim sum and cocktail bar concept that quickly gained popularity. It became one of the fastest-growing companies in the UK, with multiple locations and a strong presence in the market. Witnessing the success of Ping Pong reinforced my entrepreneurial spirit and gave me the confidence to pursue further ventures in the industry. One of the most significant milestones was the creation and successful launch of Chotto Matte. It has been immensely fulfilling to see the concept grow from an initial vision to a globally recognised brand with multiple thriving locations and being approached by some of the best landlords and most influential hotels interested to host our brand.

### With everything that has happened in recent times, how are you feeling about the 12-18 months that lie ahead?

I am optimistic about the 12-18 months that lie ahead. Throughout difficult times, opportunities arise for innovation, adaptation and growth. Challenges have ultimately helped us to realign what we do and why we do it. As we continue to navigate the changing landscape, we have gained valuable experience and insights that will shape our strategies moving forward. We remain agile and ready to respond to evolving consumer needs and market dynamics. I believe that with resilience, creativity and a dedicated team, we can not only overcome challenges but also thrive in the months ahead. I am excited about the future of Chotto Matte and the possibilities that lie before us.

### If we look at the retail industry as a whole, do you have any words of warning for the industry or advice from your own experiences?

First and foremost, it is essential to stay agile and adaptable. The retail landscape is constantly evolving and businesses must be prepared to embrace change and innovate to meet evolving consumer demands. Investing in technology and data analytics is crucial. The ability to collect and analyse customer data can provide valuable insights that inform decision-making and drive personalised experiences. Embracing digital transformation and leveraging technology can be a game-changer in staying competitive. Nurturing a strong company culture and prioritising employee well-being are vital. A motivated and engaged team can deliver exceptional customer experiences and contribute to the success of the business. Investing in training, communication and creating a supportive work environment are essential for long-term success.

### Lastly, any final thoughts or anything else you would like to add for our readers?

I would like to express my gratitude to our guests, partners and the entire Chotto Matte team for their unwavering support and dedication. Our success is a result of the collective effort and passion of everyone involved. To the readers, I encourage you to explore new culinary experiences, embrace diversity and support local businesses. The dining industry is at its best when we come together to celebrate food, culture and the joy of shared experiences.



**VIAJURMALA**  
OUTLET VILLAGE

**12 Jauna Street, Pinki, Latvia**



**The only outlet village in the Baltic States, new shopping experience for consumers and a sales channel for Brands with total commercial area of 22 500 m².**



**Contains a hybrid offer of outlet stores, food and beverage and 600 m² children playground.**



**Located in the centre of the Baltic States, on one of the busiest roads (13,5 m cars annually), 10 minutes drive from Riga International Airport (5,38 million passengers in 2022).**



**Cater for fast developing residential real estate village Saliena, three International schools, Jurmala Golf Club, and the club 'Riga FC' project for 5 football fields and a sports complex construction (50 EUR million investment).**



**Developing an infrastructure for accessibility improvement and a final stage as a Retail Park format by adding grocery/FMCG categories, beauty, electronics, and homeware.**

**viajurmala.com**

## BLOOBLOOM UNVEILS NEW FLAGSHIP STORE OPENING IN COVENT GARDEN

French designer eyewear brand, bloobloom, has opened its flagship store at 30 James Street in Covent Garden.

The store is situated near Apple, Rituals and Tiffany & Co. and boasts a spacious 600sq ft across the ground floor. The independent brand will continue to bring eyewear innovation to consumers across London at affordable prices.

The new store houses bloobloom's full collection of spectacles and sunglasses and offers the customers the full experience from walk-in eye examinations with in-house opticians, adjustment and repair services as well as personalised style advice, bloobloom offers a range of women's and men's glasses with popular styles from Traveller, to daydreamer, to Londoner and Designer.

The store opening is one of five new openings which are the start of a wider expansion for the brand across the UK, as part of a backdrop of strong growth.



RAILPEN, ONE OF THE LARGEST PENSION MANAGERS IN THE UK, HAS ANNOUNCED TOMMY HILFGER AND CALVIN KLEIN HAVE SIGNED AT CALEDONIA PARK, SCOTLAND'S PREMIUM DESIGNER OUTLET VILLAGE, FOLLOWING A RECORD-BREAKING FIRST QUARTER FOR THE DESTINATION. GLOBAL DESIGNER LIFESTYLE BRAND, TOMMY HILFGER, WILL OCCUPY A 5,000SQ FT STORE, WITH CALVIN KLEIN IN A 1,000SQ FT, BOTH POSITIONED IN PRIME LOCATIONS WITHIN CALEDONIA PARK. DUE TO OPEN THIS YEAR, THEY WILL JOIN SEVERAL PREMIUM BRANDS AT THE DESTINATION, SUCH AS BOSS, POLO BY RALPH LAUREN, KATE SPADE NEW YORK AND MARK ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT ENDORSEMENT OF CALEDONIA PARK AND OUTLETS. THIS NEWS COINCIDES WITH RECORD-BREAKING PERFORMANCE SEEN BY THE DESTINATION SO FAR THIS YEAR, WITH SALES UP 28.1 PER CENT YEAR-ON-YEAR IN Q1.

## BLACK SHEEP COFFEE TO LAND IN THE ARNDALE

Manchester Arndale is pleased to announce a series of new leasing activity which includes the arrival of Black Sheep Coffee at the shopping centre and the retention of popular store The Works.

Black Sheep Coffee has selected the centre for its latest location in Manchester, after agreeing to take a 4,187sq ft unit on Market Street on a 20-year lease. Meanwhile, The Works has agreed a new five-year lease for its 3,356sq ft store.

Catering to coffee lovers across the board, Black Sheep Coffee will offer their speciality-grade 100 per cent Robusta coffee and a selection of four different Arabica beans: Love Berries, Blue Volcano, Rebel Decaf and Seasonal Limited-Editions. With a commitment to sustainability and as part of an aim to reduce the company's environmental impact wherever possible, 100 per cent compostable takeaway cups and PLA plastic alternatives are used across all their locations. With a passion for coffee the brand has also preserved independence by harnessing support and funding from their loyal customers and those who believe in the values of the company.

## DAVID M ROBINSON UNVEILS THIRD LIVERPOOL ONE SITE

Grosvenor has announced that award-winning British luxury jewellery retailer, David M Robinson (DMR), is launching its third store at Liverpool ONE and a new city debut, following its consistently strong performance at the destination. DMR's new 3,600sq ft boutique will be in partnership with Swiss watch brand, TAG Heuer and will mark LVMH's first dedicated partnership in the city.

Opening in October, the Liverpool ONE TAG Heuer store will join DMR's OMEGA boutique as well as its recently upsized and refurbished jewellery and Rolex flagship on South John Street. Set to be the largest of its kind in the country, it will feature a private luxury lounge and bar, as well as a traditional boutique space.

This latest commitment made by the British, luxury jewellery retailer follows its continual stellar performance at the destination and is a significant vote of confidence in Liverpool ONE, where DMR has operated since its launch in 2008.

## NESPRESSO OPENS NEW EXPERIENTIAL BOUTIQUE AT TRAFFORD CENTRE

Nespresso has opened a new experiential boutique at Trafford Centre in Manchester, giving local shoppers an exclusive first look and taste of the brand's highly anticipated Summer Iced Collection.

Coffee lovers that are eager to explore Nespresso's wide range of blends, machines and accessories can now enjoy them at the new boutique – designed to engage existing and new customers through a range of unique and personalised experiences.

At the new boutique, shoppers across Manchester and the Northwest have an opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of Nespresso through a sophisticated 'Coffee as an Art' tasting and masterclass area. The Trafford Centre follows successful UK launches at the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent followed by Trinity Leeds.



## NEW WAGAMAMA RESTAURANT SET TO ARRIVE AT MERRY HILL

Sovereign Centros has announced that much-loved restaurant chain, wagamama, is set to arrive this year at Merry Hill. Serving its iconic menu of pan-Asian-inspired favourites, the restaurant will take a 4,000sq ft space on the destination's Upper Mall close to the upcoming Hollywood Bowl, adding to Merry Hill's culinary line-up.

wagamama Merry Hill will serve its classic range of katsu curries and signature ramen bowls. Also on the menu will be the restaurant's selection of donburi bowls, teppanyaki noodles and curries, as well as an extensive variety of sides, sweet treats and a number of vegan options. The Merry Hill space will adopt wagamama's trademark pared-back dining format, with a combination of long communal-style tables, as well as smaller seating areas. The new restaurant will also feature the classic

wagamama open kitchen, allowing diners to view their meals being prepared.

The announcement comes as Merry Hill reports a 17 per cent increase in F&B sales comparing January to April 2023 with the same period in 2022 and follows a successful community initiative recently rolled out by wagamama across the country. The restaurant chain pledged to support children and families by giving away free meals and open a series of community hubs.

The news follows a series of F&B announcements in 2022 for Merry Hill, including the opening of German Doner Kebab in the destination's dining hub, Eat Central. Merry Hill's leisure offer continues to go from strength to strength, with the recent signing of Hollywood Bowl, the UK's largest ten-pin bowling operator, also joining later this year.

### TURTLE BAY TO ADD FIFTH SITE

Promising to bring the flavours and spirit of the Caribbean to one of the most iconic towns in the capital, Turtle Bay is set to open the doors to its milestone 50th site this August, in the vibrant neighbourhood of Camden Town. The expansion plans for the company includes a total of six new openings this year.

### PHO LAUNCHES AT CENTRE:MK

The Vietnamese street food group, Pho, is set to open in centre:mk, one of the top 10 retail and leisure destinations in the UK. The 4,133sq ft restaurant will seat approximately 100 customers and promises to be a unique and vibrant space, perfect for relaxed and informal dining for a broad range of visitors to the centre.

### ODD MUSE MAKES ITS RETURN

Longmartin Properties Ltd, a joint venture between Shatesbury Capital and the Mercers' Company, has announced that the company, the independent 'investment fashion' label, has returned to The Yards, Covent Garden for its second pop-up, following its highly successful debut physical experience at the destination last month.

### FLIP OUT POOLE OPENS DOORS

The brand has launched in the former Marks and Spencer unit in the Dolphin Shopping Centre in the heart of Poole alongside Putt Putt Noodle, the UK's fastest-growing Asian-inspired adventure golf experience. Flip Out Poole is among the first Flip Out indoor adventure parks to feature electric karts and there will be two different kart sizes.

### BLOK UNVEILS ITS LATEST SITE

The award-winning fitness brand known for its design-led approach, has opened the doors of its third London studio, BLOKspace Leyton. Located in the creative heart of Leyton's local community, BLOKspace is conceived as a living installation bringing the world of art, intentional design and curated fitness classes together.



## VALENTINO LAUNCHES NEW PARIS HOME ON AVENUE MONTAIGNE

Valentino has unveiled its new store in Paris, saying that it's "reinvented itself" on Avenue Montaigne. The change of address, not far from its previous home, gives it more space with its offer for both women's and men's ready-to-wear and accessories spread over three floors.

Conceived by CEO Jacopo Venturini and Creative Director Pierpaolo Piccioli, it follows the new-concept openings that started last year in Madrid, Venice, Jeddah, Geneva, New Delhi, Florence and most recently in New York and Shanghai.

The new concept that was developed in-house "reveals itself in a warm setting that blends spirit, emotion and materials, embodying the codes of a serene, enveloping and evocative future". The new location also has a Red Room dressed in scarlet velvet that "vibrates at the heart of a mise-en-scene thoughtfully designed to embody the Parisian heritage and context".



NIKE UNITE, THE LATEST RETAIL CONCEPT FROM ICONIC SPORTS BRAND NIKE, HAS OPENED ITS DOORS AT BLANCHARDSTOWN CENTRE, DUBLIN'S LARGEST RETAIL AND LEISURE DESTINATION. THE FIRST STORE OF ITS KIND IN IRELAND, NIKE UNITE PUTS THE COMMUNITY FIRST, AIMING TO HELP LOCAL PEOPLE CONNECT WITH SPORT. THE UNIT FEATURES AN IN-STORE COMMUNITY WALL, CELEBRATING DUBLIN ATHLETES AND SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT, AS WELL AS LOCAL LANDMARKS AND PARTNERSHIPS. SIGNED ON A TEN-YEAR LEASE, THE STORE SPANS 10,000SQ FT IN TOTAL AND CATER TO ALL - STOCKING NIKE'S LATEST SPORTS, FASHION AND FOOTWEAR RANGES FOR MEN, WOMEN, TEENS AND KIDS. IT WILL SERVE TO STRENGTHEN BLANCHARDSTOWN'S ATHLEISURE OFFER - SITUATED NEXT DOOR TO JD SPORTS' FLAGSHIP STORE AND ADJACENT TO POPULAR BRANDS SUCH AS LIFESTYLE SPORTS, SKECHERS AND

## KIVARI EXPANDS RETAIL PRESENCE WITH NEW SITES

Australian fashion label KIVARI has opened two new retail stores in Bondi Junction and Burleigh Heads. This takes KIVARI's store count to six boutiques in key locations, with new store openings in the pipeline as the company continues to expand.

Located at 25 James Street, the new Burleigh Heads Boutique pays homage to the brand's coastal roots. The boutique is designed with modern architectural finishes, flowing curves and consciously-crafted natural furnishings.

KIVARI's Founder and Creative Director, Kirstin-Lee Keyzers, said, "I'm excited to have opened a store where it all began for KIVARI nine years ago, where I was selling handmade leather goods at the Burleigh Heads TVM market."

The Bondi Boutique is designed to reflect KIVARI's signature aesthetic, with neutral tones, organic textures and natural materials creating a contemporary and inviting atmosphere. The new space is located on Level 3 of Westfield Bondi Junction and joins existing stores in Byron Bay, Noosa, Freshwater and Miranda.

## HUGO BOSS OPENS ITS FIRST STORE IN POLAND

Złote Tarasy shopping centre has signed up a new tenant. HUGO, a brand of one of the world's upmarket fashion companies Hugo Boss, opened its first Polish brick-and-mortar store. Global real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield is responsible for the re-commercialisation and property management for the complex.

"HUGO launched its first physical store in Poland in Złote Tarasy just a week after the revamped BOSS store was opened. This brand perfectly complements the retail offer of the shopping centre. HUGO collections are designed for people who boldly follow current fashion trends and look for clothing and accessories of the highest quality," says Karolina Mucha, Cushman & Wakefield.

Złote Tarasy is a five-level shopping centre with an area of over 66,000sq m. It has a portfolio of over 200 stores, including Converse, Victoria's Secret, Guess, Lacoste, LUSH, Sephora, Douglas, MAC, Marc O'Polo, Massimo Dutti, New Balance, as well as Inditex and LPP brands.

## AMSTERDAM THE STYLE OUTLETS WELCOMES LEVI'S® STORE

Levi's®, the iconic denim brand that has been producing clothing since 1853, has opened a new store today in Amsterdam The Style Outlets, the centre operated by Spanish multinational NEINVER. The more than 400sq m store will offer a wide selection of Levi's® world-renowned products, including the 501® classic jeans, as well as a vast range of other denim jeans, jackets, shirts and accessories.

With this opening, Levi's® further expands its footprint across NEINVER's outlet portfolio and the Dutch outlet market in particular, bringing its authentic denim collection to Randstad's first outlet centre. This latest addition at Amsterdam The Style Outlets further diversifies the outlet's offering and is a perfect fit for a retail mix.



## JO MERCER OPENS FIRST MATILDA LIFE BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORE

Shoemaker Jo Mercer has opened her first brick-and-mortar store, Matilda Life, in one of Melbourne's biggest retail zones.

Matilda Life, an Australian-made lifestyle brand, was born during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021 to support hard-hit Aussie producers. It was the brainchild of Mercer and her business partner Lauren Mastromanno. The Matilda Life store features sustainable objects including Australian timber, natural Australian sandstone and Australian leather used throughout to enhance the shopping experience for visitors.

The colour palette of the store was inspired by Australian summers, arid nights and oceans. In addition, stunning curving ceilings depict the arch of an Australian surf wave in metaphor. The Matilda Life collection includes women's apparel in

wool, cotton and linen, leather shoes and trainers, sleepwear, personal fragrance and finally, home fragrances.

According to Mercer, the Australian retail experience has changed since Covid as more shoppers choose to buy things in physical locations.

"We have seen, particularly over the past year, a strong return of shoppers to 'brick-and-mortar' stores rather than online and that's been reflected in the financial performances of key Australian retailers," she said. "We have high hopes that our product offering, location, shopping experience in-store and growing support for 'Aussie made' will see a strong performance for our first store. Customers are clearly loving the 'touch and feel' shopping experience again after two years of the pandemic."



## SESSÙN OPENS SERIES OF UNITS

The Marseille-based label Sessùn, founded in 1995 by Emma François is expanding its network in Europe. Adding to its network of 38 boutiques, the brand will soon be opening new stores in London, Mallorca and Lyon. In all of its points of sale, the designer and her teams like to create a style that reflects the spirit of the location of the store.

## CITY OF DREAMS SET TO LAUNCH

Melco Resorts & Entertainment is pleased to announce City of Dreams Mediterranean will open on 10 July 2023. The one-of-a-kind development in Cyprus will become the first integrated resort in Europe, showcasing an unparalleled array of offerings, including Europe's grandest casino, fine-dining, extensive entertainment and the biggest expo centre.

## SUNSET TO OPEN RESTAURANT

Dubai-based hospitality leader Sunset Hospitality Group (SHG) will launch Ammos brand in the Balearic Islands this June in the latest stage of its ambitious global expansion strategy. They will open its homegrown brand Ammos Greek restaurant at iconic destination Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel.

## CASTORE LOOKS SET TO EXPAND

Premium British sportswear brand, Castore, is celebrating its successful expansion after growing its presence across Europe. The brand, which was founded in 2015 by Wirral-based brothers Phil and Tom Beahon, has triumphed within the European market, with plans now in place for further growth throughout 2023.

## SALSA JEANS ADDS NEW STORE

The brand has recently inaugurated a store in the Portuguese city of Guarda, at the LA VIV Guarda Shopping Center located at number 5 on Avenida dos Engenheiros Voluntários Egitanenses. The unveiling comes after the successful openings this year in Spain in Barcelona and Madrid and in Ireland in Dublin.

## WARBY PARKER IS ON COURSE TO OPEN 40 NEW STORES THIS YEAR

The direct-to-consumer eyewear brand plans to open 40 new stores this year, for a total of 240 locations.

It opened six stores during the first quarter, including its 13th location in New York City, on the Upper West of Manhattan, directly across from the Museum of National History and ended the quarter with 204 locations.

Looking long-term Co-Founder and Co-CEO Dave Gilboa told analysts that “we believe can open 900-plus stores in the US, a significant opportunity for further penetration of new and existing markets for years to come while still representing a small fraction of the 48,000 optical shops in the US”.

Among other benefits, stores act as an accelerator of progressives sales, Gilboa noted. “As our store footprint has expanded, so have progressives,” he said. “Progressives penetration was up 210 basis points year over year to 22.9 per cent of prescription eyeglass units in Q1.”



GENTLE MONSTER HAS MADE FURTHER STRIDES IN THE US, WHICH IS STILL THE PLANET'S BIGGEST LUXURY MARKET, OPENING ITS FIFTH STANDALONE STORE IN HOUSTON. THE SOUTH KOREAN EYEWEAR BRAND HAS SECURED A 4,800SQ FT UNIT, ITS LARGEST TO DATE IN THE COUNTRY, AT THE GALLERIA, THE CITY'S LEADING UPSCALE SHOPPING CENTRE. THE INTERIOR DESIGN, CREATED BY THE BRAND'S IN-HOUSE DESIGN DEPARTMENT AT THE SEOUL HEADQUARTERS, SEES AN INFUSION OF THE NIFTY AND EVOCATIVE HI-TECH INSTALLATIONS THAT GENTLE MONSTER HAS BECOME KNOWN FOR. ONE OF THE INSTALLATIONS, DUBBED THE PROBE, IS A WALKING MECHANICAL CREATURE, LIKE A SPIDER, BUT WITH SIX LEGS AND AN INSTALLATION OF A GIANT KINETIC HEAD WITH HYPER REALISTIC BLINKING AND SUBTLE HEAD MOVEMENTS.

## DICK'S TO OPEN NINE HOUSE OF SPORTS STORES IN 2023

Retailer Dick's has announced its decision to invest in retail development and open nine new House of Sport stores in 2023. Dick's Sporting Goods reported 2022 sales recently, with revenue adding 5.3 per cent due to declines by some of the retailer's closest competitors in the market.

Dick's maintains its revenue forecast for 2023 and forecasts revenue growth of two per cent. The company says first-quarter sales increased 3.4 per cent and net income added 17 per cent. In addition to the nine House of Sport stores that will open in 2023, the retailer also announced the opening of 10 outlets in 2024. By 2027, the company expects the chain to grow from 75 to 100 outlets.

Experts say Dick's revenue growth shows the retailer is “ahead of trends and capturing market share”. Unlike other chains more focused on apparel and sneakers, the retailer offers a large selection of sports equipment, including for team sports.

Back in March, the company also completed the purchase of Moosejaw which will add more revenue come the end of the year.

## WORLD'S SMALLEST BIKE STORE OPENS IN NYC

The London-based maker of a leading folding bike brand has opened its second outpost in New York City.

London-based Brompton unveiled its first-ever “Micro Junction” store in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighbourhood. Measuring only 70sq ft and dubbed the “world's smallest bike shop,” the space is designed to showcase the unique features of the folding bike while encouraging sustainable, people-powered commuting.

The tiny retail venue is digitally connected to Brompton's e-commerce offering. Shoppers can purchase any Brompton for delivery to their home or pickup at the flagship store, Brompton Junction, in Manhattan's West Village.

Designed by Barrows Global, the shop is optimized at every touchpoint to bring the Brompton brand story to life, as well as showcase the flexibility of its products.

Visitors who take a “Selfie Test Ride” can explore the Brooklyn waterfront's most iconic views by bike and post their Brompton selfies to Instagram.

## AMIRI UNVEILS A BRAND NEW STORE IN THE WINDY CITY

Following outposts in key cities such as New York City, Los Angeles and Miami, AMIRI has set up shop in Chicago.

Occupying no less than 11,500sq ft spread over two floors of a modern building along East Walton Street, it features a collaborative interior design by Mike Amiri, the brand's Creative Director and Paris-based architecture and design firm NOCOD, alongside a partnership with Two One Two Design.

The premises flaunt the AMIRI design codes, albeit adapted to the location and somewhat tweaked to avoid a generic format in multiple stores.

A modern material palette of natural materials, including natural oak, precious marble and stainless steel, is captured by a series of understated yet inviting settings.



## CRISP & GREEN LAUNCHES IN MANHATTAN AS IT EYES EXPANSION

The healthy-eating, fast-casual restaurant chain opened its first New York City location on 1 June, in Manhattan's NoMad neighbourhood. The location also marks Crisp & Green's entry into its tenth state, with ten additional states scheduled to open before the end of the year.

The restaurant brand is slated to reach 65 locations open across 20 states by the end of 2023, with a total of 130 locations open before the end of 2024. Earlier this year, it signed its largest franchise deal to date, a 40-unit development deal with franchise partner Rory Kelly of Salads & Smoothies.

Recently, Crisp & Green's real estate team has identified more than 1,700 additional territories that fit the brand's specific site criteria, which will give the company room to manoeuvre in its pursuit of more than 1,000 units.

Founded in 2016, Crisp & Green is known for its nourishing bowls, salads, smoothies and more that are made with sustainable, “consciously sourced” ingredients. The brand places special emphasis on its “commitment to community” by partnering with local partners.

“Entering into New York City is a huge moment for any brand,” said Steele Smiley, Founder and Executive Chairman of Crisp & Green and Steele Brands. “For us, it's an incredible opportunity to lean into our foundation of hospitality and show this influential community why Crisp & Green is different from other healthy fast casual restaurants. Not only are we introducing our delicious food to active New Yorkers, but we're creating a unique guest experience through our wellness events hosted on the rooftop of our NoMad location.”



### MINISO OPENS IN TIMES SQUARE

Lifestyle retailer MINISO has officially opened its new global flagship store in New York's iconic Times Square. The new store brings MINISO's signature joyful attitude and fun, affordable, well-designed products straight to the heart of one of the world's most famous shopping districts. The MINISO unit is located on the first floor of 5 Times Square.

### GROWTH FOR CANADA GOOSE

Canada Goose's latest store plans of opening three new US sites comes after the brand reported its fourth-quarter earnings last month. The latest US stores will include a wide range of their product assortment, including parkas, apparel, accessories and footwear. During its fiscal year 2024, the company plans 16 stores across US, Japan and China.

### PRIMARK TO ADD MORE STORES

The international value fashion retail giant Primark has announced further US expansion plans with the opening of three new stores this summer, in New York and New Jersey. The latest US locations will span more than 33,000sq ft of retail selling space and feature Primark's exclusive range of fashion and accessories, as well as homeware.

### LILI PINK ADDS CALI LOCATION

The Colombian brand of underwear, lounge and beauty, continues with the renovation of its store park in Colombia and launches its new store in the Palmetto Plaza shopping centre in Cali. In a space of approximately 80sq m, Lili Pink presents its main offer of underwear, as well as pyjamas, loungewear, accessories and beauty products.

### LEVI'S GOES BIG IN ARGENTINA

The company has just reopened the doors of its store in the Distrito Arcos shopping centre, in the city of Buenos Aires, with a new, more innovative space. The new store occupies the space of two stores and is spread over 434sq m, becoming the largest Levi's in Argentina and it has been designed as a new experiential space for the consumer.

## THE FUTURE OF IMMERSIVE FASHION RETAIL OPENS ITS DOORS IN RIYADH

An innovative and interactive concept store with new international designers to the Middle East region, is paving the way for an exciting future of Saudi fashion.

Mwaz - meaning 'parallel world' - is a conceptual luxury fashion and lifestyle destination in Riyadh, where the Saudi fashion scene is quickly evolving alongside new and relaxed cultural reforms.

Owned by the Sela Group, the 16,000sq ft central experience has been created by London-based Studio of Art & Commerce, specialists in design and production of Entertainment and Innovative Experiences for brands in Fashion, Music and Art around the world.

Fusing high fashion with interactive technologies and design, Mwaz satisfies the ever-growing consumer appetite for unique and innovative in-store shopping experiences. Customers visiting the store will travel through four distinct 'frontiers' (Warp, Rarities, Visions and Trill).



SAUDI ARABIA HAS OPENED A NEW ADDITION TO ITS ENTERTAINMENT AND TOURISM SECTOR - VIA RIYADH ON 11 MAY. THIS LUXURIOUS DESTINATION, LOCATED IN RIYADH, SHOWCASES THE SALMANI ARCHITECTURAL STYLE, BLENDING MODERNITY WITH THE KINGDOM'S ORIGINAL HERITAGE. THE INAUGURATION OF VIA RIYADH MARKS A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN SAUDI ARABIA'S JOURNEY TO ENHANCE ITS ENTERTAINMENT OFFERINGS IN 2023. BUILD IN ALIGNMENT WITH KING SALMAN'S CORE VALUES OF AUTHENTICITY, HUMAN-CENTRICITY, LIVEABILITY, CONTINUITY, INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY. VIA RIYADH COMBINES TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE. SITUATED NEAR THE DIPLOMATIC QUARTER, VIA RIYADH FEATURES A ST. REGIS HOTEL, UPSCALE RETAIL STORES, FINE-DINING RESTAURANTS, CINEMAS AND A THEATRE FOR LIVE PERFORMANCES.

## SNOW ABU DHABI OPENING DATES REVEALED

Snow Abu Dhabi at Reem Mall will be open to visitors from 8 June. The upcoming Snow Abu Dhabi is a sub-zero snow and ice park, operated by Majid Al Futtaim, which maintains a temperature of minus two degree Celsius.

The indoor attraction, which spans nearly 1,000sq m, will feature 12 rides and 17 attractions. Snow Abu Dhabi's main attractions include two huge slides called Ice and Floes Toboggan Race and Grauppel's Summit Escape. Other rides include The Entry Plaza, the Polar Express Train, the Flight of the Snowy Owl, the Magic Carpet and the Crystal Carousel. The attraction will also feature restaurants inside the park, including Ice Café, Grotto Amphitheatre and The Lodge Restaurant.

Reem Mall, opened on February 16, with a few shops and Vox Cinemas open for business. Reem Mall, located on Reem Island, features 400 shops, which includes big brands such as The North Face, Max, Vans, Timberland and Carrefour. Mall goers can also take advantage of the mall's car park which accommodates 6,800 spaces.

## POPULAR SEAFOOD CHAIN ANNOUNCES EXPANSION

Golden Fork, UAE's popular homegrown seafood chain, is set to roll out a massive expansion and rebranding exercise, which will see it opening 20 new and designer outlets across the Emirates, shifting many of its outlets to high-end malls in Dubai and elsewhere, besides foraying into the Saudi market.

The 45-year old fine-dining chain known for signature dishes such as Cajun Seafood, Prawn Biryani, Goan Fish Curry and Fried Shrimp, has also struck an AED 10M investment deal with a Dubai-based investment firm to fund its growth plans.

It will also shift gears to get into a franchisee model, which could also see the company entering into part stake sale deals with some of the prospective partners, to reach a wider customer base.

"Our expansion strategy will include a significant focus on rebranding as we aim to enhance our presence in shopping malls and identify areas with high footfalls," Shanavas Mohammed, Partner, Golden Fork, told Arabian Business.

## DUBAI'S CITY WALK ANNOUNCES PLAN TO ATTRACT NEW TENANTS, VISITORS

Dubai's CityWalk has announced its expansion with the opening of 30,000sq ft of space to house health and wellness offerings. The new tenants will launch in Q4 of this year.

Over the last year, multiple tenants in this category have opened including Al Rawi Medical Centre, Perla Dermatology Clinic, Aspris Wellbeing Centre and The Free Spirit Collective. This year, visitors will see an addition of Circle Clinic, Assure Clinic, Dentaldate Dental Clinic, Mid Clinic and Smile Factor Clinic in the wellness category. In the health and fitness category, tenants including Helt Gym, GOLFTec and PHY Club are set to open.

City Walk is diversifying its tenant mix to evolve with consumer trends with projected revenue in the health and wellbeing sector to reach \$223M.



## DUBAI REVEALS PLAN TO UPGRADE THE PROVISION OF BEACHES

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai approved the "Dubai Master Plan for Public Beaches" that aims to increase the total length of public beaches in the emirate by 400 per cent.

The plan, which forms part of the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, features the opening of new beaches and the development of existing ones with advanced facilities. The plans for the Dubai beach masterplan include the extension of public beaches in Dubai to more than 100km, eco tourism on Jebel Ali Beach, new cycling tracks, beach camping, water sports facilities, new bus routes, facilities for people of determination, more dining and more retail.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said Dubai is committed to ensuring the highest standards of excellence in urban development. The

emirate places the utmost priority on improving the quality of life and ensuring the happiness of citizens, residents and visitors.

He said: "The Dubai Master Plan for Public Beaches will increase the length of public beaches by 400 per cent by 2040. Their total length will increase from 21km to 105km. Services offered on public beaches will increase by 300 per cent by 2025. We launched the first urban plan in Dubai in 1960. Development is a non-stop journey in Dubai. Dubai will continue to provide the best living standards for both individuals and families."

The new Master Plan demonstrates Dubai's commitment to providing unique experiences for beachgoers in line with the goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 to consolidate the emirate's status as one of the top three cities for tourism.



### ISTYLE OPENS NEW DUBAI STORE

iSTYLE has opened UAE's first Apple Premium Partner (APP) store in Dubai Marina Mall, a perfect destination to shop the entire ecosystem of Apple Products and accessories in a spacious and welcoming environment. The store's professional team speaks multiple languages to give customers the best-personalised service for all their Apple requirements.

### FIVE GUYS UNVEILS A NEW SITE

American burger joint Five Guys has opened its newest location in the UAE at Galleria Mall in Al Barsha Dubai. The new outlet will continue the Five Guys ethos of serving burgers, hand-cut fries and more, freshly made and customisable for any taste. The outlet in Galleria Mall is Five Guys' first new store opening for 2023.

### AIUIA ANNOUNCES ECO-RESORT

AIUla will welcome hospitality brand AZULIK to the Kingdom. A 76-villa luxury eco-resort, complete with VIP club, spa, welcome lounges, all-day dining, SKER IK museum will open in 2027. With designs inspired by the natural ecosystem and surrounding sandstone cliffs, the resort's exteriors will utilise natural materials and fibres woven into several layers.

### JUMBO ELECTRONICS RE-OPENS

UAE-based consumer electronics major Jumbo Electronics recently re-opened its store on the second level in Dubai Mall following an extensive renovation. The revamped store features a wider range of kitchen appliances, premium air purifiers, vacuum cleaners, personal care devices, smart devices and gaming consoles.

### PAN EMIRATES ALTERS IDENTITY

The three-decade-long legacy of UAE-based home brand PAN Emirates continues as it unveils its new identity PAN Home with a modern twist. The new chapter opens a door to engage with a wider and new customer base, whilst meeting the market's evolved interior design tastes. The brand has undergone a complete makeover with a modern approach.

## SUN & SAND SPORTS ANNOUNCES MAJOR EXPANSION PLAN IN MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE

Sun & Sand Sports (SSS), which operates under global well-being company GMG, announced Monday its plans to open 11 stores under the flagship brand across the Southeast Asian market. This includes Singapore and Malaysia. The stores will run operations over the course of the next 36 months, the company said in a statement.

“Over the years, Asia has become the world’s consumption growth engine. At GMG, we saw an opportunity to leverage our retail expertise from the moment we entered the SEA market. Through brands such as Sun & Sand Sports, we have constantly challenged ourselves to look at innovative ways to bring added value and best-in-class shopping experiences to our customers. The brand’s resounding success in the Middle East has been inspiring and we are thrilled to extend the SSS experience to Asian customers now,” GMG Deputy Chairman and CEO Mohammad A. Baker said.



DEPARTMENT STORE AND MULTI-BRAND RETAILER SHOPPERS STOP PLAN TO OPEN THE LARGEST BEAUTY STORE IN INDIA TO DATE IN KOLKATA THIS AUTUMN FESTIVE SEASON. THE RETAIL SPACE WILL FUNCTION AS A CONCEPT STORE AND THE BUSINESS PLANS TO CONTINUE TO OPEN STANDALONE BEAUTY STORES ACROSS INDIA. “IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, WE WILL BE OPENING THE BIGGEST BEAUTY STORE IN THE COUNTRY IN KOLKATA,” SAID SHOPPERS STOP’S MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CEO VENU NAIR AT A RETAIL SUMMIT ON 6 MAY, THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA REPORTED. “THIS WILL BE DURING OCTOBER - NOVEMBER.” THIS YEAR, THE BUSINESS PLANS TO OPEN BETWEEN 15 AND 20 BEAUTY STORES AND WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THIS TARGET FOR THE COMING THREE YEARS.

## GIOIA EXPANDS PRESENCE WITH MUMBAI UNIT

Kolkata-based luxury handbag brand Gioia has expanded its retail presence by opening a store in the city of Mumbai. The store will offer a wide range of menswear bags and accessories like sling bags, mini bags, tote bags etc for women.

This is the second store by the mother - son designer duo Diksha & Vashisht Bhatia after they opened their first store in Kolkata in September 2022. The brand plans to open its third store in the Mall of Asia in Bangalore in June 2023.

Diksha and Vashisht Bhatia, Founders of Gioia in a joint statement said, “A large segment of our customer base is well travelled and from different parts of the country. While retailing online alone we can cater to everyone’s needs, some people still want to be able to touch and feel the product before they are confident about the quality and craftsmanship and then make a purchase. This expansion will help us increase customer recall and fight competition.”

Founded in 2020, Gioia is backed by one of the largest leather goods export houses in India, D2 International Private Limited.

## MITSUMI FUDOSAN OPENS SHOPPING DESTINATION

Tokyo-headquartered real estate company Mitsui Fudosan has hosted the grand opening of Mitsui Shopping Park LaLaport Taichung, the first LaLaport development in Taiwan, on 16 May.

The shopping park’s south building earlier opened in January 2023 with 41 stores, part of a broader strategy to build its outlet business in Taiwan’s three major urban areas: Taipei, Taichung and Tainan. Mitsui Fudosan also cited plans to further invest in retail properties in Taiwan.

Among the 300 shops and restaurants opening at the shopping park are a number of Japanese brands, including a joint opening by Fast Retailing’s Uniqlo and GU, food court Omotenashi Dining and the supermarket chain Lopia, which would mark its first store outside of Japan.

Around 25 of the stores being brought in are opening in Taiwan for the first time. The north building will feature a diverse selection of multi-brand stores and Japanese fashion brands, such as Briefing, Hare and Nano Universe.

## NAN FUNG GROUP’S AIRSIDE COMPLEX TO SOFT OPEN IN Q3 2023

Nan Fung Group is pleased to announce the soft opening of AIRSIDE, a 1.9 million square feet, 47-storey, mixed-use development in the Kai Tak area in Q3 2023.

The skyscraper comes with 32 storeys of Grade A office space, of which around 400,000sq ft has already been pre-leased to three renowned global corporations and Nan Fung’s core business units. The 700,000sq ft mall is set to offer visitors a brand new one-stop shopping experience and its overall leasing performance is going well to date, with almost 80 per cent of the mall space already leased. Kai Tak MTR’s AIRSIDE exit will come into operation in conjunction with the mall’s soft opening.

The site is on-course to be perfectly located in the heart of Kowloon’s Central Business District.



## JAPAN’S ADASTRIA READY TO TAKE ON UNIQLO AND MUJI WITH NEW CHAIN

The company has recently launched the first stores in a new chain which will take on Uniqlo and Muji in the casual basic apparel market. Rather than mimic competitors, Adastria will differentiate by focusing solely on consumers in their 20s to 40s, allowing for more of a fashion slant to merchandising.

Called Smile Seed Store, the first two stores have opened in Hachioji and Funabashi in residential neighbourhoods – very different from Adastria’s normal locations in high traffic malls. Over 150 stores are planned in the first four to five years. Smile Seed Store is focused on everyday wear, with merchandise split 55 per cent for women, 30 per cent men’s and 15 per cent for childrenswear.

Competition will be fierce as neither Uniqlo nor Muji are standing still, with both adjusting merchandising regularly to

meet current demand and trends. But one advantage Adastria will have is its reach. Although, in Japan, Uniqlo has 800 stores and Muji over 400, Adastria has one of the more progressive online stores, “.St”, which now has 15 million registered customers and which accounted for 15 per cent of Adastria’s JPY201bn sales last year – total e-commerce sales reached nearly 30 per cent of sales.

A quick rollout to achieve economies of scale and effective marketing through .St should give the new chain a chance.

Adastria may well have identified a large gap in the market too. Japan’s biggest apparel chains are now ubiquitous and merchandise seemingly homogenous so, for a growing number of consumers in Adastria’s target of teens to 40s, the boredom factor set in a while ago.

### MUMBAI HOMETO A NEW STORE

Ralph Lauren’s casual wear brand Polo Ralph Lauren has opened in Mumbai. Located on the first floor of the city’s Phoenix Palladium Mall, this new store sells both the brand’s men’s and women’s collections. It becomes the fourth Polo Ralph Lauren unit in India following sites in The Chanakya Mall, Emporio Mall and Ambience Mall, all in New Delhi.

### LOEWE LAUNCHES JAPAN UNIT

The Spanish luxury label has opened in Osaka its very first store entirely dedicated to the repair and maintenance of leather articles, the core of its product range. “Leather artisans” are a permanent fixture of the new store and they are ready to repair and renew damaged products brought in by Loewe customers.

### TONI PONS UNVEILS NEW STORE

Spanish footwear brand Toni Pons is expanding into the Philippines, opening its first stores at SM Megamall, Robinsons Place Manila and The Hue Hotel Boracay. The brand, in collaboration with local distributor Catalonia Enterprise Inc., aims to open 15 outlets in the country by the end of the calendar year.

### POP MART OPENS IN MALAYSIA

Pop Mart International Group has opened a store in Malaysia’s capital Kuala Lumpur, making it the second Southeast Asian market where the Chinese maker of toy collectibles has opened a brick-and-mortar outlet. The store is in Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, a shopping mall in the Bukit Bintang shopping and entertainment district.

### CHOCOLATIER EYES EXPANSION

In a little over a decade, Vietnam’s Marou has evolved from an artisanal chocolatier to a cafe and retail concept, Maison Marou, with plans to expand the stores outside of Vietnam starting 2024. Founded by Vincent Mourou and Samuel Maruta, Marou became the first bean-to-bar chocolate maker in the country in 2011.

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HARVEY NICHOLS

# A Leader in Luxury

Al Tayer Group's retail division, Al Tayer Insignia, has been establishing and operating brands and creating award-winning retail concepts across the Middle East since 1981. Over the next two pages, learn more about the company and its future plans as we speak to Khalid Al Tayer, Managing Director of the business.



After first venturing into retail with their Aati store in 1981, Al Tayer Insignia has grown to become one of the largest luxury retailers in the Middle East, hosting a portfolio of some of the world's best brands across the fashion, jewellery, home and department store sectors. They are the only Middle East partner offering the breadth of experience and leadership across the three key channels of luxury boutiques, department stores and e-commerce platforms.

"As the leading luxury retailer, we operate directly and with our partners over 180 stores across the GCC and four e-commerce sites," highlights Khalid Al Tayer, Managing Director of Al Tayer Insignia. "We have physical stores for Harvey Nichols Dubai and operate Bloomingdale's in Dubai and Kuwait with the online business covering the GCC. We have also developed Ounass, the leading luxury e-commerce platform and largest luxury multi-brand destination whether it be physical or digital in the GCC, surpassing international peers."

The company has a continuous schedule of renovations and improvements in their department stores to ensure they maintain best-in-class experiences for their customers and maximise the footprint of each store.

They also continue to invest in their omni-channel experience through development, including enhancing the user experience of the Bloomingdale's App with personalisation and AI, reducing delivery time to two hours for Ounass and Bloomingdale's and driving repeat purchases for beauty with a dedicated loyalty programme, Bloomingdale's Beauty.

"We have several exciting renovation projects across our department stores in the pipeline for the coming year, with multiple departments and customer experience areas being redesigned and redeveloped. Most notably, we are opening the first-ever Bloomingdale's Beauty store concept in Abu Dhabi, which will offer an elevated beauty experience with a focus on store digitisation to deliver a seamless omni-brand experience," Khalid explains.

Today the department store division is predominantly focused on the UAE and Kuwait. The Middle East and Africa luxury goods market is projected to deliver record growth rate during the next five years, with the UAE and KSA leading the way. Specifically, KSA presents a future growth opportunity for the company with it being the largest economy in the GCC. They recognise the future potential of KSA and the growth opportunity as a true GCC omni-retailer.

Customers are at the heart of everything Al Tayer does and their department stores allow them to observe and listen to their wants and needs through their market-leading personal shopping services and sales teams. Furthermore, their department stores also serve as an incubator for new brands brought to market by their buyers who are on the pulse of the hottest trends. They are continually bringing exclusive brand and product curations to market and amplifying their existing brands via pop-ups and experiences.

"Our goal is always to put the customer at the heart of our brand experiences. Our loyalty program Amber is compelling, given the portfolio and breadth of leading luxury brands we operate and has allowed us to develop a strong understanding of our customer and how to entice and retain them," comments Khalid. "Our omni-channel approach allows us to speak and service them at any touchpoint, whether it is online or with a clear and defined journey in our physical stores with bespoke and personalised customer service."

Discussing the topic of social media and the important role it plays in the modern retail world, Khalid explains that while it is a powerful channel to reach customers and influence and affect their purchase behaviour, it must be approached carefully. He goes on to say creating content for their brands that represent their luxury positioning and global outlook while also having relevance and appeal to their customer is key.

While sustainability is at the forefront of many global discussions, in



their role as a curator of brands and products it is their job to showcase brands that are leading in this space, brands such as Pangaia, PH5, Stella McCartney, Tata Harper and Aveda and Barbara Sturm. They have recently initiated annual campaigns that speak to sustainability and feature styling dedicated to eco-positive brands. Finally, they are also seeing many brands innovating and shifting towards a sustainable mind-set, in alignment with customer expectations.

Considering the main drivers behind the ongoing success of the business, Khalid explains that Al Tayer Insignia has always focused on being a trusted partner to their brands by authentically representing them in the Middle East to their customers as they would in their home markets.

"Evolving and innovating is part of who we are and a key driver within our businesses. We are continuously looking to evolve our omni-customer proposition from our brands and product curation, customer journey and experiences. Our next innovation will be relaunching Amber, our loyalty programme to ensure we continue to surpass the expectations of our customers and remain their preferred shopping destinations across the region."

The mission of the business is to be the omni-retailer, partner and employer of choice in the Middle East and their vision is to be a winning team that delivers expert services to their partners and exceptional experiences to their customers. These values are an integral part of



Bloomingdale's, Dubai Mall  
Dubai, UAE



everything they do and are woven into their DNA.

To conclude the interview we ask Khalid what lies ahead and what is the greatest challenge facing the company.

"Digital evolution continues to be the greatest challenge and opportunity for retailers. The next-generation of customers has evolved faster than any other as digital natives. Generation Z interacts with brands very differently from many of us in leadership roles and their expectations are more complex. We are well placed to take on this challenge as understanding our customer has always been a priority at Al Tayer Insignia. We take the time to understand new audiences through research, employing diverse talent and taking the time to engage with the younger generation whether it is influencers, agencies, employees or family members to really understand their motivation."

"A great project that lies ahead is the gathering of the global retail community in Dubai, as we organise with our friends from IGDS, the IGDS World Department Store Summit on 11-12 October 2023, for which RLI is a partner. We have built a very strong programme on the topic of 'Investing for the Future', that will challenge and inspire the audience. It is the first time that the event is being organised in the Middle East and we are very honoured to welcome leaders of department stores from all continents to Dubai," Khalid concludes.



All interior images are of Atlantis The Royal, Dubai, UAE



# Baked to Perfection

**Mich Turner MBE founded Little Venice Cake Company 24 years ago having qualified as a Food Scientist and after working as a Bakery and Patisserie Buyer at Harvey Nichols. In this interview, we spend some time with the award-winning entrepreneur as we speak about the history of the business, how it continues to deliver a world-class service and what continues to motivate her.**



After developing a love of cake making and decorating following her first victory in a culinary competition at the age of 15 and decorating her first wedding cake at 17, Mich Turner went on to found Little Venice Cake Company, which prides itself on being at the forefront of the industry, trailblazing, inspiring and setting the standards for others to follow.

“Combining totally indulgent recipes using the finest ingredients, with intricate hand craftsmanship, refined elegance and a professional service we enjoy an unrivalled prestige, delivering a world-class service, creating memories with every cake experience,” explains Turner. “Utilising my 30 years’ experience in the industry and as a consultant and speaker, I am perfectly positioned to advise, design, create and deliver customised solutions, working with strategic partners. The key is and always will be unique, uncompromising quality.”

Having had a bespoke Studio in London for 15 years, the company has now expanded overseas and diversified to provide solutions working across the hospitality, retail and food service sector. This expansion includes the launch of the Little Venice Cake Company Atelier within Atlantis The Royal – the world’s most ultra-luxury experiential hotel.

Exquisitely designed by Jeffrey Beers, the Atelier captures every essence of personality, quality, red carpet British glamour and a serene sophistication. Featuring high ceilings, dressed with marble, glass and natural woods, the space includes a stunning show kitchen where guests can enjoy the theatre of cake artists in action or attend one of the special masterclasses on offer. There is also a retail area that serves a selection of fresh baked goods and a carefully curated collection of homewares that are all exclusive to Dubai.

“The jewel in the crown is our Royal Design Room – where guests meet to taste and design the cake of their dreams and from where they can browse through a collection of Royal photographs, certificates and memorabilia from my career on our Royal Wall of Fame. They are also invited to sign our guest book,” explains Turner.

“Having created the blueprint with our Atelier in Dubai, we now have the proof of concept. While it has taken six years to develop this concept, our plan now is to expand with carefully selected partners to customise solutions and explore other international territories.”

Marking the Coronation of King Charles III recently, Little Venice Cake Company Dubai was delighted to be involved in the double celebration of Their Majesties Coronation celebrations in the Middle East. Cakes were designed and created for both British Embassy events in Abu Dhabi and Dubai and each one told a story to create a memory. To construct these most special cakes, hand painting, hand piping and hand moulding techniques were used.

In keeping with The King’s farming traditions and love of the land, they served a selection of Carrot Cake, Strawberry Royale Cake and Coronation Date Cake. Having been presented at the celebrations, the show cakes are back at the hotel and on display in the Atelier for guests to view.

With her team of pastry chefs, Mich creates mouth-watering seasonal collections including delicious treats for Ramadan, with a focus on pistachio, date and rose. With the health conscious in mind they have also developed a range of gluten free and sugar free cakes that can be especially requested.

Another specialty cake they created was their Feast of Dreams cake, which was designed and constructed especially for the grand reveal of Atlantis The Royal. The cake stood five feet tall, four feet wide and comprised seven tiers representing the sea, sand and sun; with hand moulded sugar decorations of birds, roses, leaves, water pearls, flames and hand painted butterflies to represent the four elements of earth, water, fire and air – which is synonymous with the property. It took a team of four pastry chefs a full month of 2,000 hours, working on each element by hand.

As the company approaches its 25th anniversary, Turner reflects on this by saying they have made so many wonderful cakes, for many wonderful people, at wonderful venues to celebrate wonderful occasions.

“We are honoured to have played a small part in telling their stories and creating their memories. During this time I have written seven internationally published books and taught and inspired thousands of people around the world. We will be sure to be celebrating – as well as reflecting on what we have achieved and where the next 25 years will take us.”

As our time with Mich begins to near its end, we ask her what lies ahead and what she perceives to be the greatest challenge facing both her and the company as a whole?

“The greatest challenge will be having enough hours in the day as we work on the fantastic opportunities we have in motion for further global expansion. Thankfully I have a wonderfully supportive family. My husband has recently joined the company as COO having spent 30 years in the financial markets and together we have the passion, business acumen and the vision to scale great new heights and we are excited to make Little Venice Cake Company a global brand.”



The Miami Beach EDITION  
Miami, US

The Madrid EDITION  
Madrid, Spain

The Reykjavik EDITION  
Reykjavik, Iceland



The London EDITION  
London, UK



The Tokyo EDITION, Toranomon  
Tokyo, Japan



## Blending Luxury and Lifestyle

**The vision of EDITION is to create a truly distinct product that sets itself apart from anything else in the market, with the goal of becoming the first true blend of luxury and lifestyle. Here, RLI sits down with the Global Managing Director of EDITION Hotels, Josh Fluhr, to speak about the expansion of the brand and what its next goals are.**

**S**tunning microcosms of the world's top cities and featuring fantastic service, F&B and entertainment, EDITION Hotels are positioned in gateway locations around the globe. Including world-class dining and entertainment, services and amenities all under one roof, each property is completely unique, reflecting the best of the cultural and social milieu of its location and of the time.

The business has a global presence and their properties are located in some of the most sought-after destinations in North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The upcoming opening of their newest hotel in Rome will bring their portfolio to 16 and includes sites in London, Miami Beach, New York, Sanya, Bodrum, Barcelona, Shanghai, Abu

Dhabi, Times Square, West Hollywood, Tokyo, Reykjavik, Dubai, Madrid and Tampa.

"We launched The Tampa EDITION back in September and it is a perfect example of how each property merges our signature sense of refined simplicity and style with thoughtful nods to the distinctive locales we are situated in," explains Josh Fluhr, Global Managing Director, EDITION Hotels. "Purpose-built for Tampa specifically by integrating elements that evoke the neighbourhood's wellness-focused ethos, the hotel seamlessly blends the energy of a major metropolitan city with the sensibility and facilities of a warm-weather resort," he continues.

The hotel is spread over 26 stories and features 172 rooms along with

38 private residences, a rooftop terrace with a pool, expansive spa and wellness facility, fitness centre and seven bars and restaurants including Lilac by Chef John Fraser, which recently had the distinction of being awarded a Michelin star.

Looking to the future, Fluhr explains that they have an exciting pipeline for the remainder of 2023, with the company's first hotels in Singapore and Mexico set to open as well as their second location in Tokyo which is expected to launch in Q3 or Q4. This expansion will continue in the years to come as their portfolio is expected to double in size by 2027.

In addition, the first standalone EDITION branded residences are anticipated to launch in Miami Edgewater in 2026 and Fort Lauderdale in 2027. This interest in standalone residences from the development community is a clear indication of the strength of the brand.

When asked what it is that initially attracts the company to new properties, Fluhr highlights that their goal is to continue to create a globally diverse portfolio of hotels and location is paramount to the brand. "We want to be in interesting, sought-after places that in and of themselves are destinations for our target audience, but we also consider locations where we can help revitalise the locale – Tampa is a prime example. Since we opened The Tampa EDITION, we have seen increased brand interest from Central and South America, both from the guest and development perspective."

Although all the hotels look completely different from one another, the brand's unifying aesthetic is in its approach to modern lifestyle rather than its appearance. EDITION is about an attitude and the way it makes people feel as opposed to the way it looks. Sophisticated public spaces, finishes, design and details serve the experience and with their restaurants, bars, nightlife and entertainment venues alongside their rooftops, pools, spas and gyms, they create destinations within a destination.

Playing pivotal roles in the market today, e-commerce and social media are key considerations for the company and their ShopEDITION e-commerce platform was created because guests wanted to purchase products from their hotel stay to recreate

the EDITION experience in their own homes. They also recently launched the EDITION Artist Series, a range of unique items crafted by local artisans in their hotel destinations.

"In addition to the brand's social channels, each individual hotel now has its own social media account. The content is carefully curated to showcase not only the hotel experience but also the destination through the EDITION lens. People look to the brand for inspiration and as a guide to the locale so our teams spend significant time developing engaging social content featuring key brand pillars while also sharing cultural happenings, both inside and outside of the hotels," comments Fluhr.

Away from this, the business is continually striving to improve their sustainability practices across the board. They are removing single use plastic from their hotels, changing to large format residential Le Labo bath and body bottles in guest rooms instead of miniature ones, replacing the plastic key cards with wooden ones, shifting to boxed water, using stone paper to wrap their amenities, switching to bamboo toothbrushes and more. Their property teams are also focused on evaluating their operational practices to identify areas to minimise environmental impact, with several of their hotels already achieving local and global sustainability certifications for their efforts.

EDITION hotels offer the perfect intersection and balance between luxury and lifestyle. Their guests desire sensory experiences in an elevated environment where they feel part of something special, that is what the entire team across the business brings to life and this global brand consistency is a key component of their success.

"Maintaining brand consistency on a global scale amidst our rapid expansion, doubling our portfolio by 2027 and introducing standalone residences, will be our biggest challenge," highlights Fluhr when we ask what lies ahead and what is the greatest challenge facing the company.

"Keeping the culture, service and standards intact will be crucial in order to avoid brand dilution. We have seen it happen with other brands so this is top of mind for the entire team moving forward as it is what makes the EDITION brand so special."



## Pushing the Boundaries

Gravity Active Entertainment was founded back in 2014 with a vision of providing safe and exciting family fun on a mass scale. In this interview, RLI sits down with Co-Founder and CGO Michael Harrison to learn about the origins of the business, what has propelled the company to unprecedented levels of success in the nine years since inception and what plans are in place for the future.



Created by Michael Harrison, Harvey Jenkinson and Simon Whicker, Gravity Active Entertainment remains the fastest-growing leisure and active entertainment company in the UK.

Beginning life as a single trampoline park in Yorkshire, the business has come a long way in a short space of time. When they were setting up this first trampoline park, the initial idea was that malls needed something more, they needed to evolve to incorporate leisure on a larger scale.

"Even back then, I always knew that multi-choice, multi-leisure was where we wanted to take this concept," explains Michael Harrison, Co-Founder and CGO of Gravity Active Entertainment. "So over time we began to add additional elements to the core concept. First there was climbing, then we added golf and we focused heavily on the 4-12 year old market."

Always looking forward and remaining innovative, during the pandemic the company constructed the 75,000sq ft Gravity Wandsworth site which has been a real game-changer for the business.

"We looked forward at how we could improve on what already existed in the market and Gravity Wandsworth has doubled the revenue expected and added 25 per cent footfall to the overall shopping centre. This site has really set us up as a company to do exactly what I've wanted to do, which was the incorporation of multi-use leisure all under one roof."

Off the back of the success of this location, landlords and franchise partners from around the world have been in touch, with the team currently working on the upcoming 100,000sq ft Liverpool ONE site which is due to launch this summer and the 70,000sq ft unit in Westfield Stratford.

Utilising the lessons learnt from the Wandsworth location, the team has a much better understanding as it moves forward with the Liverpool ONE site, its biggest Gravity location to date.

"With Liverpool ONE we will have a location that is perfect for summer weather with a rooftop area of 7,500sq m that features a retractable roof, three bars, two DJ areas, three live music stages and a food hall. From an experiential point of view, we are now moving the business on from leisure that is supported by F&B, to a really strong leisure and F&B mix and we feel this will take the business to another level," Harrison explains.

The Liverpool ONE unit will also feature the company's recently

launched Gravity Max concept. The idea behind this is that the attraction is family-orientated during the day but then come 8 or 9pm, the lights go down, the music goes up and the venue turns into a young adult-themed location until 1am.

"But also at these sites we are installing workspaces. We have two rooms where up to 50 people can work at a time, so people can come and get some work done for a few hours before enjoying an hour or two of fun together. We are really looking at an inclusive offer that features the family, the young adult and the corporate markets," adds Harrison.

In total the company now operates 27 entertainment parks with the vast majority in the UK for now. Internationally, they operate a site in Germany, one in Saudi Arabia with another on the verge of opening and they are in the process of building a 130,000sq ft site in Mauritius. Looking ahead, the Middle East and Mauritius are the major markets they are looking into.

With the business practically doubling in size ever year, Harrison admits that one thing they have struggled to do properly is its social media marketing. While they did this in-house, the opening of Gravity Wandsworth made them have a rethink as the company continued to grow at a frenetic rate. They have teamed up with BWP who now help Gravity execute their marketing plan across every social media outlet, something the Co-Founder admits they probably should have done some time ago.

When we ask Harrison what the key drivers are behind the success of the business, he immediately says it is the people and the team they have built over the last nine years.

"It is about making sure our team feel rewarded, feeling like they are part of a bigger team and making sure there is no one less important in our business. Across all 1,000 team members, there is no one more important than anyone else and it is this team that make the difference between us and the rest."

With Michael working on the pipeline of new sites, our time with him was quickly coming to an end so our last question was to ask what lies ahead and what does he feel is the greatest challenge facing the business?

"I think complacency and probably getting too big for our boots would be our biggest risk, especially given how fast we have and continue to grow. However as long as we stick to the values of hard work, dedication and honesty which are the core of the business, then we won't go far wrong," Harrison concludes.

[www.gravity-uk.com](http://www.gravity-uk.com)





Elante Mall  
Chandigarh, India



LaLaport Taichung  
Taichung, Taiwan

DAISO Tobu Ikebukuro  
Tokyo, Japan



## Enriching People's Lives



**Based in Japan, DAISO began life as a mobile shop in 1972 but always had the aim to become a globally-renowned retailer who assists in making the lives of people around the world richer at a single, low price. In this interview, RLI speaks with President and Representative Director Seiji Yano to learn more about the company as it continues to move forward with its international expansion.**

The aim of Daiso Industries Company Limited is to continually provide impressive quality at an impressive price while exceeding customer expectations under its three banners of DAISO, Standard Products and THREEPPY. In order to achieve this goal, they aim to build a global brand by providing products with an unparalleled value and by innovating and further refining their business model to allow for optimal product procurement, distribution and sales.

The 100 yen retail business now operates a portfolio of 6,451 stores in 24 countries around the world. The majority of these units are DAISO locations and they are spread across Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, UAE, Vietnam and the US. Meanwhile, Standard Products has 40 stores in Japan and two overseas, one in Taiwan and one in Singapore and THREEPPY has 341 stores in Japan and 22 overseas, with seven of these in Taiwan, 13 in Singapore, one in Hong Kong and one in Macau.

"In terms of recent openings for the brand, two in particular stand out for me," explains Seiji Yano, President and Representative Director of Daiso Industries Company Limited. "The first is our September 2022 opening of DAISO in the Elante Mall in Chandigarh, India. This was a major milestone for the business as it marked our first opening in the country. The second is the Jurong Point flagship store in Singapore, which opened in

May 2022. It is the first fusion store outside of Japan that displays products from three brands, DAISO, Standard Products, and THREEPPY, all under one roof. It was important to the business that it was there."

As the Group looks forward, they are focusing their efforts on the Indian market. Following their debut in the country in September, they are now looking to expand across the territory with the opening of 50 new sites in the coming five years. Further down the line they plan to open a total of 200 units, mainly in the shopping malls, large cities and capital cities of New Delhi.

Under its three main banners, the company offers a wide range of products that enrich customers' lives. Its DAISO banner features products that fall under the categories of daily necessities, hobbies and luxury items. Standard Products is one of their new brands and has a concept of 'a little better is always really nice', with the business carrying more than 2,000 products including some eco-friendly products with simple designs made from recycled thin wood and selected products made by Japanese craftsmen. Finally THREEPPY's concept is 'adorable just for you' and the brand carries more than 2,400 mature and cute products.

"An increasing number of customers are choosing environmentally-friendly products and we are making efforts to develop products that reuse thinned wood. In addition to protecting the environment, we are also developing products in collaboration with growing areas to revitalise local communities," Yano highlights.

As the future of the retail sector focuses more than ever on 'brand experience', the company continues to try and develop products and items that meet the needs of customers and become an integral part of their lives. To help build customer loyalty across the countries in which they operate, they pursue the creation of new items that are exciting and add to their range of products, increasing their variety and selection for visitors.

As the topic of conversation moves onto social media and its massive presence in the retail world today, Yano explains that the company allows customers to take photographs of products freely at all brands and stores. They want customers to enjoy shopping by communicating freely about how they encounter and use their products. In addition, they welcome feedback from customers, regardless of whether this is good or bad feedback. They value the opportunity to hear the viewpoints of customers, as they value the positive feedback and if there is any negative feedback, act upon this and improve the experience for those customers in the future.

"We strive for quality that inspires customers, employees, business partners, products, logistics, stores and the entire business domain and as a company that is living infrastructure for people all over the world, we strive to be a company that exceeds the expectations of customers and society and continue to provide enjoyment and richness," explains Yano when asked what the ethos of the company is.

Our time with the President and Representative Director ends with us asking him what the greatest challenge is for the business looking to 2024 and beyond.

"As we already operate stores in 24 countries, we want to take the lessons learned from previous expansion and utilise these as we look to grow into additional territories, because dealing with the regulations in each country is difficult as each one is different and this has presented major challenges in the past," Yano concludes.



Standard Products, Tobu Ikebukuro  
Tokyo, Japan



THREEPPY, Tobu Ikebukuro  
Tokyo, Japan



# Step into the World of Wellwear



**David Gandy Wellwear is not your run-of-the-mill activewear or loungewear brand. It is something else entirely; a new category that balances style with well-being for a life lived well. In this interview, RLI spends some time with David Gandy, Founder & Creative Director and Charlie Tee, Managing Director as we learn all about Wellwear which is designed to make customers feel good both physically and emotionally.**

Turning the vision of the David Gandy Wellwear brand into a reality is something that has been on the cards for over a decade. Utilising more than twenty years of industry experience and eight years of brand collaborations, David, together with his close friend Charlie, through the lifestyle change the pandemic enforced, used their time and collective skill set to bring the concept to life.

“This brand is a new clothing category combining style and well-being – two of my great passions,” explains David Gandy, Founder & Creative Director. “In a world where we are increasingly educated in self-care, Wellwear is bringing the clothing industry up to speed. We created collections of pieces designed to support living well in the world and this is what sets the brand apart.”

Launched as a direct-to-consumer (D2C) business in late 2021, by the brand’s first anniversary in November 2022, they had unveiled their first physical retail sites in Selfridges across their London, Birmingham and Manchester sites, as well their own digital platform.

“Investment in brick-and-mortar experiences is something that remains integral to our expansion strategy,” Charlie Tee, Managing

Director, highlights. “In the next year we would like to see Wellwear’s first stand-alone retail space and a wholesale expansion into key international markets.”

A British brand for a global consumer, David and Charlie are aware of the need to grow outside of the UK. Currently 11 per cent of sales are coming from the US and this is a number they are looking to grow in H2 and 2024. In recent months the business has gained a lot of traction in the UAE, particularly since the two men spent a week there competing in the 1000 Miglia UAE Experience for which David Gandy Wellwear was the Official Clothing Partner. They are also currently in conversations about exciting hotel partnerships that will assist in expanding their European presence.

With every new product launch, the company continues to push the boundaries on product development to bring their customers the most innovative designs, fabrics and treatments. David explains that they have a very experienced design and production team who source from the most forward-thinking European mills and factories.

When discussing brand experience and customer loyalty, Charlie says that firstly, they are strong believers that customer service is everything



Photographer: Adam Fussell

and they ensure customers are openly communicated with. For example, he says that on the rare occasions something may awry with a delivery, they make it right immediately, with David jumping in on messages personally so that customers are looked after and know they are valued.

While the brand may have benefitted at launch from David’s personal social platform, which provided an initial foundation of followers and interest, two years on Charlie highlights that the majority of their growth is organic which is very encouraging for the future.

“Being a D2C brand when we launched, Instagram was very much our ‘shopfront’ so we have always ensured we have a clear identity and tone of voice which carries through to our paid media strategy. More recently, we have been looking to focus on the less-curated platform TikTok, to see who from our audience will be there and also the new Lemon8 concept.”

Speaking about the importance of sustainability in the modern world, David says that for him, sustainability is all about longevity and it was something that was taught to him by his grandfather, to buy once and to buy well.

“With Wellwear, not only have we produced great quality garments that will last a lifetime and do not follow trends, we have also worked with the most sustainable factories in Portugal using BCI cotton and developed ways in which we can help the wearer physically to ensure

that their garments have longevity. I do recognise that we have work to do in this area, as do most other brands. However, what we have always been and will continue to be is responsible as well as sustainable.”

Rather than replicate David’s hugely successful loungewear collaboration with British high street stalwart M&S, the brand instead moves the narrative forward. This has led to the creation of a whole new category where clothing meets well-being and it is this pushing of the boundaries and refusing to accept the status quo that sets the company apart from other apparel companies.

“At Wellwear we are dedicated to making you feel good both physically and emotionally. Throughout my career I have actively campaigned for mental and physical health, long before they captured the zeitgeist of recent years. I firmly believe clothing should make you feel good as well as look good,” David explains as our time begins to run out with the duo.

“We have proof that the demand for the brand and product is there so the greatest challenge we have is scaling quickly and generating wider awareness, both of which require investment so that is a constant conversation – finding the right partners that believe in our brand and want to invest to build it in the same way that we do. We will continue to look to new markets, especially while the outlook in the UK remains unsettled and we are looking forward to growing our customer base around the world,” Charlie concludes.



## Why Digital Accessibility Could Offer Retailers a Competitive Edge

In this month's Retail Insight, Jonathan Hassell, CEO at Hassell Inclusion spends sometime discussing how digital accessibility is something that the retail industry should embrace.



The ongoing cost-of-living crisis, along with rising inflation, supply chain issues and high energy bills, means that the UK's high streets are facing increasingly challenging times. With many businesses struggling to recover to pre-Covid levels of footfall, having a well-functioning digital estate is more important than ever.

In fact, figures from Statista show that in the UK over 80 per cent of the population are digital buyers. Online shopping will only continue to grow, with the analyst predicting that 9 in 10 of the country's consumers will be buying products online by 2025.

Against this backdrop, it would be sensible to assume that a retailer's digital products – websites, apps and other marketing and communications channels – are fully accessible to all.

However, while many retailers are getting digital accessibility right, there are still a significant number that aren't. Our recent research report, 'An Immature Response? Why organisations are failing to build digitally accessible products and services', reveals that many organisations, including those in the retail sector, are failing in their obligation to provide an accessible experience for all users.

As a result, they could be inadvertently alienating a raft of potential customers who have digital accessibility needs, including sight and hearing impairment, reading or cognitive difficulties, fine motor difficulties - which makes it harder to control a mouse - or more general impairments associated with ageing.

So, how can retailers and their digital teams ensure their online estate is fit for purpose?

Firstly, it's important to look at what we mean by 'digital accessibility'. We define it as enabling inclusive web, technology and app experiences for everyone, by focusing on the user journey, i.e. how people use the technology, not just the technology itself.

In terms of what the need looks like, a conservative estimate suggests that four out of 10 people require digital solutions to be accessible. And yet, at most 20 per cent of websites and mobile apps are accessible to everyone, which leaves millions of people excluded from digital services and tools that don't adequately cater to their requirements.

What data shows is that there are often major gaps throughout the process of designing digital products. Over a third (35 per cent) of organisations involved in our research said they would launch digital products with known accessibility issues, while just 14 per cent check that digital products created for them by external suppliers meet accessibility requirements.

This makes little commercial and reputational sense – digital accessibility can help retailers increase revenue through welcoming more customers through their virtual doors.

Too often, digital accessibility is an afterthought that requires a product to be retro-fixed, when it would have been much more effective to ensure it was embedded right at the beginning of the design process.

For us, there are several key steps that retailers can take to make sure their digital environment is 'open to all':

### Recognise the value

The report reveals that most (62 per cent) organisations don't understand the benefits of accessibility, or aren't measuring the return on investment it is bringing if they're investing in it. From increased customers to a more loyal workforce, the benefits are significant. Measurement and tracking progress is key – it will drive success.

### Adopt a strategic approach

Being great at digital accessibility is about the whole user journey. This requires a strategic approach to ensure that accessibility is 'baked in' to your processes so it is not seen as a tactical add-on. Otherwise, you will

always find yourselves having to retro-fix elements of your services that don't meet accessibility requirements, which is inefficient.

### Define responsibility and get senior buy in

It is also important to have a champion at a senior level. Having a digital accessibility programme manager who can lead a project team to own, run and report progress against your strategic plan is really important. This could be spearheaded by your digital team or sit within your HR or marketing operation. You should also ensure your plan includes adequate training and the creation and communication of policies and processes to embed digital accessibility into your organisation's DNA.

### Embed accessibility across your organisation and with all stakeholders

Great accessibility is only possible if the whole company is aware of it and actively ensures it is part of the design and creation of any digital product or communication. Key to this will be taking your wider supply chain – your external digital suppliers – on this journey with you, by ensuring digital accessibility is a key part of your procurement process. It's worth doing an inventory of what can and can't be controlled, to build a picture of what you can and can't influence and change supplier to a more accessible one if you can. Asking the right accessibility questions before purchase is key.

### Focus on user experience across all digital channels

Digital accessibility can mean different things for different people across multiple user touchpoints. When looking at the retail sector, customers will come into contact with a company through digital adverts, websites, emails and online vouchers and then through digital touchpoints in the store itself, such as kiosks and self-checkouts. All of these things need to be accessible to ensure a smooth end-to-end user experience.

### Design for accessibility throughout your development process

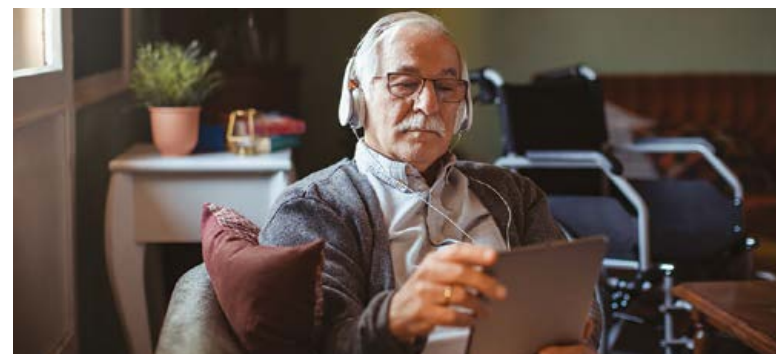
The research shows that there is often an ad-hoc approach to accessibility in the development of digital products. Retailers need to ensure it is embedded throughout the development process of all products, from websites to apps to social media and PDFs and that their accessibility is regularly monitored, checked and fixed after launch. In short, make things inclusive by design, across each product's lifecycle.

### Differentiating through digital accessibility

As well as the potential for higher customer revenue and access to a wider pool of talent to recruit from, demonstrating maturity in digital accessibility is the mark of a company with an innovative and trailblazing approach to diversity, equality and inclusion.

As such, it can increase customer and employee loyalty and improve your company's reputation. Embedding digital accessibility demonstrates you align with the values of potential customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Before too long it will be expected of everyone. Which begs the question, can your business afford to get left behind?



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# AI: What it means for the future of hospitality?

In this month's Leisure Insight, Giles Fuchs, Owner of Burgh Island Hotel discusses the rise of artificial intelligence, its current and future impact on the hospitality industry and how hotels must be aware of its importance moving forward.



It's been over two decades since artificial intelligence was first released to the mass market and even longer since science fiction brought AI to the imaginations of the general public. The past six months, however, have witnessed an explosion in the use of AI that has transported artificial intelligence to the forefront of our lives, both personally and in business.

AI is rapidly transforming many sectors across the economy and the hospitality industry is no exception. More than that, many AI technologies are free of charge, making them equally available to all hotels regardless of capital and raising the question: will hotels that fail to join the AI revolution find themselves left behind? Equally important, however, is the importance of personal relationships in hospitality and what we don't yet know is how AI might detract from this. Before embracing AI it's vital that hotels take the time to fully understand this artificial intelligence and what it might mean for hospitality in the future.

## Pros

Capable of informing advertising campaigns, streamlining booking processes and managing hotel administration, AI technology brings with it a myriad of benefits and opens up new potential for the hospitality sector.

One such benefit is the ability to carry out quick, comprehensive research. Using the internet as their database, Chatbots can undertake research on a limitless number of topics and present their findings in a clear, digestible format. You could, for example, ask ChatGPT to enumerate the relative merits of artificial intelligence for the hospitality sector (though I can't vouch for an unbiased response!).

In the case of hotels, this research function can help staff keep up to date with travel trends, allowing them to adapt their offering and promotional content to fit what tourists want. On a more individualised level, chatbots are able to analyse the likes and dislikes of a guest, a feature that can be utilised when allocating rooms or curating personalised packages.

Another way in which AI can serve hospitality is through its capacity for translation. As an international industry, language barriers have long since been a stumbling block for the hospitality sector. Indeed, 40 per cent of global consumers will only buy products from websites in their own language, meaning that hotels which don't provide multilingual information and booking services are in danger of losing a significant volume of customers. While most browsers come equipped with translation software, these inbuilt systems are notorious for producing inelegant – and sometimes incomprehensible – prose. Recent AI technology provides a more accurate translation, helping hotels to stand out on a global level.

One last benefit of artificial intelligence is as an administrative tool. With AI carrying out organisational tasks such as allocating room bookings and supervising hotel maintenance, staff members have more time to concentrate on enhancing the guest experience: welcoming visitors, devising creative events and initiatives and ensuring every aspect of the hotel is up to standard. In this way, AI can be used alongside traditional hospitality practices to streamline the day-to-day running of a hotel.

## Cons

There's no doubt that artificial intelligence has the potential to significantly change how hotels function; yet with such possibilities at our fingertips, it's important to avoid being swept away by the AI

revolution and keep in mind that all that glitters isn't silicon. Hospitality is by definition a human industry. When we welcome guests to Burgh Island, we want to ensure our guests feel individually valued, that they feel looked after and at home during their time with us. We want them to feel cared for in the way that only people care for one another.

Artificial intelligence may well streamline how we run our hotels: chatbots can reduce the time staff spend speaking with customers, information processing technology can make room allocations on the basis of guests' preferences and generative AI can help guests immerse themselves in a hotel before they ever arrive. The danger is that, by streamlining hospitality, artificial intelligence will bypass the essence of the sector.

With chatbots replacing hotel staff, guests will miss out on the personal touch of human interaction. Recent years and the experience of lockdown have taught us just how valuable this human interaction is to our lives, so how willing should we be to forfeit it now? Generative AI may help guests decide whether or not to visit a hotel, but at the same time it removes the sense of mystery that's so important when travelling somewhere new.

Staff will be affected as much as guests. By incorporating AI into their management, hotels run the risk of taking the passion out of hospitality work. Here at Burgh, our staff members take pleasure in looking after our guests, matching each guest with their perfect room, welcoming visitors when they arrive and ensuring they are looked after throughout their stay. Indeed, the relationships we build with our guests mean that many choose to return year after year.

## Happy Medium

There are many ways that artificial intelligence could change the hospitality industry and this rapidly advancing technology should by no means be dismissed. Certainly, its administrative capabilities have the potential to free up time for staff to spend on welcoming visitors and improving the guest experience. Nonetheless, we should avoid falling into the trap of making changes just because we can.

Before incorporating AI into their management, hotels should think carefully about what aspects of artificial intelligence can benefit their business. For some larger-scale hotel chains, this could mean using chatbots throughout the booking process. For smaller boutique hotels, the benefits of AI may be limited to administrative tasks such as overseeing building maintenance. In any case, the use of AI isn't a case of all or nothing. This technology certainly holds potential for hotels, but we must ensure that, by embracing it, we don't undermine the spirit of the hospitality sector.



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**Broadway Malyan** is a global architecture, urbanism and design practice dedicated to creating buildings and places that will provide a lasting legacy. Through a shared design ethos we create places with a strong sense of identity where people and communities want to live, learn, shop, work and relax. Our collaborative approach with a focus on customer experience and community, has enabled us to deliver award-winning projects across the world, from new build icons to repurposed interiors.

[www.broadwaymalyan.com](http://www.broadwaymalyan.com)

### CONCEPT I



**Concept i** is an award winning interior design and architecture studio globally engaged in retail, commercial, and entertainment projects. We create innovative places for living and enjoyment, crossing cultural and geographic boundaries, injecting the newest trends, technologies and materiality into our work. Our work is vibrant, always seeking fresh ways to mix human activities and uses into new style spaces.

[www.concepti.com](http://www.concepti.com)

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**One Works** is a global design and consultancy firm offering integrated architecture, infrastructure and urban design services. We are experts in dealing with complex and crowded spaces. Our expertise includes traditional shopping centres, as well as open-air schemes and urban destinations. Integrating our specific retail understanding to a broader masterplanning approach, we design sustainable solutions to enrich the overall customer experience.

[www.one-works.com](http://www.one-works.com)

### TCONCEPT



**Tconcept** is an international design studio based in the Netherlands. We create inspiring places around the globe, transforming destinations into experiences for people to live, work and stay. People and human scale are at the centre of what we do, our experienced and enthusiastic team work closely with our clients to meet their needs and expectations, enabling us to deliver a diverse portfolio of concept design and placemaking in urban mixed use, retail, landscaping and interior design.

[www.tconcept.nl](http://www.tconcept.nl)

\* minimum of 12 months

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[www.espritedigital.com/lumos](http://www.espritedigital.com/lumos)

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[www.niki-ltd.com](http://www.niki-ltd.com)

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[www.portview.co.uk](http://www.portview.co.uk)

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**Pure Fitout** is an independent, award-winning fit out specialist with extensive experience in high quality, bespoke interior fittings and installations. Utilising specialist expertise to manufacture joinery, metal and stone in-house, we are dedicated to bringing client visions to life in an efficient and cost-effective approach.

[www.purefitout.com](http://www.purefitout.com)

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### SCHWITZKE PROJECT



Building Experience - **Schwitzke Project** offers complete concepts for individual shopfitting from a single source. The company's core competence lies in the implementation of concepts into ready-to-use stores, incorporating the brand's identity as well as local conditions. Brands and retailers from all over the world trust in the expertise of Schwitzke Project's internationally experienced team to bring their brand images to life.

[www.schwitzke-project.com](http://www.schwitzke-project.com)

### UMDASCH



**umdasch The Store Makers:** Premium & Travel Retail delivers 155 years of our heritage and expertise to make your store stand out from the crowd. We work with you on an individual basis to ensure that your vision is realised and your expectations are exceeded. With imagination, a feeling for materials and pioneering trends, we create top-quality shopfitting. Premium & Travel Retail is our passion.

[www.umdascsh.com](http://www.umdascsh.com)

### VIZONA



**Vizona** is a shopfitting company that develops bespoke retail concepts hand-in-hand with customers and designers, backed by decades of experience. Its strength derives from a combination of market know-how, technical expertise and international presence: Vizona implements store concepts across the globe. The project teams work closely with customers, architects and an efficient network of supply chain partners. That's how Vizona manages to transform extraordinary retail ideas into reality.

[www.vizona.com/clients](http://www.vizona.com/clients)

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The Well, Toronto Canada  
Developers: RioCan and Allied Properties



Westfield Hamburg Überseequartier, Hamburg, Germany  
Developer: Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield

## Building Communities Around Places

**Defined as a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces, Placemaking capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that improve urban vitality and promote people's health, happiness and well-being. Over the coming pages, RLI highlights a number of examples of these from around the world.**

According to the article 'Placemaking in Urban Design' by Urban Design Lab, Placemaking is an approach to urban design that prioritises people over infrastructure. It aims to create public spaces that are more than just utilitarian, but rather places that inspire and promote social interaction and cultural exchange. Placemaking recognises that public spaces play an essential role in the social and cultural life of communities and that they are critical to creating a sense of place and identity.

The article goes on to say that another principle of Placemaking is mixed-use development. Placemaking encourages mixed-use development, which combines residential, commercial and civic uses in a single space. This creates a sense of place and provides opportunities for social interaction and economic activity. Mixed-use development can also help to reduce dependence on cars by creating walkable, bikeable neighbourhoods with easy access to shops, services and public transportation.

Another article on the topic by Innovation Quarter which is entitled 'Five Placemaking Projects that Inspire Us' explains that there are the following four types of Placemaking:

- Standard placemaking - this is the process of creating quality places where people want to live, work, play and learn.

- Strategic placemaking - this is targeted to a particular goal in addition to the creation of space. For example, developing spaces that will attract businesses, leading to jobs and growth.

- Tactical placemaking - this emphasises testing projects through phases and iterations rather than constructing projects straight from the drawing board.

- Creative placemaking - this integrates arts, culture and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities.

The article continues by saying that Placemaking can run the gamut - from placing rubbish bins on sidewalks to building an innovation district where the community can convene. However, a common thread runs through all placemaking projects: building stronger communities.

Over the next few pages, join RLI as we take a look at a range of examples of Placemaking from all corners of the world, to highlight the different types and how they each possess their own unique elements to draw people out and bring communities together.

A joint venture between RioCan REIT and Allied Properties REIT, The Well is a bold reflection of Toronto's energy and diversity and an extension of the urban vibrancy of King West. Bordering Front, Spadina and Wellington, it is a mixture of retail, commercial and residential space in downtown Toronto that will draw approximately

22,000 daily visitors, including the approximately 11,000 residents and employees that will live and work at The Well. The design includes 1.2 million square feet of office space and 320,000sq ft of retail and food service. It has 1,700 residential units spread throughout six residential rentals and condominiums, plus one office building connected to a three-level retail base. At The Well, the idea of liveability is real, with easy access to everything that Toronto demands, expects and deserves: transit, culture, wellness, sustainability, diverse food options, inspiring workplaces and curated entertainment. The Well, which is set to open this year, is a choreographed mix of urban experiences, dynamic architecture and interconnected public spaces.

A project opening in spring this year 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 scheme 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 surround 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.

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield (URW) has announced Mill Creek Residential (MCR) as co-developer for the first phase of the landmark transformation of Westfield Garden State Plaza in Bergen County, New Jersey. Anticipated to break ground in 2024 and slated to open to residents in 2026, the first phase will include the construction of 550 luxury apartment homes that will be integrated with the shopping centre via a one-acre 'green town' for residents, visitors and shoppers to enjoy, as well as introduce a 'main street' outdoor district featuring restaurants and everyday conveniences and services. The development will also include significant community and sustainability features such as new parks and greenspaces, green building construction, upgraded connectivity to public transportation networks, electric vehicle charging stations and the restoration of a section of the beloved local Sprout Brook.



The Landmark Tijuana, Tijuana, Mexico  
Developer: Thor Urbana

**AIRSIDE, Kai Tak, Hong Kong, China**  
Developer: Nan Fung Group



Developer Nan Fung Group is pleased to announce the soft opening of AIRSIDE, a 1.9 million square feet, 47-storey mixed-use commercial development in the Kai Tak area in Q3 2023. The skyscraper comes with 32-storeys of Grade-A office space and the 700,000sq ft mall is set to offer visitors a brand new one-stop shopping experience and its overall leasing performance is satisfactory, with almost 80 per cent of the mall space already leased. Kai Tak MTR's AIRSIDE exit will come into operation in conjunction with the mall's soft opening. Building on Nan Fung's ongoing efforts and commitment to sustainability, AIRSIDE introduces the unique and innovative urban lifestyle concept of "wholeness" that connects people and nature to build a sustainable, low-carbon society. As part of the wholeness lifestyle concept, AIRSIDE houses a 4,000sq ft urban farm that is home to over 50 varieties of produce, which is supplied to F&B outlets at the mall to offer a true farm-to-table experience for visitors; the remaining produce will be shared with the community. With the urban farm, AIRSIDE hopes to promote a low-carbon-footprint lifestyle and nature-based solutions to the public.

Snøhetta, in collaboration with A49 Architects, has designed their most extensive project in Asia for MQDC, one of Thailand's leading property developers. The project is a 250,000sq m mixed-use building in the upcoming CyberTech district of South Sukhumvit in Bangkok. The Cloud II project will re-invent a part of Sukhumvit into a hub for innovation and tech companies in the city and provide the area with a large, green public space and spaces for artists, makers and tech entrepreneurs. The Cloud II project aims to create a new lifestyle environment and surroundings within the area. Designed to cater to people's daily needs and

requirements, several restaurants will operate from a centralised kitchen, a gym, a wide selection of retail stores and two hotels. The project also includes a variety of cultural offerings such as a library, educational venues and creative workspaces fit for the modern, hybrid way of working from home or outside the office. The location also makes the Cloud II easy for visitors and commuters to access through public transportation, with the BTS skytrain station just across the street. The project is expected to complete towards the end of 2024.

The largest city-centre project in Europe, Westfield Hamburg-Überseequartier is set to become a new urban community hotspot in Germany. Encompassing a unique culture, leisure, entertainment and dining offer, it will feature a 10-screen flagship cinema, beauty and wellness centres, international and local restaurants, bars and cafés and the latest trends in entertainment technology. This mixed-use urban district will feature flexible offices with 360° views over HafenCity and the harbour, modern apartments with direct access to the waterfront, three hotels and a 200-store shopping centre offering the best local and international brands together with a wide range of services and digital innovations, for an enhanced customer journey. The shopping centre itself will span 80,500sq m of retail, leisure and restaurant space and it is set to open in spring 2024 by developers Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield. The scheme will expand the Hamburg City metropolitan area by 40 per cent and the proportion of public and publicly accessible private open spaces is 38 per cent.

Lamda Development has revealed its plans for Riviera Galleria and Commercial Hub retail destinations at The Ellinikon, Greece's and

**Champions Park, Warsaw, Poland**  
Developer: Champions Developments



**The Crossings, Dublin, Republic of Ireland**  
Developer: Quintain



Europe's greatest urban regeneration project that is being built on the former Athens airport. Adjacent to central Athens, the nearby Piraeus Port and the International Airport, The Ellinikon is unique in Europe for its location, its size — three times larger than Monaco — as well as its scale and ambition. The Ellinikon will set new benchmarks for the future of Mediterranean coastal development — for integrated, sustainable living; for iconic placemaking; for smart-infrastructure; and for its broad base of business potential, from tourism to innovative commercial properties to ground-breaking destination retail. A collection of several communities will be home to thousands, supported by essential services available to all — such as education and healthcare. This groundbreaking development is on course to open in 2025.

The greenest centre in the Netherlands is emerging in Rijswijk by developer Reshape Properties and designer TconcepT. That is the ambition of the large-scale transformation of shopping centre In de Bogaard. In the coming years it will become the new Bogaard city centre with a large number of new homes, inviting parks and squares, smallscale stores and amenities. The new Bogaard city centre is set to become an exemplary sustainable, contemporary living area. Hof van Rijswijk is a prominent part of this development. Around an extraordinary, communal courtyard garden, Hof van Rijswijk offers a diverse mix of attractive housing types. What connects all the homes is the combination of the lively city centre on the outside and the green oasis on the inside of the complex. This makes Hof van Rijswijk a unique place to live and stay, for everyone.

Champions Park by developer Champions Developments will be a sustainable, self-sufficient "5-10-15 min" mixed-use development located

in the suburban area of Warsaw in Poland next door to the state of the art football training centre of the top tier multi sports club Legia Warsaw. The goal of the development is to create a place where everyone can become the "champion of their life". Champions Park project is a development of a new "garden city/community". The Market Square or otherwise called the Downtown is the retail and entertainment centre of the development. It includes the commercial/ lettable areas as well as external public and semi covered spaces. This is intended to be the centre of the development where the placemaking activities such as events, entertainment, retail, F&B, services and others will be located. Phase one is set to open in 2026 and the overall development will also feature a SPA and sports hotel with 120 keys, cover a site area of 230,000sq m and a commercial area of 200,000sq m.

The Crossings in Dublin, Republic of Ireland is a new vibrant shopping and retail environment to serve the affluent and growing catchment and put The Crossings, Adamstown on the map in terms of modern retailing. The first phase of The Crossings is now open and features 11,700sq m of retail space alongside 279 residential units. When fully complete, The Crossings will comprise of 975 residential units, 18,000sq m of retail space and 3,500sq m of commercial uses to include a civic/library building, creche, enterprise centre and primary care facility. Under development by Quintain who are best known for the transformation of Wembley Park in London and the third largest developer in Ireland, The Crossings is being designed to be a truly mixed-use community with a 2-acre village green as the focal point for the area as a place to unwind and dine and to bring people together at events, artisan markets and family fun days.



Cluj-Napoca Project, Romania  
Developer: IULIUS Group

With more than a decade's worth of expertise in developing and operating mixed-use urban regeneration complexes in Romania, IULIUS Group is now launching a new project in Cluj-Napoca. The investment is upwards of half a billion Euro and focuses on the Carbochim platform, set to become the largest urban reconversion project on the Romanian market. This urban development endeavour will transform the industrial area into a vibrant space in Cluj and will be integrated as part of the city. The Carbochim factory will be relocated this year and upgraded, without any periods of business interruption. The new project includes: the largest retail area in the country at 115,000sq m, a centre dedicated to performing arts, conservation of two industrial heritage buildings and reintroduction thereof into the public circuit, a model of integrated approach to green spaces, connecting the urban garden spanning on over four hectares with the adjacent parks and a complete reconfiguration of the road and pedestrian infrastructure.

Battersea Power Station opened last year and is at the heart of one of central London's largest, most visionary new developments, which will see this vast 42-acre (over 8 million square feet) former industrial brownfield site become home to a community of homes, shops, bars, restaurants, cafes, offices and over 19 acres of public space. This legendary London landmark and surrounding area has been brought back to life as one of the most exciting and innovative mixed use neighbourhoods in the world – a place for locals, tourists and residents to enjoy a unique blend of shops, bars, restaurants, leisure and entertainment venues, parks and historical spaces. It is a place to shop, eat, drink, live, work and play.

The Point concept in Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on

creating an outdoor experience celebrating boutique retail, lifestyle F&B and street shopping with entertainment uses. This new cultural centre by developer Red Sea Markets Co. will have a unique set of celebrated courtyards, plazas & terraces connecting a year-round multi use events space. It is envisioned as a contemporary lifestyle neighbourhood for exquisite urban shopping and entertainment that celebrates a new district of mixed-use within a family-friendly development filled with dining, events and memorable attractions. This is established through a series of planning strategies that uses the concept of centrality to reinforce the arrival experience, exposition of new trends in retail and finally impressing a memorable destination. All aimed to create a new sense of place for the community of Abha and wider visitors to the region.

Infiniti is set to be a timeless destination for upscale 360° lifestyle experiences. Specializing in building high-end modern developments, ranging from residential to commercial, Ajdan brings contemporary luxury living to the most prominent locations in Saudi Arabia, the GCC and beyond. With a sharp eye for state-of-the-art design and an unwavering commitment to creating spaces that bring the outdoors inward, Ajdan is at the forefront of innovation in MENA real estate. The towers have been designed with each and every resident in mind, giving all residential units a view of the Arabian Gulf; rest assured knowing that the sea will accompany you all throughout your day. Each tower is complete with an infinity pool and modern landscape design. With 45,510sq m of property, an upscale F&B area, contemporary high-end residential towers and cutting-edge amenities, we've designed



The Point, Abha, Saudi Arabia  
Developer: Red Sea Markets Co.

a living destination that puts your mind at ease. Situated in AlBahar District, Khobar, you'll find yourself right amidst the liveliness of the new downtown with exciting destinations like SEVEN Entertainment, Dhahran Expo and Saudi Aramco. An opening date for the scheme is yet to be announced.

Saudi Arabia will soon be home to the world's largest modern downtown in Riyadh, titled New Murabba, the Kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Prime Minister has announced. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2030 and will add on to the Kingdom's roster of 15 upcoming megaprojects, set to transform the nation. The launch of the New Murabba Development Company (NMDC) aims to develop the world's largest modern downtown in Riyadh, which will contribute to the city's future development in line with Saudi Vision 2030, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported. New Murabba will feature eco-friendly zones, walking and cycling paths and over 80 entertainment and culture venues. Spread across an area of 19sq km at the intersection of King Salman and King Khalid roads, the development will boast 104,000 residential units, 9,000 hotel rooms and 980,000sq m of retail space. In addition, the development will include more than 1.4 million square metres of office space, 620,000sq m of leisure assets and 1.8 million square metres of community facilities.

The three striking residential towers that comprise One Sydney Harbour are the final piece of the incredible transformation of Barangaroo South, along with Hickson Park and Waterman's Cove. These immersive public spaces include a public park, an expanded waterfront walkway and a public pier; part of Lendlease's dedication

to delivering more than half of Barangaroo as open space for all to enjoy. More than ten years in the making, Lendlease's commitment to this incredible precinct has seen Sydney's iconic waterfront become a world-class destination. Lendlease is the proud developer of Barangaroo South, one of Australia's most awarded urban regeneration precincts. The more than \$6bn development is a showcase of international design excellence, leading technologies and sustainability, outstanding dining and retail, health and wellbeing offerings, public art and cultural programs. Rising from the harbour shores, Barangaroo South forms a new financial hub for Sydney, with global businesses including PriceWaterhouseCoopers, HSBC, Westpac and Lendlease all proudly calling this precinct home.

Developer Heworth are soon to launch Rozelle Village, their redevelopment of the former Balmain Leagues Club in Sydney's inner west. The precinct will feature 147 luxury residences including studios, apartments and towers at varying heights along with a range of bespoke style specialty stores and a 1,400sq m public village square. To enhance resident well-being, private and public communal green spaces will be added to improve the visual appeal of the development. The Village will share a central entrance for the new Wests Ashfield Leagues Club which will have bars, restaurants with terrace dining and gaming lounges. At over 2,000 square metres, the new Wests Ashfield Leagues Club will feature several bars, restaurant and dining spaces with terrace dining, gaming lounge and dedicated sport bar. There will be kids play areas and family-friendly theme throughout and the scheme is on course to be completed in early 2026 after construction begins later this year.



Barangaroo South, Sydney, Australia  
Developer: Lendlease

# A Sector Evolved

**The global wellness tourism market size is expected to reach USD 2.1 trillion by 2030 and the market is expected to expand at a CAGR of 12.42 per cent from 2023 to 2030. Here, RLI takes a look at a selection of concepts and spaces that highlight the importance of wellness in the modern world.**

**T**he leisure, wellness and hospitality sectors comprise an all-encompassing field that is being driven by expanding individual, community and corporate market opportunities. The benefits of attaining a greater sense of wellbeing are growing daily as people become more in-sync with their mental health. Destinations, services and products serving this industry are on course to continuing growing and evolving.

A report entitled 'Wellness Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Service, By Travel Purpose, By Travel Type, By Region And Segment Forecasts, 2023 – 2030' by ReportLinker, the award-winning market research solution, highlights that improving patient awareness about health and personal care will be one of the major drivers for the market. Promotional campaigns arranged by various governments are also encouraging wellness tourism across the globe. Wellbeing services offered by players help customers find

solutions to improve or maintain their personal health and wellness. The rising number of health-conscious people is contributing to the increasing demand for wellness activities at popular travel destinations.

Wellness tourism includes various activities such as spas, mineral springs, skiing, hiking, pilates, yoga and others. In recent years, increasing demand for wellness therapies has resulted in a rise in the number of spas, mineral springs and wellness retreats. With work from anywhere becoming the new normal, people are taking wellness vacations to resorts where they can work while enjoying nature's beauty. Popular tourism destinations are providing all the facilities to allow working professionals to grow their business prospectus through remote workations.

Earlier this year, KidZania has launched a new concept called kinezis, a gym-style destination merging fitness, wellness and entertainment. kinezis offers three unique experiences – kinezis fitness, which focuses

on physical training, kinezis fun, which includes adventure activities and kinezis health, which provides wellness experiences. kinezis fitness is a boutique gym area with classes led by trainers. It uses state-of-the-art equipment and provides immersive activities. kinezis fun features adventure activities, from climbing walls to zip lines and kinezis health is a wellness area with a spa, personal trainer and nutritionist. The first kinezis location has opened in the Mundo E shopping mall in Tlalnepantla de Baz, Mexico. The \$23M venue is the first of many, as KidZania plans to open additional locations in Mexico and across the world. KidZania is an interactive edutainment brand with 27 locations across the world. KidZania venues are interactive miniature cities for children, who can independently explore the cities and more than 100 careers.

Last year, Hilton announced the signing of an agreement with CKR Resorts Private Limited to launch Hilton's flagship brand in Hyderabad, with Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa. Hilton continues to expand its presence in India and currently operates 24 hotels, seven of which are Hilton Hotels & Resorts properties. The resort is spread across 15 acres and is situated in Shamirpet, Hyderabad, near Genome Valley – a high-tech business hub focused on pharmaceutical research and development. With 115 rooms and 13 villas with private plunge pools, Hilton Hyderabad Resort & Spa aims to offer an exceptional guest experience. Additionally, with its green lawns, modern architecture and design, along with its banquet and meeting spaces, the resort will offer options for guests to host corporate events, meetings, social events and weddings. The resort will be equipped with a fitness centre and a spa, as well as multiple specialised outlets and a bar to cater to food connoisseurs.

City of Dreams Mediterranean, Europe's first integrated resort (IR), is expected to be the largest premier integrated destination resort in the region. It will feature a fourteen-storey luxury hotel with 500 guest rooms and suites, over 8,000sq m of MICE space, an outdoor amphitheatre, a family adventure park and a variety of premium dining outlets and luxury retail. Its interior design will be based on Melco's international luxury standards, specifically customised for the Cyprus IR, while the exterior design will feature distinct Mediterranean influences. A world-class development, a landmark for Cyprus but also for the wider region, the integrated resort is set to enrich Cyprus' tourism product, attracting thousands of new tourists annually and significantly contribute to countering seasonality, while establishing the island as a year-round all-season destination. Set to open next month by developer Melco Resorts & Entertainment, City of Dreams Mediterranean will take modern resort luxury to new heights and it is set to become a game-changing development, poised to revolutionise the island's tourism and hospitality sectors. Melco has also announced a special soft opening period for hotel and invited guests and this will commence on 12 June 2023, followed by the public opening on 10 July 2023.

A new partnership between Red Sea Global, the major Saudi multi-project developer and Clinique La Prairie, the Swiss longevity clinic will see a new resort launched at the upcoming ultra-luxury tourism site Amaala. Clinique La Prairie Health Resort in Amaala will be a wellness-focused property located in Amaala's Triple Bay hub and will include 13 villas, as well as 52 rooms and suites. With an emphasis on longevity, the 36,115sq m resort features a central 'Longevity Plaza' leading to four distinctive

*City of Dreams Mediterranean, Limassol, Cyprus  
Developer: Melco Resorts & Entertainment*





**Therme Manchester, UK**  
Developer: Therme Group



**Cavendish Square London, UK**  
Developer: Reef Group

areas of the resort corresponding to each one of the brand's pillars – medical care, nutrition, movement and wellbeing. The resort will also feature a diagnostics lab, museum, beach club, workshop and training rooms, a private dining space and even a cooking school. The medical pillar of the brand will see Clinique include an advanced diagnostics lab and radiology, neuroscience, dermo and aesthetics wings. On the wellbeing front, it will provide cryochamber, hyperbaric suites and IV infusion, alongside other therapies. Upon completion, Amaala will be home to more than 3,000 hotel rooms across 25 hotels and approximately 900 luxury residential villas, apartments and homes, alongside retail establishments, fine dining, wellness and recreational facilities.

Launched in November last year, The Chedi Katara Hotel & Resort in Doha is composed of 59 rooms and suites as well as 32 chalets and villas at Katara Cultural Village in Qatar's capital city, Doha. The Chedi Katara Hotel & Resort, Doha, Qatar shall occupy a beachfront setting within the landmark 100ha Katara Cultural Village district that includes theatres, concert halls, exhibition galleries, mosques, restaurants, shops, a park and an open amphitheatre. The area is a magnet for well-heeled travellers and Qataris who are keen to explore the cultural heritage of the region. All of Katara's pedestrian-friendly attractions

are accessible from the property, either by foot or buggy. The 32 villas dotting the extensive landscaped gardens in the Katara Hills range from one to five bedrooms, all with private gardens and swimming pools, offering privacy, luxury and tranquillity in the heart of the city. On the beachfront promenade, a long swimming pool accents the principal resort building while a second infinity pool offers a relaxing environment for families to enjoy a wide variety of snacks and fresh juices at the stand-alone Beach Club.

Promising the finest experiences life has to offer, Sindalah will be the first physical showcase of NEOM. An incomparable island destination, it will be an exclusive gateway to the stunning Red Sea. It will welcome the global yachting community, as well as visitors looking for exquisite luxury. A place where enhanced nature meets responsible design, advanced technology and inspirational architecture, Sindalah will feature unforgettable experiences above and below the water and great connectivity to the nearby Mediterranean, in addition to spectacular golfing, Sindalah will provide year-round delights thanks to its perfect climate. Whether you are looking for vibrancy, a buzzing atmosphere or pure adrenaline the diverse offerings on the island will cater for you. The resort will include a beach club, yacht club, spa and wellness centre plus 51 luxury retail outlets – in addition to luxury hotels and a large marina.

Expect only the best in this new year-round destination, where the weather is always enjoyable – meaning your enjoyment will no longer be dependent on the seasons.

Launched last year, Zula Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som is a pioneering destination in the Middle East that blends Traditional Arabic & Islamic Medicine with a holistic health and well-being philosophy, established by Chiva-Som, the internationally acclaimed wellness resort in Thailand. They welcome guests from all over the world to their coastal home on the northern tip of Qatar, where they offer two distinct yet interconnecting experiences. Zula Serenity is dedicated to adult guests seeking an immersive health and lifestyle reset, while Zula Discovery invites families to connect and embark on a wellness journey together. They aim to inspire people with positive and sustainable lifestyle change.

Uniquely located within a renowned London Square addressing Oxford Street, Harley Street and Regent Street, the four-storey subterranean development Cavendish Square will be a world first wellbeing destination incorporating healthcare, retail and commercial space. Cavendish Square London by developer Reef Group is the world's first mixed-use development specifically for the health and wellbeing industry. Set over four levels below the historic Cavendish Square Gardens, the scheme will total 280,000sq ft with floors of up

to 80,000sq ft. Distinct entrances to Harley Street, Regent Street and Oxford Street, offer occupier and customer flexibility; one square, three addresses. Tenant hand over is scheduled for this year.

Set to open in 2025, Therme Manchester will be the UK's first city-based wellbeing resort and it will be an immersive experience that benefits the mental and physical and wellbeing of all who visit. In addition to a 'next-generation' waterpark, thermal bathing and a wellbeing spa, Therme Manchester will include experiences such as immersive digital art, an on-site urban farm and botanical gardens. With unique design features including an all-season urban beach and the world's first living waterslides. Therme Manchester will be a landmark development for the city and it is set to become an iconic symbol of the North-West of England. In addition to its site in Manchester, the company has an ongoing portfolio that includes a new wellbeing resort in Washington, DC. Per a press release, the aquatic attraction will be Therme's flagship site in the US. The company is exploring potential locations in DC and will engage with council members, business leaders, community partners and residents. Therme's new experience in DC is expected to create 7,200 construction jobs over a two-year period, 700 to 800 permanent operations jobs upon facility stabilisation and an estimated \$1.1 bn in DC nominal tax revenue flow over 25 years.



**Clinique La Prairie Health Resort, AMAALA, Saudi Arabia**  
Developer: Red Sea Global



**Sindalah, NEOM, Tabuk Province, Saudi Arabia**  
Developer: PIF

# Next-Level Reality

**Immersive Attractions & Experiences are unique environments where people can enjoy the perception of being surrounded by, or be a part of, a different landscape than that of reality. Over the coming pages RLI takes a look at a selection of these immersive offerings and highlights why they are now so popular in the world today.**

According to Cosm in their article 'What is an Immersive Experience?' immersive attractions and experiences are transportive in nature – they take you to another place entirely. Guests are enveloped in captivating environments that stimulate the senses and deceive perception.

The article goes on to say that human curiosity and the desire to explore have fuelled immersive technology growth. Technology gives everybody access to these new frontiers through live feeds from the ISS, footage from the Perseverance Rover on Mars or new discoveries from the James Webb Telescope. Sport's broadcasting and camera technology has even evolved to put people right on the field in the middle of the action.

Immersive Experiences & Attractions is a fast-growing segment of the entertainment sector and it utilises technology such as augmented reality and projection mapping to design elaborate environments for people to explore, this is the view point of Meow Wolf's Vince Kadlubek and ARTECHOUSE's Adrian Jones in the article 'How Immersive Experiences are Captivating Today's Travelers'. They go on to say that immersive experiences have grown in popularity over the last through years amidst the Covid-19 era, which for many has not been the happiest time. Experiences that have space and understanding for those uncomfortable yet unavoidable emotions built into them are going to ring more authentically than an all-

happiness-all-the-time experience ever could.

## Immersive Attractions & Experiences Across the World

FI® Arcade, the world's first official Formula 1® simulator racing experience to put socialising at its core, is to open its first US location in Boston's Seaport district early 2024. The first-of-its-kind hospitality concept has seen more than 8,000 fans and non-fans visiting its flagship London venue each week to enjoy competitive socialising at its finest since it opened late last year. Boston Seaport will be the first to bring the excitement and thrill of FI® Arcade across the Atlantic as part of an ambitious plan mapped out across the US, targeting more than 20 permanent venue locations in the next five years. Covering 16,000 square feet, the new FI® Arcade takes inspiration from the world of Formula 1, with 69 racing simulators designed especially for the venue, each equipped with cutting edge motion and audio-visual effects to fully immerse guests in the race. Combined with a premium food and drink offering, the venue promises to match the famous FI hospitality enjoyed at Grand Prix around the world.

Meow Wolf is an arts and entertainment company based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They create immersive and interactive experiences that transport audiences of all ages into fantastic realms

of story and exploration. Meow Wolf began in 2008 as an informal DIY collective of Santa Fe artists. These collaborative roots lay the foundation for Meow Wolf's distinctive style of immersive, maximalist environments that encourage audience participation and their mission is to inspire creativity through art, exploration and play so that imagination will transform the world. The company currently operate three sites in Santa Fe, established in 2016 and Las Vegas and Denver in 2021. The newest permanent exhibitions will be at the Grapevine Mills Mall in 2023 and in Houston's Fifth Ward in 2024.

Launched back in 2020 by developer Fisher Brothers, AREA15 has confirmed plans to expand its district in Las Vegas by 20 acres, providing a destination where people can "come, enjoy, consume, eat, party, dance and stay". The anchor tenant will be a year-round eerie experience from Universal Parks & Resorts inspired by Halloween Horror Nights. Universal's horror experience will occupy more than 110,000sq ft in a standalone building. In addition, more than 85,000sq ft will be dedicated to pop-ups and outdoor experiences. This will be joined by additional attractions, entertainment, retail and F&B. The new development extends beyond AREA15's main complex, home to attractions including Meow Wolf's Omega Mart, Illuminarium and Lost Spirits Distillery. As part of the expansion AREA15 is looking for tenants offering immersive experiences, attractions, curated retail, unique entertainment and exciting F&B outlets. The expansion will include more than 450,000sq ft of space, with tenant leasing opportunities ranging from 1,000sq ft to 60,000sq ft. AREA15 is breaking ground on the expansion in the coming months and it will be turned over to the tenants in mid-2024.

After hugely successful runs across Europe and the US, the expansive

and award-winning 360-degree digital immersive art experience, Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience, will debut in Southeast Asia in 2023, opening in Singapore for the first time at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), BI Forum. This highly Instagram-worthy and stunning digital art experience is organised by H&B in partnership with Exhibition Hub, Fever and RWS. This 360-degree digital art experience is housed within various individualistic galleries in the expansive space of over 17,000sq ft. The exhibition invites visitors to step into more than 300 of Vincent Van Gogh's sketches, drawings and paintings, immersing one in his world and life works by using floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall large scale digital projections. One of the core highlights of this exhibition is an expansive central projection area where the digital projections are the most prominent, creating a mesmerising space where visitors can sit and absorb the wonders of one of the most well-loved Dutch influential artists all around them at every turn.

BattleKart is a quintessential mix of video gaming, augmented reality and electric go-karting, brought together to provide guests with unparalleled sensations! Imagine a track on which they project different circuits and playing modes, where you progress at full speed on-board an electric kart while interacting with the scenery, the bonuses and the other players. Based in Belgium, BattleKart is an indoor electric karting concept, to which augmented reality technology provides an immersive video game environment. In semi-darkness, you drive a kart on the track, whose elements are dynamically video-projected from the ceiling. Thanks to a patented localisation system and game management by the servers, the karts interact with the projected scenery as well as the other karts.





Valo Motion, the Finnish leader in active mixed-reality products, has announced the launch of Stomp Squad, an innovative co-op multiplayer experience for their mixed-reality trampoline game platform, ValoJump. Stomp Squad expands Valo Motion's library of titles and is a spin-off of Super Stomp, one of the company's most popular ValoJump experiences. ValoJump seamlessly integrates advanced motion tracking and augmented reality technology, blurring the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds. When combined with StompSquad's collaborative gameplay, ValoJump offers fun and interaction for players of all ages. The cooperative gameplay mechanics encourage players to jump and move on the trampoline, to stomp on robots and engage with friends in exciting new ways. Stomp Squad is an enjoyable social experience, in which players actively engage with each other to progress through the game.

EmotionHall is a unique and engaging place which is located in the context of Tiare Shopping, a "Meeting Place" and part of Ingka Centres in the North-East of Italy. It is the first permanent, immersive arena in Italy, modular and interactive, dedicated to art, culture and entertainment. EmotionHall is the first permanent interactive area dedicated to immersive art, cultural and entertainment experiences, created by high-performance projection and sound system. Its annual planning

calendar includes alternating art exhibitions, realized in collaboration with international artists, as well as theatre and music events and much more. Because of the characteristics described, this project embraces customers with widely differing interests, with a good propensity to spend on cultural and entertainment goods.

Dreamscape Immersive's technology platform enables full immersion in virtual worlds through complete body presence. It untethers its audience members from the computer and allows them to walk freely with friends within a virtual world, where they see themselves, interact with objects and each other and experience worlds previously accessible only in their imaginations. The vision of Dreamscape is to combine the emotional power of Hollywood storytelling, the visceral excitement of great theme-park rides and this extraordinary new technology to create stories and worlds that push the limits of virtual reality. Dreamscape is truly the birth of a new storytelling medium, giving people the opportunity to step into a story and watch it unfold around them as they explore cinematic worlds, characters and creatures never before thought possible. And each Dreamscape adventure is a shared experience, embracing the human desire to explore, learn and enjoy together. Today the Swiss-based business has sites in Dubai, Los Angeles, Geneva and Riyadh.



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Immersive Gamebox  
Lakeside, Essex, UK

Hammerson has signed the world's most advanced virtual reality experience, Sandbox VR, as part of its vision to diversify the use of Grand Central in the heart of Birmingham and an ambitious strategy to reinvigorate its assets through new brands, entertainment and experiential concepts. The 13,000sq ft unit - set to open this summer - is the brand's third in Europe and largest to date. This signing supports Sandbox VR's plans to expand across the UK and Ireland, while elevating the experiential offer at Hammerson's Bullring & Grand Central, in-line with the wider evolution of the destination. Taking group virtual reality gameplay and competitive socialising to the next level, Sandbox VR creates a truly immersive experience within exclusively designed interactive worlds, making players feel like they are living inside a game or a movie. The unmatched adventure is powered by a new generation of Hollywood motion capture cameras, 3D precision full-body trackers, custom hardware and haptic feedback suits, enhancing the touch, vibration and motion senses for the user.

Situated in Marble Arch in a stunning 30,000sq ft permanent location, Frameless features award-winning galleries and showcases some of the world's greatest works of art, presented on a scale and in ways never seen before. Frameless is an art collection of the surreal and spectacular, where visitors are not only in the art, they are part of it. Our multi-dimensional galleries are transformed with a 21st-century interpretation of the classic masterpieces, designed to delight. Opening its doors back in October, the site is home to four unique galleries that harness the different types of projection technology to bring art to life. Visitors will take a unique journey as they travel through masterpieces, having

an intimate view of every brushstroke, seeing details in a fluid, moving dimensional way bringing these artworks to life. Thoughtful music composition triggers emotion through the highest climactic moments, as well as very peaceful self-reflective interludes. It is a digital playground for all ages!

Immersive Gamebox is reinventing how consumers socialize by introducing a whole new genre of gaming - immersive reality. Co-Founded by CEO Will Dean and CFO David Spindler in 2018, Immersive Gamebox currently has 20 locations across the US and EMEA with more to come. Games are designed by its in-house game studio to offer a wide range of ages innovative, shared experiences. Squid Game is one of the latest experiences in an extensive library of original and IP games. In June 2022, IGB announced its partnership with Rovio Entertainment to bring the first-ever life-sized slingshot Angry Birds game, to gameboxes across the US. The library also features IGB's own proprietary games, including James Bunny, also launched in 2022, where users play as an agent tasked with taking down unlawful mafia bosses. Each game has specific recommendations for age ranges and indicates suitability for a family activity, work outing or date night.

Outernet is an immersive entertainment district in the heart of London where communities come together to enjoy culture in breathtaking new ways. They have brought together the best content and latest immersive technology to create new experiences for music, arts, culture and creators. Londoners and global travellers alike can discover free immersive experiences every day at Outernet. They have created an exciting schedule of entertainment and arts content



FI® Arcade Venue Design  
London, UK

using the latest technology and talented metaverse creators. Their innovation has no limits, with world-class creative plans in the pipeline that are set to launch later this year. Not only do they drive deep engagement with the hundreds of thousands of people they reach each day in the district, but they reach many millions more through wider earned, owned and paid strategies.

Created by the Welsh attraction company Frontgrid, ParadrupVR is an attraction that allows guests to fly over any environment they can imagine. An award-winning, flying under canopy experience in VR, it combines motion-based engineering and VR gamification to create sensational experiences. Unattended, multiplayer and with a global online league, ParadrupVR is leading the way in terms of retailtainment and competitive socialising, driving new and repeat footfall to venues.

Saudi Arabia's SEVEN has inked a new deal with Hasbro for indoor entertainment centres across the Kingdom as part of its \$13bn entertainment boom. Saudi Entertainment Ventures (SEVEN) has announced it will create a Transformers theme park in the Kingdom. The PIF-owned entertainment group has signed a second licensed agreement with Hasbro. Under the agreement, SEVEN will bring the Transformers brand to its entertainment destinations in Saudi Arabia. SEVEN has partnered with AOA, an industry leader in immersive experience design and production, to develop the Transformers attractions which will provide thrilling and highly immersive experiences. Spanning more than 10,000sq m, the first Transformers attraction will open at SEVEN's entertainment destination in the Al Hamra district of Riyadh, with two additional attractions set to open at other SEVEN's entertainment

destinations. The Transformers ride-based attractions will feature thrilling state-of-the-art rides and captivating environments that will have guests fully immersed in the action-packed world of the iconic brand.

CoComelon Playdate is a kids and family oriented YouTube channel specialised in music and nursery rhymes content that helps pre-schoolers learn life lessons. It is a place where imagination comes to life and kids can let their creativity run wild. Since launching at Riyadh Boulevard World in November last year, the 1,550sq m has been sold out almost every day and features playing and learning sections, F&B section, retail section and a party section. Families can enjoy quality time in the experience, discovering the world of CoComelon in real life through interactive play and learning. CoComelon Playdate leaves families entertained with a desire to repeat their visit and experience.

Monopoly Lifesized is an interactive and immersive, 80-minute, physical version of the world's favourite board game. Challenging for all ages; families, friends and children will love racing around life-sized Monopoly boards, with real-life representations of the tokens from the legendary board game acting as the players' guides. Monopoly Lifesized is a permanent attraction located at the Boulevard World, Riyadh and with many other locations to follow. Footfall and revenue have exceeded the forecasted figures since the attraction has been sold out most of the days it has been operational since its opening last November 2022. Monopoly Lifesized Riyadh is the first-of-its-kind in the MENA region and the second Monopoly Lifesized FEC after the opening of one in London.



Monopoly Lifesized  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



Frontgrid, ParadrupVR  
King Power Mahanakorn, Bangkok, Thailand

# Beacons of the Industry

While the retail sector is a global entity, there are some locations and cities that burn just a little brighter and are more attractive to shoppers and brands as they look to expand on the world stage. Join us over the next six pages as RLI takes a closer look at a selection of key retail markets.

## Dubai

Dubai is the shopping centre of the world. This is according to 'Passport to the Middle East: Why retailers are choosing Dubai for international expansion' report by The Retail Summit in partnership with Euromonitor International. They explain that it is one of the most diversified economies of the GCC and that Dubai relies heavily on tourism and travel retail. Dubai is a launch pad for regional expansion and most of the world's major brands have a presence. Dubai is ranked number one in overall international retailer presence, with over 62 per cent of the world's brands with some sort of footprint. Unlike other major Middle Eastern cities, where the retail landscape is anchored to traditional souqs, Dubai is not stymied by the past. Here there is a real readiness for change which makes Dubai fertile ground for all that is cutting-edge. International brands continue to dominate in the United Arab Emirates and consumers here are very brand conscious. Meanwhile, Majid Al Futtaim, the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, recently released its 'State of the UAE Retail Economy' Q4 report, which revealed that overall consumer spending was up 19 per cent in 2022 compared to the previous year. There was a notable 13 per cent growth in spending across the retail economy for the full year including, leisure and entertainment (29 per cent), fashion (25 per cent), hypermarkets and supermarkets (11 per cent) and general retail (nine per cent). This increase was driven by the rise in international visitors to the UAE, which more than doubled to 14 million in 2022, bolstered by major events including the FIFA World Cup in neighbouring Qatar.

## Hong Kong

Officially known as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong is a city and special administrative region of China that is home to 7.4 million residents of various nationalities in a 1,104sq km territory. In Cushman & Wakefield's 'Hong Kong Office and Retail Leasing Markets Q1 2023' report by Rosanna Tang, it says that following the full border opening between Hong Kong and the mainland, tourist arrivals show a significant increase. As a result, demand for retail stores has improved and the report says they believe that the first half of the year will see a faster-than-expected rental increase at about three to eight per cent. In the first two months of 2023, total retail sales amounted to HK\$69.3bn, recording a significant increase of 17.3 per cent year-on-year, predominately due to the low base recorded in 2022. Landlords are targeting higher asking rentals. However, retailers have remained generally conservative and consequently the market did not witness major brand expansion activity during the quarter. Luxury brands and large chain-stores, in particular, will need some time to understand the changing consumption patterns of mainland visitors, after a long period of tourism hiatus. The gap in expectations between landlords and potential tenants has lengthened lease negotiations, meaning lease activities and rentals were yet to achieve an immediate V-shape rebound in Q1. In addition, after three years of border closure, Hong Kong's service sector is struggling with labour shortages, which could impede F&B expansion and the city's tourism rebound. They believe that the first half of this year will be a period of adaptation and exploration for the retail market in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong



Istanbul

## Istanbul

An article on Lonely Planet.com by Jesse Scott and Didem Tali highlights that thanks to its extraordinary geographical gifts, the transcontinental city of Istanbul has always lured serious traders and shoppers. Visitors can appreciate the strong artisan tradition, browse high-quality local products and even sip complimentary tea from tulip-shaped glasses while discussing what to bring home. Resembling a massive labyrinth and boasting nearly 4,000 shops in 45,000sq m, the Grand Bazaar is one of the world's oldest covered shopping centres. Istanbul remains a unique city that is positioned on two continents and in the third quarter of 2022, the increase in demand in the retail market drew attention. Cushman & Wakefield's Turkey – Country Snapshots – Third Quarter – 2022: Office, Retail & Industrial & Logistics continues by saying that another reason for the increasing demand is that the number of foreign visitors after the pandemic almost caught up with the pre-pandemic period. Although increasing costs due to inflation and fluctuating exchange rates continued to affect the sector, significant occupancy rates were observed both in shopping malls and on main streets. In the third quarter of 2022, it was observed that investors continue their growth strategies despite the difficulties in finding empty stores. In addition, it is noteworthy that many Turkish brands that cannot fit into the Turkish market have started to develop growth strategies abroad. In the third quarter of the year, the demand continues to increase with the effect of the pre-pandemic period in the number of foreign visitors. Meanwhile, in the third quarter of the year, there was no new shopping mall entry and the total supply remained stable at 13.8 million square metres.

## London

The capital and largest city in England and the UK, it is a world-renowned retail hotspot and a beacon of the industry. One of the world's most important global cities, it exerts a considerable impact upon the arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, professional services, research and development, tourism and transportation. For decades London has led the way in terms of innovation, fashion and retail trends and it is the focal location for new retailers seeking representation in the UK. CBRE's 'Central London Retail Market Summary – Q1 2023' explains that, reflecting the wider trends seen across real estate, Central London retail investment volumes were muted in Q1 2023, at £183M. However, in prime locations, yields have remained stable due to strong occupational demand and the prospect of rental growth. Meanwhile a report from Savills entitled 'Market in Minutes: Central London Retail – Q4 2022' explains that London's West End is now clearly in recovery mode. In December last year, West End sales were just nine per cent below 2019 levels, according to New West End Company, which is particularly encouraging considering rail strikes during the ordinarily busy run-up to Christmas. This was reflected in trading figures from Shaftesbury, with tenants reporting average turnovers six per cent above 2019 levels over the festive period and up 42 per cent year-on-year. Strong trade in the West End, coupled with an improving economic outlook, is helping to bolster occupier sentiment. In addition, with average prime headline ZA rents in the West End still 16 per cent below pre-Covid levels, combined with a good degree of availability, there is an increasing realisation amongst occupiers that now may be the optimum time to secure new space.

London





Los Angeles

### Los Angeles

Los Angeles, the “entertainment capital of the world,” is a globally-recognised travel destination for millions of tourists each year. The city’s influence, however, reaches far beyond the glitz and glamour of Hollywood. According to the ‘Q4 2022 Retail Market Outlet – Los Angeles’ by NAI Capital, LA Country’s retail market post-pandemic recovery moved slowly in Q4 2022. Vacancy, sublease space and slack demand for retail space confronted landlords contending with a changing economy. While vacated space that was hastily put on the market during the pandemic shutdown is getting occupied as retailers pivot back to brick-and-mortar. A magazine by DCBID entitled ‘DTLA Retail Report: A Guide to the Future of Retail in Downtown Los Angeles’ explains that the retail industry has been evolving over the last decade – and so has Downtown Los Angeles. During the pandemic, retail’s shifts accelerated dramatically. With the inexorable rise of e-commerce, the role of physical stores is increasingly about branding, experience, convenience and personal service. Downtown has 743 retail businesses per square mile – and 157 food and beverage businesses, making it one of the most dynamic and exciting urban centres in the US. The city is home to signature locations, boutiques, local flair, new retail, fine-dining and local-dining experiences and familiar favourites. The CBRE report ‘Los Angeles Retail Figures Q3 2022’ explains that freestanding sites continued to drive capital markers activity, closely followed by storefront locations. Sites with higher parking ratios and excess land were targeted and included auto-dealerships, supermarkets, health clubs and fast-food restaurants. The report also states that, although port activity has de-congested relative to H1 2022, retail development remains constrained and has grown increasingly more complex with the rise in interest rates and construction costs.

### Milan

A highly-regarded reference point when it comes to European culture, Milan has long been considered Italy’s most modern city – a place that combines the best of the country’s renowned culture with a thriving business and finance centre and a distinctive cosmopolitan edge. This is highlighted in Knight Frank’s Europa Cities Guide 2022 – Milan. It continues by saying that despite being smaller than many other major European cities, Milan, in recent years, has managed to redevelop large urban areas and has become one of the most prominent cities in Europe from a real estate and retail perspective. Milan offers a high quality of life for its residents, with internationally recognised flagship events and exhibitions held throughout the year. Tourism underpins the city’s economy, while the student dynamic of the city remains core to the residential sector. In 2026, Milan will host the Winter Olympic Games, an event that boosts its international appeal further. Cushman & Wakefield’s ‘Italian Market: Focus on Retail 2022’ report highlights that Milan is a leading global city, with strengths in the arts, commerce, design, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, services, research and tourism. Although the city centre has a long-established tradition of retailing, in recent years the city has undergone an important reshaping thanks to the redevelopment of areas such as Porta Nuova and CityLife, becoming new shopping realities attracting dynamic brands. Milan is also the province with the largest out-of-town retail offer of the region of Lombardy, with 1.2 million square metres across 49 schemes and over 2,500 shops. The retail density stands at almost 390sq m per 1,000 inhabitants, above the national average (about 270sq m per 1,000 inhabitants).



New York

### New York

New York City is one of the world’s premier shopping destinations, topping “best of” lists and drawing visitors from across the globe. The retail sector is a vital part of the city’s economic and social landscape, with businesses ranging from corner grocery stores to renowned department stores in locations across the city. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the retail trade sector unevenly, with online retailers and some essential businesses experiencing growth and other large retail segments seeing falling revenues. CBRE’s ‘Retail Markets in Focus: New York City’ explains that New York’s retail sector has faced significant challenges over the past few years, including high pre-COVID rents that increased operating costs, a population that migrated to suburban locales during the pandemic and the emergence of hybrid work, which reduced in-office attendance. However, an educated population, abundant mass transit and renowned high-street districts that attract local, regional and international visitors set the stage for a recovery. According to Cushman & Wakefield’s Q1 2023 Manhattan Retail Report, New York City’s economy is showing a sign of improvement as tourism in the city continues to rebound and it is now on track to grow to 63.3 million in 2023 and surpass 2019 numbers by 2024. Manhattan retail leasing continued its positive trajectory into the first quarter of 2023. Available retail space declined or held steady in nine out of 11 tracked submarkets on both a quarterly and annual basis, with select submarkets at historic lows since the 2015 and 2016 troughs. The largest lease of the first three months of 2023 was a five-year deal for LVMH at 6 East 57th Street near Upper Fifth Avenue, where LVMH will take over the former Niketown space.

### Paris

Where to begin with Paris, it’s a city that everyone feels they know something about, romanticised and idolised as the backdrop to countless advertising campaigns, films and books. According to Knight Frank’s ‘Europa Cities Guide 2022 – Paris’, this is hardly surprising given that Paris is often regarded as the capital of the arts, also popularly referred to as the ‘City of Light’. Universally recognised as one of the world’s most beautiful cities and centres of high culture; fashion, cuisine, art and cinema are tightly woven into the historical fabric of Paris. Despite its rich history, Paris is a city that never fails to look to the future and is considered one of the most diverse cities in Europe. Although sprawling, it has a distinctive village-like culture within its 20 arrondissements, with many Parisians tending to shop and socialise locally within their quarters – the further division within each arrondissement. Knight Frank’s French Property Markets – 2022 Review & 2023 Outlook: Investment, Office & Retail highlights that in 2022, the Paris retail market benefited from the continued recovery in international tourism. With 86.7 million arrivals at Paris airports, 80 per cent of which were foreign passengers, traffic is up 107 per cent compared to 2021 and is gradually approaching the 2019 level. In addition, the report highlights that 38 luxury shop openings were identified in Paris for 2022, five more than in 2021 and nine more than in 2020. Iconic projects have also been opened, such as Cartier at 13 rue de la Paix, Dior at 30-32 avenue Montaigne and Chanel at 21 rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. This trend will continue in 2023 and 2024, with the expected openings of Saint Laurent on avenue des Champs-Élysées and avenue Montaigne and Gucci and Alexander McQueen on rue Saint-Honoré.



Milan



Paris



Riyadh

**Riyadh**

Knight Frank’s report entitled ‘Saudi Arabia Commercial Market Review: Summer 2022’ highlights that in Riyadh the fortunes of the retail sector are on the cusp of reversing. The Ministry of Investment issued 2,056 foreign investment licenses in the final quarter of 2021. 44 per cent (907) of these were linked to the retail and e-commerce sectors. They have noted a steady stream of requirements from international retailers looking to enter the Kingdom, particularly Riyadh, putting upward pressure on rents. Malls are the primary target for these new entrants and regional and super-regional mall lease rates are beginning to creep up as new requirements gather pace. On average, larger malls (SAR 2,716 per square metre) have seen rents increase by one per cent over the last 12 months. Vision 2030 is changing the Kingdom’s retail landscape dramatically. With 56 per cent of Saudi’s population below the age of 35, the country has a young and dynamic demographic. They have been exposed to international brands and fashion labels, restaurant experiences and edutainment overseas. And as these international retailers arrive in their droves, they are being readily welcomed and absorbed into the retail fabric. Indeed, in Riyadh alone, 290,000sq m of restaurant-led retail developments, including 275 new restaurants, spread across 16 lifestyle retail developments, have been completed since the launch of the National Transformation Plan in 2016, ushering in a thriving food scene in the capital. In addition, the report explains that they expect the hospitality sector to continue to recover over the medium term as Riyadh remains a focal point for tourism and business growth, supported by governmental infrastructure and tourism investments in line with Vision 2030.

**Singapore**

Singapore, officially the Republic of Singapore, is an island country and city-state in maritime Southeast Asia whose retail market size was valued as high as SGD44.5bn in 2021 and is expected to achieve a CAGR of more than three per cent during 2021-2026. Research from Knight Frank in their report ‘Singapore Retail Market Update – Q1 2023’ explains that there has been an upturn in prime retail rent as the tourism sector recovers. More borders in Asia have reopened and Singapore welcomed visitors from previously closed countries. According to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), Singapore welcomed more than 2.9 million visitors in the first quarter of 2023. Although about only two-thirds the pre-pandemic 4.7 million arrivals in Q1 2019, the average duration of visitor stays lengthened from an average of 3.34 days in 2019 to 3.97 days in the early days of 2023. Since April 2022 when Covid-19 restrictions in Singapore were broadly lifted, many local brands flourished, expanding both locally and globally as pandemic pressures eased. While Singapore’s retail sector strengthens, the gravitation towards experiential retail and lifestyle continues with increasing popularity for health, beauty and wellness services. Such concepts have been steadily growing with people becoming more accepting of alternative and holistic therapies such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), meditation and preventive health. This is also aligned with wider discussions for Singapore to be fashioned as an urban wellness hub as part of its tourism offerings. Notwithstanding the upward revision of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), inflation and economic uncertainty, the retail sector is expected to continue to recover and improve as air travel and visitor arrivals edge toward pre-pandemic levels.



Sydney

**Sydney**

Sydney is the state capital of New South Wales and the most populous city in Australia and Oceania. Located on Australia’s east coast, the metropolis surrounds the world’s largest natural harbour and sprawls towards the Blue Mountains to the west. JLL’s ‘Australia National Retail Market Overview: National, Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, South East Queensland, Sydney’ highlights that in 2022, retailer demand continued to differ by category. Demand from discretionary retailers, particular mid-market fashion retailers, remained generally muted from uncertainty surrounding future trade conditions as consumers begin to cut back on discretionary spending amid rising interest rates. While significant interest was shown throughout all retail sub sectors by F&B category retailers and in particular quick service restaurants. Evidence is emerging of weakening retailer sentiment with vacancy rates in most sub sectors increasing in Q2 2022. This suggests some retailers beginning to reintroduce store nationalisation plans which were put on hold given strong sales and rebasing on rents in 2021. Sydney recorded low supply in Q2 2022 with only 19,000sq m of retail space reaching completion, bringing the first half 2022 total to only 34,700sq m. Following a record year of transactions in 2021, investor appetite in the first half of 2022 was subdued. Investment volumes in 2Q22 totalled AUD 518M, bringing the half yearly total to AUD 1.1bn. In Q2 2022, transaction activity was primarily concentrated in neighbourhood and large format retail assets. The neighbourhood and large format retail sub sectors accounted for 85 per cent of sales volumes, split evenly between the two sub sectors. The remainder of the sales in 2Q22 were split between ‘other’ retail accounting for eight per cent and two CBD assets accounting for seven per cent.

**Tokyo**

Born of commerce and complexity, Tokyo is the very definition of a metropolis. Twenty-three wards, 39 municipalities and 13.6 million people join to form Japan’s capital. Include the three surrounding prefectures of Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba and you have a population base that exceeds 36 million people. In the department store sector, sales increased 38 per cent year-on-year in August, the 12th consecutive month of increase. Luxury goods continued to record strong sales, outperforming 2019 levels since March. This reflected strong domestic consumption as the number of foreign visitor arrivals continued to be constrained due to immigration restrictions, according to JLL’s ‘Japan Research – Tokyo Retail Market Summary – Q3 2022’ article. It goes onto say to Oxford Economics, as of September 2022, private consumption was revised upwards to grow 2.9 per cent in 2022 and one per cent in 2023. Private consumption is expected to hold firm. Risks include the impact of inflation on operation costs and disposable income. On the back of healthy sales supported by domestic consumption, as well as the return of foreign visitor arrivals as immigration restrictions ease, demand from various retailers is expected to remain resilient and underpin rent growth for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, CBRE’s ‘Japan Retail MarketView Q4 2022’ explains that the high street vacancy rate for Q4 2022 fell by 0.1 points quarter-on-quarter to 7.6 per cent as an available property that had been attracting interest since the previous quarter secured a tenant. Ginza high street rents rose by 3.8 per cent quarter-on-quarter to JPY 250,700 per tsubo per month. This rise was primarily a result of multiple luxury brands expressing a willingness to pay above-market rates for the opportunity to open stores in prime high street locations.



Singapore



Tokyo



# Committing to a Better Future

The seventh edition of MAPIC Italy was once again a great success as the event was full of insights focused on sustainability and responsible development as key factors for the industry's growth. MAPIC Italy took place over the 16-17 May at Superstudio Maxi in Milan and featured more than 1,900 delegates, confirming the event as the most important fair dedicated to the Retail Real Estate sector in Italy.

## Sustainability as the Key to Business Development

The overall theme of this edition of MAPIC Italy was: 'The Era of Responsible Retail: The Common Commitment to a Better Future' and this was the primary focus of the two-day event organised by RX France. Sustainability took centre stage and there was a particular emphasis on the importance of sustainable development policies as key factors for business growth for both retail brands and real estate market players.

During the opening speech, Francesco Pupillo, Show Director of MAPIC and MAPIC Italy, emphasised:

"We have now entered a new era: the era of responsibility; responsibility that is both individual and collective as an industry. The challenge in the coming years will be to combine responsible development with business growth. The brands and players that will be most successful are those that can demonstrate greater transparency in their actions, with an authentic message of responsibility, ethics and attention to resources and the environment, placing the human factor and experience at the centre of their business."

The first day of the conference began with the traditional opening

event co-organised with CNCC in collaboration with Largo Consumo. Various topics were addressed, particularly 'Ecological Transition and Digital Transition as Drivers of Shopping Center Industry Development' and 'Shopping Centers: ESG and Sustainable Growth.'

Roberto Zoia, President of CNCC and Director of Assets, Development and Network Management at IGD SIQ SPA, highlighted the three fundamental priorities of the association and the industry for the next three years:

"The first priority will be for the Association to lead our industry towards ecological and digital transition. The second is dialogue with institutions and political leaders to eliminate competitive asymmetries between our omni-channel retail and large platforms. The third is to inform and engage all stakeholders, financial communities, markets and institutions about the merits of our business model and the great determination with which we are pursuing sustainability objectives."

In the debate on the topic, the focus was on how the Shopping Centre format is evolving to respond to new sensitivities and consumption patterns with a mix of products and services that are increasingly

shifting towards attentive, innovative and above all, responsible retail. In this regard, Luis Pires, Head of Country at Klepierre Management Italy, emphasised the need for more visibility in the rules addressing ESG issues in Italy "...and how we should all embrace the vital opportunity to work towards a more responsible development ethos presented by the PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan)."

Sustainability and responsible development were also discussed in the session co-organised with Confimprese: 'Retail & Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Retail Development', moderated by Barbara Cimmino, Executive Member of Confimprese and Head of CSR & Innovation at INTICOM SPA (Yamamay). The session allowed for the sharing of some of the most interesting initiatives in terms of responsible and sustainable development by brands. The session also served as an opportunity for the presentation of the Confimprese Manifesto for sustainability in retail: a roadmap for responsible retail.

## The Human Factor and Experience as Key Elements of the New Paradigm

There was also significant emphasis on the role of the human factor and experience in shopping destinations, with the increasing presence of leisure and food in the retail mix of new destinations. In the session "Transforming Retail Destinations into Experience Places," co-organized with Giochi News, guests discussed the growing need for integrating recreational and cultural activities into shopping locations. Attendees also saw presentations of new leisure formats completely made in Italy, including the project developed by Green Spirit for Merlata Bloom, the lifestyle destination project on the outskirts of Milan presented by Nhood. Another important aspect of the experience is the growing use of brand licenses and their activation in physical spaces, as demonstrated by Matteo Olivetti, Sales Director Global CP at Rainbow, the licensor of Winx Club.

## Prospects for the Italian Commercial Real Estate Market

MAPIC Italy 2023 was also an opportunity to assess the future prospects of the commercial real estate market in Italy. In the panel moderated by Paola Dezza, Editor of Il Sole 24 Ore, international investors shared their views on the Italian market. Giorgio Mauro Pieralli, Head of Real Estate Southern Europe Investment Management at Zurich Insurance Group, explained that the market is currently in a wait-and-see situation, awaiting a trigger event that can provide better visibility for investors, with a relatively positive sentiment regarding the prospects for transaction volumes to recover. Pieralli emphasised how important it is for investors that owners and developers continue to innovate and diversify consumer experiences.

In an in-depth discussion on the commercial real estate market in Italy, Mirko Baldini, CEO of CBRE, expressed optimism, stating, "We believe that there is significant room for growth in both town and out-of-town retail. We are pleasantly surprised to see retailers' attention to new developments. This dynamism is having a positive influence on investment recovery."

## Development Strategies of Brand and New Landlord-Tenant Partnership Models

The sharing of brand visions and development strategies was also a significant part of the program and content. In the session 'Renaissance of Retail in Italian Cities', moderated by Monica Cannalire, Founder & Managing Director of Yunicorn, the expansion of retailers in Italian cities was discussed. As explained by Rodolfo Rustioni, CEO of Rustioni & Partners, there is currently high demand for spaces from international brands concentrated in Milan. Rome has excellent prospects for the coming years. Other cities, such as Naples, are also appealing to brands, although the availability of medium-sized prime high-street locations is limited. The recovery of tourism is also highlighting destinations like Capri, Taormina and Forte dei Marmi in the high-end market segment. The development of the first urban shopping centre in Italy in Bolzano is also an interesting experiment.

The next event on the agenda is MAPIC, which will take place from 28-30 November, for more information or to book your place please visit [www.mapic.com](http://www.mapic.com)





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www.cityscapeglobal.com

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www.exporeal.net

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11 - 12 OCTOBER 2023  
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www.wdss2023.org

**RETAIL CONGRESS MENA 2023**

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The Ritz-Carlton  
Dubai, UAE  
www.events.mecsr.org

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Center, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
www.fii-institute.org

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14 - 17 NOVEMBER 2023  
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