

# Best business minds to converge at the Middle East Retail Forum

Press Release

24 November, 2012

*Visionaries to brainstorm on how to maintain double digit CAGR and make me retail a trillion dollar business by 2014*

Dubai: November 24, 2012: Come 5th & 6th December, Ritz Carlton DIFC, Dubai will host the 1st mega congregation of stakeholders in the retail business - the Middle East Retail Forum (MRF) organised by IMAGES RetailME, the business magazine of the Middle East Retail industry and supported by some of the leading names in the retail fraternity.

Sharing MRF vision and strategy to be unfolded at the Forum, Amitabh Taneja, Chairman of the IMAGES Group said, "While retailing in the Middle East has been the catalyst of growth for home grown retailers as also for some 140 global retailers and 1000+ brands, past few years have been rather tough for most and only a handful could reap profits. It was high time that we provided a knowledge platform for retail leaders, entrepreneurs and emerging retailers to come together and share learning and discuss collaborative opportunities for profitable growth."

"The region's thrust on tourism and a young population offers the retail sector ample opportunities as well as challenges to meet the demands of new generation of consumers. MRF will be the platform for industry leaders to address critical issues that will impact the future of retail in the region. It's all about developing great ideas, people, products, services and spaces that are critical for catalysing profitable growth of the Middle East Retail market," he added.

To create next consumption thrust in the Middle East, speakers at the MRF conference will engage retail industry leaders in sharing of views and attempt charting a way forward for every vertical including Fashion & Lifestyle; Home & Office Improvement; Consumer Electronic & Durables; Leisure & Entertainment; Health & Beauty; Food Service & Restaurants; and Food & Grocery.

Shopping Centres and Retail Technology - that will hugely impact retail 2020 trends - will be the focus of deliberations on Reinventing Retail for the Generation Next. MRF also aims to highlight the combination of emerging channels influencing consumers' shopping experience and its impact on their purchasing behaviour through knowledge workshops by eminent retail leaders and key consulting firms.

Key speakers include, Burhan Al Hasemi of ENOC, Nilesh Ved of Apparel Group, Raza Beig of Splash & Iconic, Kishore Biyani of Future Group, Thomas Lundgren of THE One, David Macadam of JLL, Fahmi Al Shawa of Circle K, Sana Toukan of Euromonitor, Vishal Pandey of Glasgow Consulting Group, Mohamed Galal of Tasweeq Malls, Avjit Yadav of GLA, Walid Al Haj of Cravia, Fadi Malas of Just Falafel, Omar Kassim of Jado Pado, Fadi Younes of Frozen Yoghurt, Silvio Liedke of Fun City, Lennard Otto of Wadi Adventure, Narain Jashanmal of Jashanmal Bookstore and Paul Marks of Build-A-Bear Workshop among others.

Welcoming the initiative, Yusuffali M.A., Group Managing Director of UAE based Emke Group which operates more than 100 hypermarkets, supermarkets and shopping malls, said, "Retail is instrumental to the economic growth in the Middle Eastern region and having a knowledge platform like the MRF only motivates the industry to do better". Yusuffali, who has been operating for almost four decades in the GCC region and controls nearly 34 percent of the organised retail sector, further said, "Being present at this important forum will not only enhance our retailing knowledge and network, but also help us forge strong links and partnerships, some of which may go beyond our businesses as we work together on being socially responsible for meeting legal, ethical and economic responsibilities". Line Investment, a subsidiary of Emke Group, is supporting the Middle East Retail Forum and Images RetailME Awards 2012 from the forefront.

#### Advertisement

Nilesh Ved, Chairman of the Apparel Group, who has been strongly advocating the need to create more shopping days to drive the next consumption wave in the Middle East, will chair the session on new opportunities for expansion and growth. "Compared to West, the Middle East has fewer shopping days, with the exception of perhaps Dubai," he said.

Mohammad I. B. Alawi, CEO, Red Sea Markets Co., owner of Red Sea Mall, Jeddah, strongly advocated the need for nurturing demands with value added products and services. He said, "There has already been considerable investments in modern retailing due to new generation consumer demands. The chore here is to nurture these demands with value added products and services. Furthermore catering to these demands will help boost local morale, create more jobs, encourage entrepreneurship and finally raise the bar on local income levels thus enhance local economy. At Middle East Retail Forum let us explore and discover the possibility of creating futuristic foresight which will meet demand of our consumers".

Based on the real estate resilience, David Macadam, Regional Director MENA Jones Lang LaSalle MENA commented, "The MENA markets and the UAE specifically continue to offer retailers and the developers great opportunities for new business growth. The turmoil in the neighbouring countries in the MENA region has provided the UAE with more retail brands arriving from around the world. At the MRF 2012, Jones Lang LaSalle and other participants anticipate a learning experience from shared recent case studies, discussion of real estate trends and key issues affecting the retail sector."

Some 700 delegates are expected to profit from the forum discussions and network with the retail industry's who's who over two days. The evening of 5th December will host the annual IMAGES RetailME Awards 2012 felicitating outstanding achievers in retail and the gala dinner filled with celebrations and glittering entertainment.

RetailME Awards 2012 has received overwhelming number of nominations coming in for 19 titles that will honour excellence in retail - from fashion, food, consumer electronics, health and beauty, leisure and entertainment to best marketing, best social media campaigns, store design and personality of the year.

"A congregation of the most innovative and successful retail brands, companies and minds from the ME region and the entire retail support universe, including retail real estate, design & architecture, merchandise & services, visual merchandising, security and technology, MRF is the 'Mecca' for retail captains and policy makers, and is a 'must attend' for all businesses wanting to connect with the ME market and her consumers", Amitabh Taneja summed up.