

“This is the beginning of what we think will be a very successful story,” avers Petit. “We are very proud and happy to have introduced Maisons Du Monde to the Middle East. It has been a long ride and a lot of work with our partner Majid Al Futtaim Fashion. We share a lot of common objectives; the foremost is being able to inspire customers through our first Maisons Du Monde store at City Centre Mirdif, offering a delightful shopping experience.”

Commenting on adding a new category – home – to Majid Al Futtaim Fashion’s portfolio, El Khatib says, “The plan was to diversify our portfolio. We were searching for an interesting concept developed by an exciting brand that offered interesting products. It had to add newness to the market, inspiring consumers. During this journey, we discovered this beautiful brand called Maisons Du Monde. We realised that this is the brand that would be able to satisfy a diverse set of consumers. With that in mind, we started a dialogue to introduce the brand in this part of the world. What’s more, we opened the first Maisons Du Monde store in Dubai serving as a gateway into the Middle East.”



Heralding the French heritage in Dubai

The word ‘maison’ in French means a dwelling that serves as living quarters, a term that perfectly blends in with the brand in question – Maisons Du Monde, a French home furniture and accessories brand. While discussions were progressing over the last couple of years with franchise partner Majid Al Futtaim Fashion, Maisons Du Monde finally entered the Middle East this year in June with its first store at City Centre Mirdif.

***Rupkatha Bhowmick** met both brand CEOs – Maisons Du Monde’s Gilles Petit and Majid Al Futtaim Fashion’s Shireen El Khatib – to talk about the French brand’s foray into the Middle East, which also marks Majid Al*



“The Middle East is a key market, which holds huge potential for us. What lends to this great potential is our unique positioning in this market wherein almost all our products are designed in-house. It has enabled us to bring a particular offer to this market. We have over 90-member team – including designers, stylists and trend hunters that monitor global trends to create exclusive products – working at a chateau in the west of France preparing all that you see in our stores from scratch. You can’t find our products

anywhere else – not on Amazon or anywhere – and that’s unique,” Petit stresses.

The growth story

Maisons Du Monde started two decades ago as a small decoration store spanning 1,075 sqft in the west of France. In the year 1996 four Maisons Du Monde stores opened in Bordeaux, Lyon, Quimper and Vichy.

“Maisons Du Monde started out with small products that came in exotic styles. The brand founder, Xavier Marie, soon understood that to be

successful the brand had to follow the current trends and, importantly, consumer behaviour. Progressively the brand started designing new styles – classic, industrial, vintage – adding to its existing portfolio. It has been key to the success and evolution of the brand that Maisons Du Monde is today,” Petit elaborates.

In 2003 Maisons Du Monde took its first step beyond the home turf entering Spain, opening in Madrid. The following year saw the brand enter Belgium with a store in Messancy. Currently, there

Did you know?

- In 2012 Maisons Du Monde joined the United Nations Global Compact.
- In 2014 Maisons Du Monde announced an ambitious CSR policy under the banner ‘Committed Together’.
- In 2016 Maisons Du Monde celebrated its 20th anniversary, conducting a successful IPO and launched its Foundation.

are over 300 Maisons Du Monde stores across Europe – including France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland to name a few.

It was quite early in the day, much before the word omnichannel was even familiar, that Maisons Du Monde started operating as an omnichannel retailer. On its 10th anniversary in 2006, Maisons Du Monde launched the first e-commerce site as well as the first furniture catalogue.

“More than a decade ago we started the online business. Needless to mention, it was quite an early start. At the end of December 2016, the online business accounts for over 19% of the brand’s revenues. We operate our online business on our own, except in case of franchises that operate on their own, wherever applicable. Geographically, we have 300 stores opening the last one in Paris a month ago, with the Middle East being the most recent region penetrated,” Petit states. “Even though we are a French brand, six of our ten biggest stores are located outside of France.”

Collections appeal to a broad consumer base

Maisons Du Monde offers two seasonal collections. Within each collection, there are six different themes. During the formal opening of the first Maisons Du Monde store at City Centre



Gilles Petit and Shireen El Khatib





Mirdif two winter collections – Green Addict and So Blush – were launched. These collections offer everything from mirrors and light fixtures to wall art and furniture in different styles curated keeping in mind consumer need and taste.

“Through our collections, we can meet the needs of every consumer. As a consequence, our model works very well wherever we are present across the globe. We were confident that the model would work in the Middle East too where we have had to specially curate a few elements keeping in mind compliance issues,” Petit reveals.

“In Europe, for example, we have a fully centralised merchandising system serving the entire region. We follow the same model in partnerships too. For the entire Middle East our partner is Majid Al Futtaim Fashion, except one store in Morocco that we opened last year with a different partner,” he explains.

“What’s also interesting is that Maisons Du Monde falls in the aspirational yet affordable market segment. We offer a wide range of products in a highly variegated price range. We are always looking to offer value for money proposition, managing to cut across all customer segments,” he continues.

Offering around 12,000 SKUs the share of decorative items is higher compared to furniture at City Centre



Mirdif, which is probably driven by the store size. “If we open a bigger store here, we would like to display more of our bigger pieces of furniture too. For now, gold and copper products are doing very well,” Petit adds.

Warming up to the local population

Spanning around 5,380 sqft and located on the first floor of City Centre Mirdif, the interiors of Maisons Du Monde follows the guidelines of the brand principals. From flooring and wall fixtures to high ceilings and visual merchandising have all been done in line with the set guidelines. Even the wall fixtures came from Maisons Du Monde to maintain style coherence across its store network.

While the store has a cosy layout with room sets occupying every corner

telling a story, there is enough space for visitors to walk around and browse through every category. We maintain a product-first approach in using the colours and lightings. Furniture, textiles and accessories are all laid out in a way that complements each other.

“Besides being one of our own properties, City Centre Mirdif is also one of our best shopping malls,” states El Khatib. “It caters to a largely local population – both nationals and residents. Attracting a local catchment we felt it would be a great idea to introduce a new brand like Maisons Du Monde, which is a homeware brand, in this mall first to meet the needs of the local population. After all, it is mostly the population residing in the UAE who will buy from a home brand rather than tourists who may

not want to carry heavy items. Our growth plans entail opening the brand in our other properties too.”

While El Khatib declined to comment on concrete future expansion, she adds, “Maisons Du Monde boasts a comprehensive offer in interior décor, making it a brand suitable for every market where consumers are looking to add beauty and newness to their homes. After all, it’s a brand with many followers. From the time we opened the first store in June this year the response has been excellent. The results have been very encouraging.”

“Customers who know the brand are excited to shop at Maisons Du Monde in Dubai, while those who are getting acquainted are keen to explore. Not only do we see repeat footfall but customers are buying multiple items per transaction,” she concludes. ■