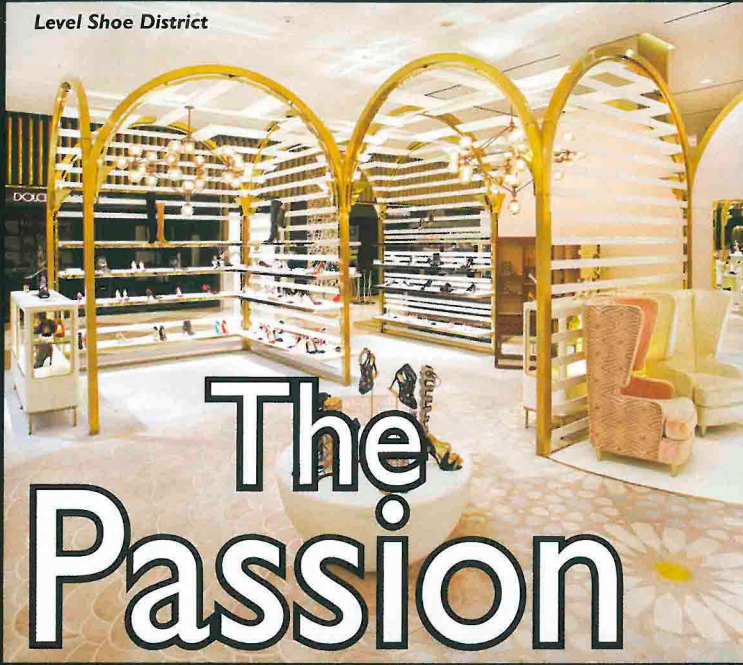


Level Shoe District



The Passion Behind Luxury



Katakeet



Tanagra



Tryano, Yas Island



WojooH



COVER STORY



A FAMILY BUSINESS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING ITS CUSTOMERS NOT ONLY THE MOST EXCITING NEW BRANDS BUT AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE, THE CHALHOUB GROUP CONTINUES TO GROW AND DEVELOP. HERE, RLI TALKS TO CO-CEO PATRICK CHALHOUB TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR AND BEYOND.



Tryano, Yas Island

Since 1955, the Chalhou Group has been the leading partner for luxury across the Middle East. As an expert in retail, distribution and marketing services, the Group has become a major player in the beauty, fashion and gift sectors regionally. By blending regional expertise and an intimate knowledge of luxury, the Chalhou Group is building brands in the region, by offering service excellence to all its partners and a unique experience to its customers through its passionate teams.

Based in Dubai, and with a growing workforce of more than 12,000 people, implemented in 14 countries, and a network of over 650 retail stores, the Group's success is attributed to its most valued asset: highly skilled and dedicated teams. Professionalism and passion are what fuel Chalhou's competitive edge in today's market.

The Group operates through its companies, affiliates and joint ventures offering customers unparalleled services in elegant surroundings. The management of over 150,000sq m of retail space and long-term partnerships with developers provide a unique perspective on mall developments and the ability to negotiate the best locations for its partner brands.

"For me, it's never about the quantity of brands but the quality of what we deliver," explains co-CEO Patrick Chalhou. "It is true that we have many partnerships in this part of the world and we try to develop them as regional rather than local partnerships."

The Group has created four multi-brand concepts, unique in their own way, designed to fill a gap in the market with choice, width and depth.

Tanagra is the preferred destination for style-savvy globalists to find the quintessence of elegance, curated by experts with a finger on the luxury pulse, whilst Wojoo, formally known as 'Faces', is a beauty haven filled to

the brim with a tantalising array of fragrance, make-up and skincare products. Katakeet is a unique luxury children's wear concept store, conceived around storytelling with the contribution of British children's book illustrator Polly Dunbar, and Level Shoe District, 'the world's finest shoe metropolis', targets the luxury consumer through an unparalleled collection of exclusive footwear and bespoke services. This iconic district, spanning 96,000sq ft, is recognised as a global fashion destination, with a curated space divided into 40 designer boutiques and four multi-brand areas: women's designer and contemporary, men's and trend.

The Group is currently working on a new 200,000sq ft Tryano concept store at Yas Mall with Aldar. Set to open in October, the store will be divided into four sections – beauty, handbags, accessories and children – with the widest variety of items on offer in the country.

"The aim has been to create a 'garden of imagination,'" explains Chalhou, "portraying the four sections as seasons of the year."

An official opening is expected in mid-November.

Brand building and local adaptation lies at the heart of the Group's franchise business, from customised marketing and buying to personalised real estate and positioning guidance. Chalhou manages an extensive portfolio of franchises with brands such as L'Occitane, Saks Fifth Avenue, Carolina Herrera, Céline, Lacoste, Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, Tory Burch, Christofle, Baccarat, Tumi to name a few.

"It is vital to connect with the customer," says Chalhou, "to their dreams and aspirations, and to deliver something that is relevant to this. With this in mind, when we negotiate with a brand we do so as a partner, in order to better implement and deploy that brand."

Shared vision and business development,

combining the brand's know-how with the Chalhou Group's expertise is also the driver behind its joint venture model. The Group established a strong foothold in the Middle East region with some of the best names in luxury such as Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Sephora, Fendi, Chaumet, Christian Louboutin and Berluti.

"It is very important to us, when working with brands, that we allow them the opportunity to express themselves and not overshadow what they stand for, acting as a bridge between the customer and how we can present the brand to best effect. It has to stand for something," he adds.

The past year or so have been fairly demanding, he concedes, though it has given the Group an ideal window in which to reinforce its commitment to ethical business and sustainability. It has also taken the opportunity to invest internally: "In the recent months we have also focused on the retail experience and managing and developing the retail experience, not only in terms of product but also at point-of-sale, distribution and so on," he adds.

The Chalhou Group has opened between 40-50 franchise stores in the past year and will continue this deployment throughout the coming 12-18 months: "We will continue our penetration in those markets in which we currently operate, especially with North Africa becoming increasingly more relevant.

"What makes the difference is our DNA," smiles Chalhou. "Our values are everything."

At the heart of this, he says, is the Groups ability to accommodate the dynamic transformation that it has seen in its customer base, a real shift towards a younger, more digitally-aware population.

"We are a family business after all, and this is why, even with 12,000 team members, we feel we remain very much a family. Our people make a difference," he concludes.