

WORLDEF E-Commerce



COVER STORY

FROM ISTANBUL TO DUBAI, OPENING TO THE WORLD

WORLDEF Growth Network celebrates its first anniversary and begins its international expansion.

WORLD'S #1 E-COMMERCE SHOW!

WORLDEF

DUBAI • 2027



In partnership with **DUBAI** **COMMERCCITY** دبي كوميرس سيتي

MASTHEAD

CONCESSION OWNER & PUBLISHER

WORLDEF E-Commerce Foundation

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Burak Yalim

burak.yalim@worlddef.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Ugur Gurbes

ugur.gurbes@worlddef.com

ART DIRECTOR & VISUALS

Faruk Aysan

faruk.aysan@worlddef.com

SOCIAL & AUDIENCE

Özlem Dirican

ozlem.dirican@worlddef.com

COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS

Leila Gadirli Pirguliyeva

leyla.kadirli@worlddef.com

ADDRESS

WORLDEF GLOBAL MANAGEMENT FZCO,
Dubai CommerCity 11 17th St - Umm Ramool
Dubai - United Arab Emirates

Phone: +971 50 817 34 03
E-mail: info@worlddef.com

PRINTING PRESS

Birinci Printing Co. Ltd. / Istanbul
Phone: +90 212 612 00 16

PUBLICATION

Bi-Monthly Publication / Dubai / August-
September 2026

ISSUE

38

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2026

BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION
DUBAI

PERIODICAL PUBLICATION

The name and publication rights of WORLDEF E-COMMERCE MAGAZINE belong to WORLDEF E-COMMERCE FOUNDATION. All rights of the text and photographs belong to WORLDEF E-COMMERCE MAGAZINE. No text or photographs may be quoted without written permission. The responsibility of the published advertisements belongs to the advertisers. WORLDEF E-COMMERCE MAGAZINE undertakes to comply with the universal press professional principles!

Contents

Expert perspectives and bold ideas shaping the future of e-commerce worldwide.



01

EDITOR'S LETTER

Growth Begins with Connection

Burak Yalim, Editor-in-Chief

FEATURED STORIES



03 NEWS

UNIEF Expands Its Global Network: E-Commerce Platforms Unite Under One Roof

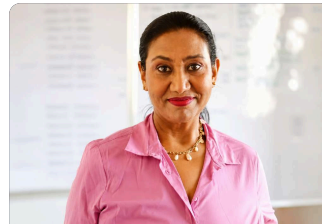
United E-Commerce Federation (UNIEF)



22 INTERVIEW

A New Era at Coca-Cola AI Ahlia: Digitalization, Sustainability and Growth

Victor Wong, CEO, Coca-Cola AI Ahlia Beverages LLC



36 ANALYSIS

Retail in MENASA: From Consumer Growth to Supply-Chain Resilience

Shormishtha Ghosh, Founder & MD, In Tandem Global Consulting



42 EVENT

Digital Trade Ecosystem Came Together at WORLDDEF ISTANBUL: 82 Countries, 22,000 Visitors

WORLDDEF ISTANBUL 2026

I RESEARCH & LISTS

09 MENA's Top 30 Retailers 2026

36 Retail in MENASA: From Consumer Growth to Supply-Chain Resilience
SHORMISHTHA GHOSH

II INTERVIEWS

22 A New Era at Coca-Cola AI Ahlia: Digitalization, Sustainability and Growth
VICTOR WONG

28 Kiperin Türkiye Expands Globally Through Science and Digitalization
MEHMET MUSTAFA KOÇ

30 A Story That Began with a Question Became a Global Logistics Platform: Navlungo
İSA KORKMAZ

34 In the Future of E-Commerce, the Customer Will Be an AI Agent
ORKHAN AHMADOV

39 Türkiye's Most Comprehensive B2B E-Commerce Platform TöptanTR Launches a TL 500 Million Investment Initiative
SEZGIN ŞENER

III PERSPECTIVES

26 Trust is the Real Currency of Kenya's Digital Economy
KERISSA VARMA

32 The EU's Search to Balance China-origin E-commerce Pressure
ÖMER FARUK DOĞAN

IV ECOSYSTEM

03 UNIEF Expands Its Global Network: E-Commerce Platforms Unite Under One Roof

07 WORLDDEF Growth Network Is Growing: NOVA Chapter Launched

20 Successful E-Commerce Brands Honored: ECOM BRANDS 100

42 Digital Trade Ecosystem Came Together at WORLDDEF ISTANBUL: 82 Countries, 22,000 Visitors

49 WORLDDEF Prime Antalya to Host Strategic Collaborations

Growth Begins with Connection



Burak Yalim
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A business can enter a new market with a product, a platform and a carefully prepared strategy. Becoming part of that market takes something more: people who understand its realities, partners who keep their commitments, and relationships strong enough to carry a business through uncertainty. Behind lasting international success are connections built patiently, tested in practice and strengthened through trust.

This issue of WORLDEF E-Commerce Magazine examines those connections and the capabilities that make them commercially meaningful. Across our interviews, analyses and ecosystem stories, a shared question emerges: how can digital commerce turn expanding opportunities into lasting growth?

Our cover story features WORLDEF Growth Network, WGN, as it celebrates its first anniversary and welcomes the NOVA Chapter in Istanbul. WGN is now taking its next step internationally, with work underway to establish its first chapter in Dubai. This expansion brings its approach to trusted business relationships, knowledge exchange and mutual growth into a new market. From Istanbul to Dubai, WGN's ambition is to build a community whose members can develop partnerships and pursue opportunities across borders.

At an institutional level, the United E-Commerce Federation, UNIEF, is also expanding its international network. Registered in Geneva and headquartered in Dubai, the federation brings together organisations representing e-commerce and digital economy ecosystems across different countries. Its agenda reflects challenges shared by many markets: cross-border payments, logistics, skills development, consumer confidence and the responsible use of technology.

As UNIEF Secretary General, I believe the federation's value will depend on how effectively we translate this shared agenda into practical cooperation. Experience gained in one market can help another strengthen its capabilities, support its entrepreneurs or improve dialogue between industry and

public institutions. Dubai CommerCity's participation as a founding member, alongside organisations from Asia, Europe, the Caucasus and North Africa, provides a valuable foundation for that work. Our responsibility is to help these relationships produce opportunities that businesses, particularly SMEs, can access.

The regional landscape in which such cooperation develops is explored in our MENA's Top 30 Retailers feature. Across different categories and business models, the organisations presented reveal the depth of the region's retail sector. For brands considering expansion, understanding this landscape means examining the distribution networks, local knowledge and customer relationships that connect products with demand. Market entry requires a clear understanding of how people shop and how businesses serve them.

Shormishtha Ghosh extends this perspective across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. Her analysis places supply-chain resilience at the centre of the retail conversation. Growing consumer demand creates opportunity, while sourcing, inventory management and reliable delivery determine a company's ability to capture it. Regional connectivity becomes commercially valuable when businesses can continue operating through disruption and adapt without losing the confidence of their customers.

Victor Wong's interview brings these questions into the operations of Coca-Cola Al Ahlia. His account connects digitalisation, local sourcing, sustainability and investment in people within a coherent growth strategy. The emphasis on

execution is particularly relevant: better information and more capable tools deliver results when teams can apply them consistently. Global standards gain their practical meaning through decisions made in factories, distribution networks and individual markets.

Our conversation with Navlungo's İsa Korkmaz approaches the same challenge through international logistics. For companies selling across borders, uncertainty over transportation quickly affects costs, customer experience and commercial planning. Flexible routes, operational visibility and clear communication help businesses respond to changing conditions. These capabilities deserve close attention whenever we assess the infrastructure supporting international growth.

Trust gives this discussion a further dimension. In her contribution on Kenya's digital economy, Kerissa Varma examines how fraud and concerns about personal information influence participation in digital services. Her analysis reminds us that customer confidence requires continuous investment. Every transaction, security decision and response to a problem contributes to a person's willingness to return.

Lasting growth depends on connections people can trust and systems businesses can rely on.

Orkhan Ahmadov's discussion of AI agents takes the question of confidence into a changing commercial environment. His vision of software increasingly purchasing on behalf of consumers challenges established approaches to discovery and conversion. Accurate product information, current inventory and reliable delivery commitments become essential when a machine is evaluating an offer. Preparing for that possibility requires businesses to examine the quality of their underlying data and processes today.

Our interviews with Kiperin Türkiye and ToptanTR show how these broader themes take shape in different business set-

tings. Mehmet Mustafa Koç describes an international growth strategy grounded in scientific work, quality, localisation and customer experience. Sezgin Şener outlines ToptanTR's planned investment in digital procurement and the capabilities supporting business customers. Both contributions highlight the organisational work required to serve a growing market reliably.

Ambassador Ömer Faruk Doğan adds the policy perspective through his examination of Europe's response to China-origin e-commerce. Questions of consumer protection, competitive conditions and the position of producers are integral to the future of digital trade. The quality of international cooperation will also depend on our ability to discuss these concerns openly and understand their consequences across markets.

WORLDDEF ISTANBUL 2026 brought this wider community together, welcoming 22,000 visitors from 82 countries. Our coverage, alongside the ECOM BRANDS 100 feature, reflects the businesses and ideas contributing to the sector's development. The task ahead is to sustain those relationships and help promising conversations become practical collaborations.

That work continues at WORLDDEF Prime Antalya on 8–10 December 2026, with its emphasis on matching business needs with relevant capabilities and decision-makers. It is an opportunity to take the questions raised in these pages into focused commercial discussions.

I would like to thank our authors, interviewees and institutional partners for sharing their experience and perspectives. My sincere thanks also go to the editorial, design, communications and partnerships teams, and to every colleague whose work helped bring this issue together. Their commitment gives this publication its quality and purpose.

To our readers, thank you for your continued interest and trust. I look forward to continuing the conversation in Antalya and to seeing the connections formed across our community develop into lasting partnerships.



Burak Yalın

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



DUBAI دبی کومیرسیتی
COMMERCTITY

香港電商聯會
HKEC
HONG KONG FEDERATION OF E-COMMERCE

MCBEA
Malaysia Cross Border E-Commerce Association

**CHAMBER
OF DIGITAL ECONOMY**

Assocomm
Albanian e-commerce association

**ECOMMERCE
COMMUNITY
AZERBAIJAN**
ecom.org.az

**ECOMMERCE ASSOCIATION
GEORGIA**

eCommerce Association in
Bosnia & Herzegovina

AMECMD | ASSOCIATION MAROCAINE
DU E-COMMERCE ET
MARKETING DIGITAL

News

UNIEF Expands Its Global Network: E-Commerce Platforms Unite Under One Roof

As digital commerce increasingly transcends borders, the need for stronger international cooperation is becoming more evident than ever. While e-commerce markets around the world are growing at different speeds and facing their own unique challenges, many of the opportunities they possess and the obstacles they encounter are remarkably similar. Issues such as cross-border payments, logistics efficiency, regulatory alignment, talent development, and consumer trust continue to shape the future of digital commerce. It is precisely within this context that the United E-Commerce Federation (UNIEF) was established!

UNIEF continues to expand its international network by bringing together organizations representing e-commerce and digital commerce ecosystems from different countries. Headquartered in Geneva, UNIEF aims to bring together national e-commerce associations, ecosystem enablers, industry leaders, and public institutions around a shared vision of advancing global digital commerce through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and strategic partnerships. Rather than operating as a regulatory body, the federation seeks to establish meaningful connections between markets and create an environment where ecosystems can learn from one another and collectively address the challenges brought about by digital transformation.

E-Commerce Organizations from Different Countries Unite Under the UNIEF Umbrella

By bringing together organizations representing e-commerce and digital economy ecosystems across different geographies under the same structure, UNIEF aims to create a more connected and collaborative global digital ecosystem by connecting these stakeholders with one another. The associations and organizations that have joined UNIEF's growing international network are as follows: Dubai CommerCity from the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong Federation of E-commerce, Malaysia Cross-Border E-commerce Association (MCBEA), Chamber of Digital Economy from Poland, Albanian E-commerce Association (ASSECOMM), Azerbaijan Ecommerce Economy Organization, Ecommerce Association Georgia (eCAG), Moroccan Association of E-commerce and Digital Marketing (AMECMD), and Ecommerce Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

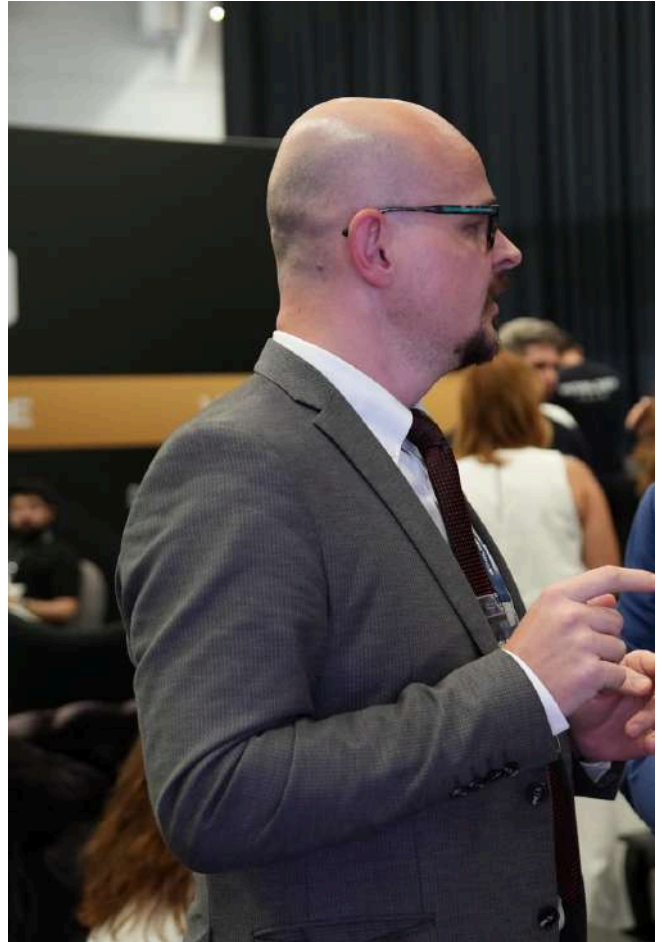
UNIEF Aims for Cooperation in Global Digital Commerce

Registered in Geneva, Switzerland, and headquartered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, UNIEF operates as an international non-profit organization. The federation's purpose is not to act as a regulatory authority, but to connect organizations shaping digital commerce, strengthen coordination, and enhance cooperation between countries. UNIEF aims to support policy dialogue between governments and industry representatives, promote the dissemination of international principles and best practices, and develop the capacities of SMEs, entrepreneurs, and e-commerce organizations. Supporting the ethical and responsible use of technology and artificial intelligence, as well as increasing cross-border digital commerce cooperation, are also among the federation's priorities.

Burak Yalim: We Want to Strengthen the Connections Within the Global E-Commerce Ecosystem

UNIEF Secretary General Burak Yalim made the following assessment regarding the federation's expanding international network: "Digital commerce is now a global ecosystem operating beyond borders. As UNIEF, we aim to strengthen cooperation between countries and regions by bringing together strong organizations representing e-commerce ecosystems in different countries under one roof. Every new organization joining our network brings with it the experience, knowledge, and potential of a different market. In the coming period, while expanding our network to more countries, we will con-

tinue to develop concrete projects that support SMEs' access to cross-border trade, increase the sharing of knowledge and experience, and encourage the responsible use of artificial intelligence and new technologies."



Burak Yalim, UNIEF Secretary General

A Vision for a More Inclusive, Transparent, and Human-Centered Digital Economy

At the core of UNIEF's vision lies the development of digital commerce in an inclusive, transparent, responsible, connected, sustainable, and human-centered manner. The federation aims to create a global digital economy in which SMEs can enter international markets more safely, consumers feel secure and informed, companies innovate responsibly, and e-commerce organizations can develop collaboration alongside competition. UNIEF carries out its activities in three main areas: policy and advocacy, standards and best practices, and capacity building and education. Topics such as digital commerce, SME growth, consumer protection, artificial intelligence, payment systems, and logistics are also included in the federation's international dialogue agenda.

Different Markets, Shared Challenges

Considering the common challenges experienced across different markets within the global e-commerce ecosystem, the importance of international cooperation becomes evident.

The perspectives of UNIEF's founding members include a wide range of views. So, what do the representatives of UNIEF member organizations from different countries say about this issue?

Lado Kandelaki

President of the Georgia E-Commerce Association

"International collaboration and knowledge exchange through organizations such as UNIEF are becoming increasingly important for supporting innovation, strengthening partnerships, and helping emerging markets integrate more effectively into the global digital economy ecosystem."

Daniele Rutigliano

President of the Albanian E-Commerce Association

"Albania has undergone a significant digital transformation over the past decade, with widespread internet adoption and rapidly growing use of digital platforms. However, rapid digital adoption does not automatically translate into digital maturity. This transformation presents not only challenges, but also significant opportunities for businesses willing to invest early in building digital capabilities and long-term authority."

Orkhan Ahmadov

President of the Azerbaijan Ecommerce Economy Organization

"In an emerging market, the ecosystem does not yet exist; you are either building it alongside your company or you are encountering barriers that have not yet been resolved."

The views shared by UNIEF's founding members demonstrate why international cooperation is becoming increasingly important for the future of digital commerce. Although each market is at a different stage of development, there is a

shared understanding that ecosystem building, knowledge exchange, and cross-border collaboration are critical to unlocking sustainable growth.



An International Structure Established in Geneva

UNIEF operates as an international non-profit organization with legal personality, established pursuant to Articles 60–79 of the Swiss Civil Code governing associations. Headquartered in Cologny, Geneva, the federation operates as an independent, non-political, and non-commercial organization and adopts the principles of transparency, neutrality, and responsible governance. UNIEF's Founding General

Assembly was held on July 16, 2025. The federation positions itself not as an organization that replaces national legislation or exercises regulatory authority, but as a platform that facilitates international cooperation, promotes the development of voluntary standards, and supports the advancement of responsible digital commerce worldwide.



(From left to right) UNIEF President Omar Nart, UNIEF Secretary General Burak Yalim, Dubai CommerCity Vice President of Digital Ecosystem and Partnerships Arjun Sarkar, Dubai CommerCity Director General Amna Lootah

Dubai CommerCity Becomes a Founding Member of UNIEF

Dubai CommerCity (DCC), the first and leading free zone in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region established specifically for the digital commerce and e-commerce sector, officially joined UNIEF as a “Founding Member” through a signing ceremony attended by executives from both organizations. The ceremony, held as part of WORLDDEF Istanbul 2026, was attended by UNIEF President Omar Nart, UNIEF Secretary General Burak Yalim, Dubai CommerCity

Director General Amna Lootah, and Dubai CommerCity Vice President of Digital Ecosystem and Partnerships Arjun Sarkar.

At the signing ceremony, a shared commitment was adopted to strengthen cooperation between regional e-commerce ecosystems and create new pathways for knowledge exchange, innovation, and cross-border partnerships. At the same time, the ceremony demonstrated the federation’s growing momentum and its ability to bring together organizations from different regions around a shared vision for the future of digital commerce.



News

WORLDEF Growth Network Is Growing: NOVA Chapter Launched

WGN NOVA Chapter Launch · Renaissance Polat Istanbul Hotel

WORLDEF Growth Network (WGN), the new-generation business networking initiative established under the global e-commerce and media platform WORLDEF, introduced its new group.

The WGN NOVA Chapter launch was held at Renaissance Polat Istanbul Hotel with strong participation. The launch brought together professionals from different sectors of the business world. At the event, participants had the opportunity to establish new business connections and evaluate potential collaborations. During the program, which was held with strong participation, NOVA Chapter President Aytaş Akıncı introduced the chapter's board members and distributed membership certificates to the group members.

Omar Nart: Our Goal Is to Open All Doors for Our Members

WORLDEF CEO Omar Nart stated in his speech at the launch that WGN aims to grow in international markets in the coming period. Nart, who gave a presentation on WGN's structure, said, "As WGN, our goal is to open all doors for our members, wherever they are in the world."

"As WGN, our goal is to open all doors for our members, wherever they are in the world."



Anniversary

WGN Is 1 Year Old!

The WGN NOVA Chapter launch also hosted WGN's first anniversary celebration. WORLDEF CEO Omar Nart, WORLDEF CMO Nihat İpekçi, WORLDEF CCO Melih Tekin, and WGN Türkiye Director İkbâl Çobanoğlu cut the anniversary cake.

What Is WORLDEF Growth Network?

WORLDEF Growth Network aims to create an ecosystem where its members establish sustainable connections that actively shape the digital economy. WGN, a structure that brings together professionals from the worlds of e-commerce and retail technologies under one roof, stands out with its disciplined organizational model, innovative approach, and human-centered vision. WGN aims not only to increase the business volume of its members, but also to

enable them to grow as part of a community in which they add value to one another. At WGN, relationships are developed not only through referrals, but also through an understanding of mutual trust and mutual benefit. Success within the community is built as a collective force on an ecosystem basis. Setting out with the vision of building a trust-based digital commerce network in the MENA region where everyone wins, WGN aims to connect this network with global networks, starting from the MENA region.



MENA's Top 30 *Retailers* 2026

A to Z | WORLDEF E-Commerce Magazine | July-August 2026



The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region stands out as one of the fastest-transforming retail markets in the world. Its young and digitally engaged population, rising consumer spending, urbanization, tourism investments, and the rapid expansion of e-commerce are not only driving growth across the retail ecosystem but also reshaping its structure. Prepared by WORLDEF E-Commerce, the “MENA’s Top 30 Retailers 2026” list brings together the retail companies at the heart of this transformation and those playing a leading role in shaping the region’s commercial future.

The list goes beyond ranking MENA retailers solely by company size. It also provides valuable insight into where

competition is intensifying across the region and how leading retailers are responding to changing consumer expectations. Investments across a wide range of areas—from traditional retail and e-commerce to omnichannel strategies, mobile applications, loyalty programs, and rapid delivery solutions—are among the common characteristics of the companies featured on the list.

The Gulf countries, in particular, play a defining role in the transformation of retail across the MENA region. Major economies such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are becoming increasingly important commercial hubs, attracting greater investment from global brands while also enabling

local retailers to pursue international expansion strategies. At the same time, Egypt, Morocco, and other North African markets are strengthening their position on the regional retail map through their large consumer bases and significant digitalization potential.

One of the most important trends highlighted by the list is the gradual disappearance of the boundaries between physical and digital retail. Today, having a strong store network alone is no longer sufficient. Consumers expect a seamless experience across the entire customer journey, from product discovery and purchasing to payment, delivery, and after-sales services. As a result,

leading MENA retailers are making significant investments in technology, data analytics, artificial intelligence, personalization, logistics, and payment infrastructure.

"MENA's Top 30 Retailers 2026" also serves as a strategic reference for brands, technology companies, logistics providers, fintech ventures, and e-commerce service providers seeking to expand into the region. The companies featured on the list represent not only retailers with significant sales volumes but also major players influencing the wider commerce ecosystem through their extensive customer net-

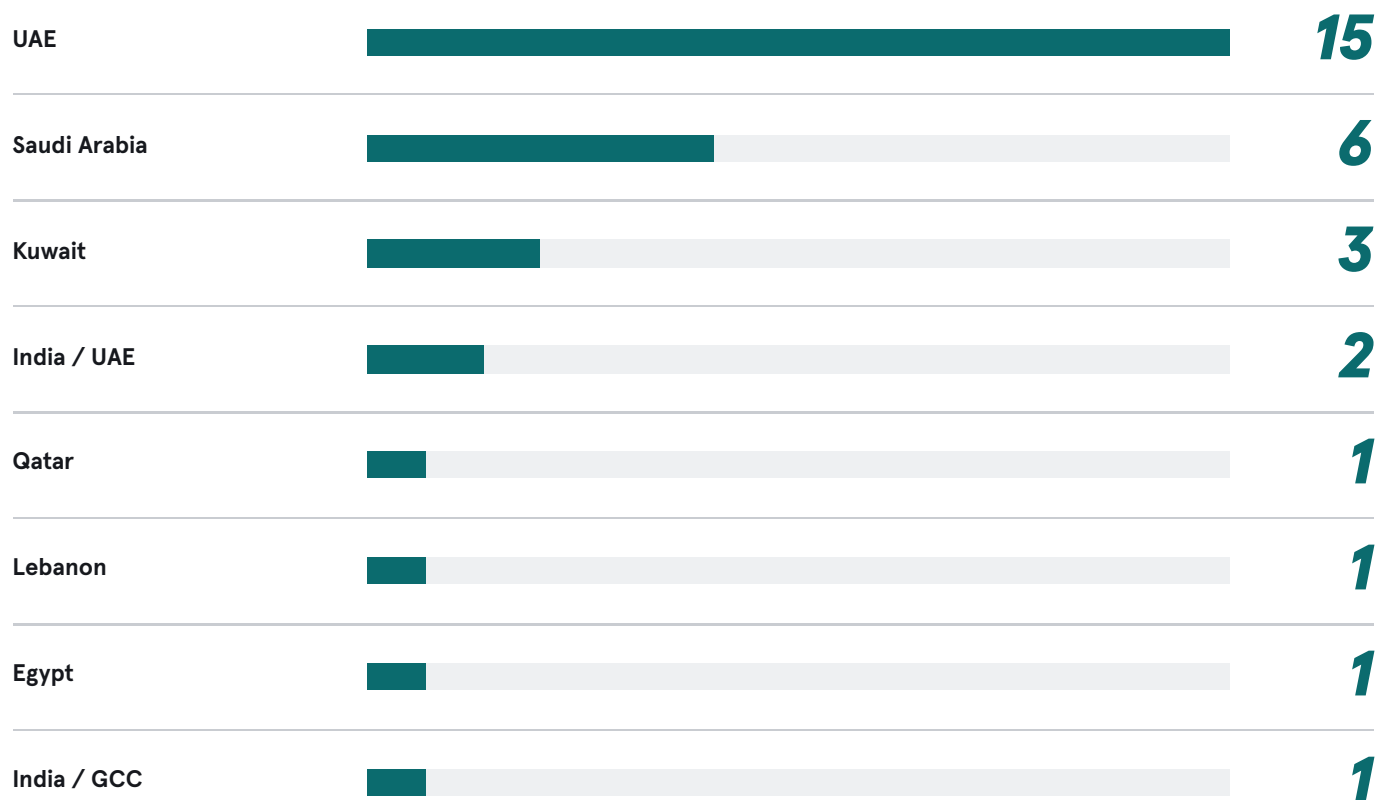
works, strong distribution infrastructures, and investments in digital transformation.

In the coming period, competition within MENA retail is expected to intensify further around technology, customer experience, delivery speed, data utilization, and cross-border commerce. From this perspective, "MENA's Top 30 Retailers 2026" not only identifies today's leading retailers but also offers a strong perspective on which companies and transformation dynamics are likely to shape the future of retail across the region.

Editorial Note

"This list covers 30 retailers shaping commerce across MENA. From Kuwait's century-old franchise giants to Egypt's fastest-growing electronics chain. Entries are alphabetical, not ranked. Each entry lists the company's primary retail brands and banners alongside leadership, geographic footprint, and a short editorial assessment. The list was compiled for the July-August 2026 issue of WORLDEF E-Commerce Magazine."

Country





#01

Country: Saudi Arabia

AFG International (Cenomi Retail)

Active Markets: 8 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Hussein Shobokshi (Chairman) / Sameer Jain (CEO, from July 2026); Al-Futtaim Group (49.95% strategic shareholder since 2025)

Key Brands: Zara, Massimo Dutti, Pull and Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho, Zara Home, Lefties (full Inditex portfolio), Mango, Aldo, Cinnabon, Subway; 47 brands total

Saudi Arabia's largest and only publicly listed franchise retailer, AFG International traces its roots to 1990 when it was founded by the Alhokair brothers as Fawaz Abdulaziz Al Hokair. Operating 800+ stores across 165 shopping malls in 8 countries, the group holds the full Inditex portfolio for Saudi Arabia including Zara, the region's most coveted fast-fashion franchise. Al-Futtaim Group's 49.95 percent strategic stake, acquired in 2025, and the appointment of Sameer Jain as CEO in July 2026 signal a business in active transformation, combining its unmatched Saudi franchise footprint with Al-Futtaim's operational and digital retail expertise.



#02

Country: UAE

Al-Futtaim Group

Active Markets: 20+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Omar Abdullah Al Futtaim (CEO)

Key Brands: IKEA, Marks and Spencer, Toys R Us, ACE Hardware, Ted Baker, Watsons, Borders, Herfy Food Services, Harvey Nichols (partial), LEGO

Al-Futtaim's retail division is one of the most diversified franchise portfolios in MENA, spanning home furnishing (IKEA), premium grocery and clothing (Marks and Spencer), children's entertainment retail (Toys R Us), and home improvement (ACE Hardware). Its exclusive franchise rights for IKEA across UAE, Qatar, Egypt, and Oman make it the single most important furniture retail operator in the Arab world.



#03

Country: Kuwait

Alghanim Industries

Active Markets: 40+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Kutayba Alghanim (Executive Chairman)

Key Brands: X-cite (electronics), Costa Coffee (Saudi), Wendy's (MENA), Kout Food Group, BYD (EV distribution), Barq (EV charging)

Alghanim Industries' retail arm is anchored by X-cite, Kuwait's leading consumer electronics retailer, and Kout Food Group which operates fast food franchises across the Gulf. The group has made aggressive bets on clean mobility through BYD distribution and its Barq EV charging network, signalling a family that is actively reshaping its commercial footprint for the next decade.



#04

Country: UAE

Al Maya Group

Active Markets: 5 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Kamal Vachani (Group Director)

Key Brands: Al Maya Supermarkets, Al Maya Liquor, Al Maya Laundry, Al Adil Trading

Al Maya has served the UAE's diverse expatriate and local consumer base since 1982, building a network of supermarkets and FMCG distribution operations across Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah. Its understanding of multi-ethnic consumer preferences in the UAE gives it a product range and sourcing breadth that larger chains struggle to replicate at neighborhood level.



#05

Country: Qatar

Al Meera Consumer Goods

Active Markets: 2 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: H.E. Abdulla Abdulaziz A. Al-Subaie (Chairman and MD)

Key Brands: Al Meera Supermarkets, Mango (franchise), Esprit (franchise)

Al Meera is Qatar's most trusted supermarket brand, operating the country's largest network of community-focused retail stores. Listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange, it has expanded into fashion retail through franchise agreements with Mango and Esprit, and remains central to Qatar's food security strategy. Its omnichannel push in recent years has accelerated following post-2022 World Cup investment in digital infrastructure.



#06

Country: Saudi Arabia

Al Othaim Markets

Active Markets: 2 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Fahad Abdullah Al-Othaim (Chairman and CEO)

Key Brands: Al Othaim Supermarkets, Al Othaim Malls, Al Othaim Entertainment, Party Land

Al Othaim Markets has grown from a single store in Riyadh into one of Saudi Arabia's largest domestically-owned retail groups, with a combined network of hypermarkets, supermarkets, and entertainment centres. Its mall development arm and Party Land entertainment brand make it unique among Saudi food retailers in having built a diversified consumer experience ecosystem rather than a pure grocery play.



#07

Country: Kuwait

Alshaya Group

Active Markets: 17 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Mohammed Abdulaziz Alshaya (Executive Chairman) / John Hadden (CEO)

Key Brands: Starbucks, H&M, Mothercare, Victoria's Secret, Boots, American Eagle, Pottery Barn, The Cheesecake Factory, Shake Shack, Primark, Ulta Beauty, Bath and Body Works, KidZania, Chipotle

Founded in Kuwait in 1890, Alshaya is the Arab world's most prolific franchise operator. With 75 brands and 4,000 stores, it is the company that brought Starbucks, H&M, Primark, and Shake Shack to the MENA consumer. Its Aura loyalty programme connects over 35 million members across the GCC, and its 2025 partnership with Primark and Ulta Beauty signals that the group's appetite for new brand introductions remains undiminished.



#08

Country: UAE

Al Tayer Group (Luxury Retail)

Active Markets: 6 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Obaid Humaid Al Tayer (Managing Director)

Key Brands: Harvey Nichols, Bloomingdale's, Armani, Gap, Banana Republic, Guess, Holt Renfrew, Katayama, Faces (beauty retail)

Al Tayer Group's retail division is the UAE's most prestigious luxury franchise operator. Its exclusive rights to Bloomingdale's and Harvey Nichols in the region anchor the premium end of MENA fashion retail, while Gap and Banana Republic serve the accessible fashion segment. The group's Faces beauty retail chain has built a loyal regional following that bridges luxury cosmetics and mainstream beauty consumers.



#09

Country: UAE

Apparel Group

Active Markets: 14+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Nilesh Ved (Founder and Chairman) / Sima Ved (Chairperson)

Key Brands: Tommy Hilfiger, Skechers, ALDO, Charles and Keith, Tim Hortons, Crocs, Calvin Klein, Nine West, Steve Madden, Dune London, Levi's, Birkenstock, Hackett London, Cold Stone Creamery, Inglot, Rituals, Aeropostale, LC Waikiki

Apparel Group has built one of the most diverse multi-brand retail portfolios in the world from a Dubai base, operating 85+ international brands across fashion, footwear, food and beauty in 14 countries. Its 2025 expansion into Hungary and the Philippines marks its transition from a MENA-GCC operator into a genuinely global franchise platform. Co-founded by husband and wife Nilesh and Sima Ved, it is one of the region's most compelling family-built retail success stories.



#10

Country: Lebanon

Azadea Group

Active Markets: 13 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Said Daher (Group CEO)

Key Brands: Zara, Pull and Bear, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho, Zara Home, Banana Republic, Gap, Pottery Barn, West Elm, Williams-Sonoma, Aesop

Azadea Group holds some of the most coveted franchise rights in MENA retail, including exclusive Inditex partnerships for Zara across multiple countries and Williams-Sonoma group brands including Pottery Barn and West Elm. Founded in Beirut, the group has maintained operational continuity through Lebanon's economic crisis by anchoring its operations in the Gulf and Egypt, where its Zara stores consistently rank among the highest-performing in the Inditex global network.



#11

Country: Egypt

B.TECH

Active Markets: 1 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Mahmoud Khattab (CEO)

Key Brands: B.TECH (own brand electronics and home appliance retail), B.TECH Online, B.Tech B-Pay (BNPL)

B.TECH is Egypt's dominant electronics and home appliance retailer, operating over 200 stores and a fast-growing e-commerce platform across the country. Founded in 2002, it has built one of Egypt's most trusted consumer retail brands in a market where electronics purchasing decisions carry significant trust requirements. Its B-Pay buy-now-pay-later product reflects an evolution from pure retail into embedded financial services, positioning B.TECH as one of the most forward-thinking MENA-native retail operators on this list.



#12

Country: Saudi Arabia

BinDawood Holding

Active Markets: 2 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Ahmad Abdulrazzaq BinDawood (CEO)

Key Brands: BinDawood Hypermarkets, Danube Supermarkets, BinDawood Online (Nana partnership)

BinDawood Holding operates Saudi Arabia's two most beloved grocery banners: BinDawood Hypermarkets for large-format shopping and Danube Supermarkets for premium, locally-rooted community shopping. Listed on Tadawul, it has invested significantly in digital commerce through a partnership with Nana, Saudi Arabia's leading e-grocery platform. Plans to open 15 new stores in 2025 reflect a domestic-first strategy that prioritises Saudi market depth over regional expansion.



#13

Country: Kuwait

Boutiqaat

Active Markets: 6 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Abdulwahab Al-Essa (CEO and Co-Founder)

Key Brands: Boutiqaat (beauty and lifestyle social commerce platform), BQ Beauty, BQ Fashion

Boutiqaat is the Arab world's most successful social commerce platform, connecting influencers and beauty brands directly to consumers across the GCC. Founded in Kuwait and built entirely around influencer-led discovery and purchase, it operates differently from every other retailer on this list: its storefront is social media, its sales team is its influencer network, and its product is as much community as it is commerce. Its model has anticipated the creator economy shift in MENA retail by nearly a decade.

OUNASS

#14

Country: UAE

Ounass

Active Markets: 6 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Khalid Al Tayer (CEO); Al Tayer Group (parent company)

Key Brands: Ounass.com (300+ luxury brands including Gucci, Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, Prada, Miu Miu, Bulgari, Loro Piana, Jimmy Choo, Brunello Cucinelli, MCM, Stella McCartney)

Ounass is the Middle East's most credible luxury e-commerce platform, launched in 2016 as Al Tayer Group's first exclusively digital retail venture. With 300+ luxury brands, 2-hour delivery in Dubai, same-day across the UAE, and express service to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar, it has built a service standard that rivals Net-a-Porter globally. CEO Khalid Al Tayer, who also runs Al Tayer Insignia and its 60+ luxury brand physical portfolio, has created a rare model where the same group controls the luxury shopping experience both online and in-store across MENA.



#15

Country: UAE

Chalhoub Group

Active Markets: 14 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Patrick Chalhoub (Co-CEO) / Anthony Chalhoub (Co-CEO)

Key Brands: LEVEL Shoes, Wojooh, Faces, Harvey Nichols (partial), Sephora (MENA franchise), Level Kids, Liwa, WEARETENET (digital accelerator)

Chalhoub Group is the most digitally sophisticated luxury retail operator in MENA, managing 600+ stores across 10 countries and accelerating its transformation through WEARETENET, an internal digital commerce accelerator. Its Sephora franchise across the Arab world brings the world's most influential beauty retail format to a region with one of the highest per-capita beauty spending rates globally. Co-CEOs Patrick and Anthony Chalhoub have made the group's AI and data investments one of the most documented retail transformations in the region.

Choithrams

#16

Country: UAE

Choithrams

Active Markets: 6 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: L. T. Pagarani (Chairman)

Key Brands: Choithrams Supermarkets, Day to Day (discount format), Priceless (value retail)

Choithrams has served the UAE's multicultural consumer base since 1975, building a grocery brand that resonates equally with Emirati families and the country's diverse expatriate communities. Its Day to Day discount format and Priceless value chain reflect a family that understands multiple consumer segments simultaneously. In a UAE grocery market increasingly dominated by global chains, Choithrams' local identity is its most durable competitive advantage.



#17

Country: UAE

Grandiose

Active Markets: 1 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Mussaab Aboud (CEO); Ghassan Aboud Group (parent company)

Key Brands: Grandiose Supermarkets, Grandiose Food Avenue (in-store dining concept), Grandiose Online

Grandiose has established itself as the UAE's most ambitious premium grocery challenger, growing from a single concept store in 2016 to 50+ locations across Dubai and Abu Dhabi under CEO Mussaab Aboud. Its Food Avenue in-store dining concept and emphasis on locally sourced, fresh produce have differentiated it from larger hypermarket competitors. Backed by the Ghassan Aboud Group and now implementing SAP S/4HANA across its operations, Grandiose is one of the clearest examples of a UAE-native retailer investing in digital infrastructure to compete at scale.



#18

Country: Saudi Arabia

eXtra (United Electronics)

Active Markets: 3 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Sulaiman Al-Muhaidib (Chairman) / Ali Ahmed Mansour (CEO)

Key Brands: eXtra (own brand electronics retail), eXtra Online, Extra Care (extended warranty), eXtra Business (B2B)

eXtra is the GCC's largest consumer electronics retailer, operating across Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman with a fully integrated omnichannel model that spans its flagship stores, e-commerce platform, and B2B services. Its Extra Care extended warranty programme and eXtra Business division for corporate clients reflect a retailer that has moved beyond box-shifting toward service-wrapped product retail. New CEO Ali Ahmed Mansour, appointed in February 2026, brings fresh leadership to a company at the peak of the Saudi consumer electronics upgrade cycle.



#19

Country: UAE

GMG (Gulf Marketing Group)

Active Markets: 12+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Amin Baker (Chairman) / Mohammad A. Baker (Deputy Chairman and CEO)

Key Brands: Sun and Sand Sports, Nike (GCC distribution), Under Armour, Columbia, Vans, The North Face, Timberland, Dropkick, Nu Athlete, Supercare Pharmacy, Geant (UAE), Klassic

GMG is one of the world's largest retailers of Nike merchandise and the force behind Sun and Sand Sports, the Middle East's leading sports retail chain. Founded in 1977 when Abdul Aziz Hassan Baker opened a butcher shop in Dubai, the group has evolved into a global wellbeing platform spanning sports, everyday goods, health, and logistics across the MENA and Southeast Asian markets. Its 2020 acquisition of Royal Sporting House in Southeast Asia and its 100-store Egypt expansion plan signal a company that defines itself by geographic ambition.



#20

Country: Saudi Arabia

Jarir Marketing Co.

Active Markets: 4 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Muhammad Al-Agil (Chairman and CEO)

Key Brands: Jarir Bookstore (own brand), Jarir Online, Apple products (authorised reseller), Microsoft Surface, Samsung

Jarir Bookstore is one of Saudi Arabia's most recognised and trusted retail brands, spanning books, electronics, office supplies, and educational materials across 70+ stores in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait. Its position as an authorised Apple reseller gives it premium traffic and a digitally engaged customer base that extends its retail influence well beyond its bookstore origins. Consistently ranked among Saudi Arabia's most admired companies, Jarir has built customer loyalty that most global retail chains would recognise as exceptional.



#21

Country: India / GCC

Kalyan Jewellers

Active Markets: 5 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: T.S. Kalyanaraman (Chairman and MD)

Key Brands: Kalyan Jewellers, Candere (online jewellery), Tejasvi (lightweight jewellery)

Kalyan Jewellers has built one of the Gulf's most trusted jewellery retail presences, serving the region's large South Asian diaspora alongside local Gulf consumers. Its brand ambassadors, including film stars with massive pan-Arab and South Asian recognition, have made it a household name across the GCC's multicultural consumer base. Candere, its digital-first jewellery platform, represents an early and credible move into online jewellery retail in a category historically resistant to e-commerce.



#22

Country: India / UAE

Landmark Group

Active Markets: 22 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Renuka Jagtiani (Chairwoman and CEO)

Key Brands: Centrepont, Max Fashion, Home Centre, Babyshop, Splash, Shoemart, Lifestyle, Home Box, Emax, Shoexpress, VIVA, Styli (digital), Fitness First, Fun City, Citymax Hotels, Wow Mart

Landmark Group is one of the largest omnichannel retailers in MENA, with 22 homegrown brands, 2,200+ stores across 17 countries, and 35 million active Shukran loyalty members. Founded in 1973 by the late Micky Jagtiani with a single store in Bahrain and now led by his wife Renuka Jagtiani, the group has built every brand it operates rather than franchising them, giving it a margin and control profile that franchise-dependent competitors cannot match. Styli, its digital-first fashion brand, is one of the more credible MENA-native D2C fashion plays in the market.



#23

Country: UAE

LuLu Group International

Active Markets: 22+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: M. A. Yusuff Ali (Chairman and MD)

Key Brands: LuLu Hypermarkets, LuLu Express, LuLu Online, LuLu Connect (electronics), LuLu Exchange (remittance)

LuLu Group is the Arab world's most geographically expansive hypermarket operator, with 250+ stores across 22 countries spanning the GCC, Levant, Africa, South and Southeast Asia. Founded by M. A. Yusuff Ali, who immigrated from Kerala to Abu Dhabi in 1973, LuLu's success is built on understanding the Gulf's diverse consumer base better than any other retailer. Its LuLu Online platform and LuLu Connect electronics chain give it an omnichannel and specialist retail presence that extends well beyond its hypermarket footprint.



#24

Country: India / UAE

Malabar Gold and Diamonds

Active Markets: 13 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: M. P. Ahammed (Chairman)

Key Brands: Malabar Gold and Diamonds, Era by Malabar (plain gold), Mine (diamond jewellery), Ethnix by Malabar (fashion)

Malabar Gold and Diamonds has grown from a single showroom in Kerala to one of the world's largest jewellery retail chains, with 350+ stores across 13 countries. Its Gulf operations, particularly in UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, serve the region's large South Asian diaspora and an increasing base of local consumers attracted by its hallmarking and transparency practices. Its sub-brands Era, Mine, and Ethnix reflect a sophisticated portfolio strategy that addresses different consumer segments within the jewellery category.



Majid Al Futtaim

Active Markets: 15+ countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Tariq Al Futtaim (Board)

Key Brands: HyperMax (formerly Carrefour MENA), Mall of the Emirates, Mall of Egypt, City Centre Malls, Vox Cinemas, Ski Dubai, THAT (lifestyle concept)

Majid Al Futtaim is the region's most comprehensive retail and entertainment ecosystem, operating 29 malls, 13 hotels, 600 cinema screens, and its hypermarket network now rebranded as HyperMax following the 2025 exit from the Carrefour franchise. With over 18 billion dollars in assets and operations spanning the UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and beyond, MAF's scale gives it a lens on MENA consumer behaviour that no market research firm can replicate. Its investment in data analytics and digital personalisation across the HyperMax network is reshaping what grocery retail means in the Gulf.

#25

Country: UAE



Panda Retail Company

Active Markets: 3 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Bander Talaat Hamooh (CEO)

Key Brands: Panda Hypermarkets, Panda Supermarkets, Al Azizia (legacy banner), Panda Online

Panda Retail Company is Saudi Arabia's second largest food retailer by revenue, operating hypermarkets and supermarkets across the Kingdom under its Panda banner. As a subsidiary of Savola Group, one of the most respected conglomerates in the Arab world, Panda benefits from deep supply chain integration and institutional governance. Its Panda Online platform has accelerated in the post-pandemic environment and its franchise model in Bahrain and Qatar signals a measured but deliberate regional expansion strategy.

#27

Country: Saudi Arabia



Paris Gallery

Active Markets: 8 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Mohammed Abdul Rahim Al Fahim (CEO); Al Fahim family (founders and owners)

Key Brands: Paris Gallery (luxury multi-brand retail), Watch Gallery, Rivoli (eyewear), Cartier, Burberry, Montblanc, Chopard, Salvatore Ferragamo, Dunhill, Aigner, Etro (distribution rights)

Paris Gallery is the Arab world's most established luxury multi-brand retail group, founded by the Al Fahim family and operating 86+ stores across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, and beyond since 1981. CEO Mohammed Abdul Rahim Al Fahim has been twice named the most powerful entrepreneur in the Arab world's retail sector, and the group holds distribution rights for some of the most coveted luxury names in fragrance, cosmetics, watches, and fashion. Its Watch Gallery and Rivoli eyewear subsidiaries give it a multi-format luxury retail presence that no competitor in the region can match.

#26

Country: UAE



Sharaf DG

Active Markets: 4 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Ibrahim Sharaf (Chairman)

Key Brands: Sharaf DG (own brand electronics retail), DG Online, DG Byte (refurbished electronics)

Sharaf DG has built a strong alternative to eXtra and Jarir in the UAE electronics retail market, with 50+ stores across UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Egypt. Its DG Byte refurbished electronics brand is an early and credible move into the circular economy for consumer electronics in a region where certified pre-owned has historically been underserved. The group's expansion into Egypt positions it well for a market where middle-class electronics aspiration is growing faster than purchasing power.

#28

Country: UAE



#29

Country: UAE

Spinneys

Active Markets: 6 countries / markets

Chairman / CEO: Ali Said Al Bwardy (Chairman) / Sunil Kumar (CEO)

Key Brands: Spinneys (premium supermarket), The Kitchen by Spinneys (convenience), Spinneys 1961 (own brand private label)

Spinneys is the UAE's most premium supermarket brand, built on a reputation for fresh produce quality, an extensive private label range under Spinneys 1961, and a customer experience that commands the loyalty of the country's most discerning food shoppers. Listed on the Dubai Financial Market in 2024, it has since announced expansion into Kuwait through a joint venture with Alshaya Group, into Saudi Arabia, and into the Philippines through a partnership with Ayala Corporation, making it one of the most internationally ambitious UAE-founded retailers of the last decade.



#30

Country: UAE

Western International Group

Active Markets: 6

Chairman: K.P. Basheer (Founder and Chairman)

Key Brands: Nesto Hypermarkets, Geepas (electronics and home appliances), Younglife (fashion), Parajohn (luggage), Royalford (kitchenware), Jazp.com (e-commerce platform, UAE, Oman, Qatar); Safeer Mall (acquired January 2025)

Founded by K.P. Basheer, who started with a single shop called Gift Palace in Bahrain in 1986 before moving to Dubai and building one of the UAE's most diversified consumer-facing conglomerates, Western International Group now spans hypermarket retail through Nesto, own-brand consumer electronics through Geepas, fashion, luggage, kitchenware, and e-commerce through Jazp.com. Its January 2025 acquisition of Al Safeer Group's Safeer Mall in Sharjah signals active inorganic growth ambitions. With \$1.38 billion in revenue and 10,000 employees across six markets, it is one of the most comprehensively integrated value-retail operations in the Gulf and one of the most undercovered by regional business media.

MENA's Top 30 *Retailers* 2026

#01  AFG International (Cenomi Retail) Saudi Arabia	#02  Al-Futtaim Group UAE	#03  Alghanim Industries Kuwait	#04  Al Maya Group UAE	#05  Al Meera Consumer Goods Qatar
#06  Al Othaim Markets Saudi Arabia	#07  Alshaya Group Kuwait	#08  Al Tayer Group (Luxury Retail) UAE	#09  Apparel Group UAE	#10  Azadea Group Lebanon
#11  B.TECH Egypt	#12  BinDawood Holding Saudi Arabia	#13  Boutiquaat Kuwait	#14  Ounass UAE	#15  Chalhoub Group UAE
#16  Choithrams UAE	#17  Grandiose UAE	#18  eXtra (United Electronics) Saudi Arabia	#19  GMG (Gulf Marketing Group) UAE	#20  Jarir Marketing Co. Saudi Arabia
#21  Kalyan Jewellers India / GCC	#22  Landmark Group India / UAE	#23  LuLu Group International UAE	#24  Malabar Gold and Diamonds India / UAE	#25  Majid Al Futtaim UAE
#26  Paris Gallery UAE	#27  Panda Retail Company Saudi Arabia	#28  Sharaf DG UAE	#29  Spinneys UAE	#30  Western International Group UAE



News

Successful E-Commerce Brands Honored: ECOM BRANDS 100

The most successful e-commerce brands were honored at WORLDEF ISTANBUL, the global e-commerce, retail, and artificial intelligence event. For the “ECOM BRANDS 100” awards, 365 e-commerce brands across 33 categories were evaluated, and awards were presented to the 100 most successful e-commerce brands.

As part of WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026, the “ECOM BRANDS 100” award ceremony was held for the most successful e-commerce brands at the Yenikapı Event Area. The ceremony brought together leading representatives of the e-commerce ecosystem on the Future Commerce Stage.

Launched to highlight brands demonstrating real performance in digital commerce, ECOM BRANDS 100 brought successful e-commerce brands in Türkiye into the spotlight as a category-based competition and voting platform. With its performance-oriented evaluation approach, the platform focused not on perception but on actual growth, scale, impact, and achievements in digital commerce, rewarding the industry’s leading brands.

The award ceremony was attended by senior executives from e-commerce brands, industry representatives, business partners, and key stakeholders from the digital commerce ecosystem. Music, dance, and illusion performances held throughout the ceremony added color to the evening, while the award-winning brands received great applause.

“This Was Our Responsibility to the Industry”

Speaking at the award ceremony, WORLDEF CEO Omar Nart pointed out that companies maintaining a presence in the digital sphere had not previously been recognized through such an organization and said, “This was our responsibility to the industry. Every year, we will reward those who make it onto this list.”

As part of ECOM BRANDS 100, 365 brands participated in voting across 33 categories. Following the voting process, 100 brands that ranked successfully received their awards on the WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 stage. Bringing together brands shaping the future of digital commerce across Türkiye, the organization became an important gathering that rewarded success, innovation, and sustainable growth within the e-commerce ecosystem.



WORLDDEF CEO Omar Nart

Competition Categories Covered a Broad Ecosystem

At ECOM BRANDS 100, brands competed in a wide range of categories including women's clothing, men's clothing, under-

wear & pajamas, baby & children's clothing, women's shoes, men's shoes, bags, skincare, makeup, hair care, perfume & deodorant, automotive accessories & in-car products, carpets & rugs, tableware & kitchen, home decoration, home furniture, household goods & organizers, garden & outdoor furniture, study room & office furniture, toys, sportswear, hobbies & music & art, home & cleaning, petshop, DIY & hardware, gifts & party supplies, vitamins & supplements, healthy snacks & diet foods, jewelry & accessories, food, snacks and beverages, as well as modest fashion & shawls.

ECOM BRANDS 100 Will Become a Strong Index

With ECOM BRANDS 100, WORLDDEF aims to reward excellence within the e-commerce ecosystem and increase the visibility of successful brands. First held as part of WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026, the organization is planned to become an annual tradition and develop into a strong index that recognizes the achievements of e-commerce brands.

ECOM BRANDS 100 was launched to discover brands demonstrating strong performance in digital commerce, identify leading players across categories, and bring industry leaders into the spotlight through a community-driven selection model. This new tradition, launched in WORLDEF's 10th year, will continue to reward brands contributing to the development of Türkiye's e-commerce ecosystem every year.





Interview

A New Era at Coca-Cola Al Ahlia: Digitalization, Sustainability and Growth

Victor Wong, CEO, Coca-Cola Al Ahlia Beverages LLC

Established in 1988, Coca-Cola Al Ahlia is today preparing to enter a new phase of growth as one of the leading production centers in the United Arab Emirates and the wider region. Victor Wong, who has assumed the role of CEO, spoke to WORLDEF E-Commerce about Coca-Cola Al Ahlia's transformation journey, the balance between global brand standards and local market dynamics, its approach to sustainable production and local sourcing, evolving consumer preferences, and the impact of e-commerce on its sales strategies.

Noting that the company positions digitalization, data analytics and artificial intelligence among the core pillars of operational efficiency, Wong emphasized that investments in human capabilities are also an integral part of this transformation. The interview also explored the company's growth objectives for the next five years, its circular economy investments, and its vision of making Coca-Cola more agile, connected and future-ready across the region.

Coca-Cola Al Ahlia was established in 1988 as a joint venture and has since become one of the region's key production centers. How do you evaluate this growth journey and its strategic milestones?

Our growth journey has been one of decisive transformation, especially over the past few years. As a challenger brand in this region, Coca-Cola has always viewed the Middle East as a distinct region with its own unique opportunities. We have embraced this approach by strengthening the fundamentals: maintaining a laser focus on our goals, ensuring executional excellence, and future-proofing the business through investments in digitalization and sustainability rather than merely scaling it.

Becoming one of the region's key production centers is a milestone in itself. For us, this means producing the products that people across the region and beyond have grown to love, while also creating jobs, building local supplier networks and strengthening the communities in which we operate.

As our business grows, we are seeing these efforts pay off in real time. Our aim now is to raise the bar even further: capitalize on what we have achieved and remain even more agile as new opportunities arise.

As a local company representing global brands, what kind of responsibility and advantage does this bring in terms of both operations and brand management?

We operate at the intersection of global standards and local realities. This carries the responsibility of preserving the brand love built around the world while also delivering value tailored to our customers and consumers here. The UAE adds another layer to this dynamic. The country's constantly changing population of residents and visitors brings with it a wide range of cultures, preferences and experiences.

Some may view this as a market without an established local taste. We, however, see it as a unique and enjoyable opportunity: a single market in which we can draw on the full breadth of our global portfolio to meet many different expectations at once.

Yes, it is a delicate balance. However, we regard this combination of scale and intimacy as one of the key pillars of how we keep consumers at the center of everything we do. We go deeper by combining the advantages of scale with local understanding, resources and granularity in the way we oper-

ate. This is what enables us to execute with both consistency and agility.

How is your approach to using local raw materials in production and contributing to the regional economy integrated into your sustainable growth strategy?

It all starts with mindset. We view local sourcing from both the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries as a lever for sustainability. Local sourcing makes us future-ready by shortening supply chains, reducing exposure to external volatility and enabling us to operate with greater granularity in the markets we serve. It also reflects our commitment to creating long-term value not only for the business, but also for the broader ecosystem around us.

This is the core strength of the Coca-Cola system: global expertise combined with local capabilities. Local sourcing and strong community ties are the clearest expressions of this. Over time, this approach translates into a stronger supplier network, better practices and more jobs.

How have international standards such as quality systems, ISO and HACCP certifications strengthened your competitive advantage? What is your current priority in quality management?

Standards such as ISO and HACCP are non-negotiable. As a global organization, these standards form our baseline and the foundation of the trust we build with consumers, customers and regulators across the region. We take them even further by adhering to internal standards for food safety, production and traceability that go beyond industry practices.

As we strengthen our executional capabilities, we are placing digital at the core of our operations. Predictive quality is the next chapter in our journey. This means using data and systems not merely to react, but to drive continuous improvement and embed quality into the way we think and operate every day. It is a long-term shift from being reactive to being proactive, enabling us to serve both our people and our consumers better.

Consumer behavior in the beverage industry is evolving rapidly. How do you interpret trends in health, functional beverages and the premium segment?

Consumers are beginning to make more intentional choices. We are seeing growth in the way consumers select products that fit their lifestyles, cultures and the experiences they

want. It is also about the moments: watching a football match becomes more special with a Coca-Cola in hand, while summer trips with your family can feel even more refreshing with Sprite. Different moments call for different feelings, and we hold this close to us.

Our role is to expand choice by building a total portfolio that reflects this individuality and “moment-fit,” without losing what made people fall in love with our brands in the first place.

“E-commerce should not be viewed as an entirely separate channel. It is an extension of how consumers expect to engage with us every day.”

How has the growth of e-commerce and quick commerce channels affected your distribution and sales strategy? What roadmap are you following for online ordering and direct-to-consumer models?

Since the 1920s, Coca-Cola’s philosophy has been that our products should be “within an arm’s reach of desire.” This principle holds true wherever and whenever you are in the world. The question today is how to adapt this mindset to e-commerce.

At their core, e-commerce and quick commerce are about raising the bar on speed and availability. We respond through executional excellence, ensuring that our products are present, visible and easy to access across platforms.

Globally, two-thirds of our customers are already digitized, while markets using ordering tools are seeing a 4% to 6% increase in sales. This is clear evidence that digital execution translates directly into growth.

E-commerce should not be viewed as an entirely separate channel. It is an extension of how consumers expect to engage with us every day. Our roadmap reflects this. As we connect more outlets through loyalty and digital ordering programs, we are moving from millions of touchpoints to billions, building direct, data-rich relationships with consumers at scale.

Beyond retail and HORECA channels, what kind of omnichannel approach have you adopted to enhance brand visibility across digital sales channels?

We think in terms of consumer journeys. Whether in retail, HORECA or digital, the objective is the same: to be present, relevant and chosen. This requires bringing execution, content and data together to ensure a seamless experience across every touchpoint.

In connection with what I shared earlier about our products being “within an arm’s reach of desire,” today this also means being “within a click’s reach of desire.” When you see our products displayed, whether virtually or in-store, we want you to know that deliberate effort has gone into ensuring that you see them. Then, when you look for our products, we want you to know that we are wherever you look. Finally, whenever our commercial partners need fresh stock or any other service, we can provide it.

What are your concrete targets for reducing environmental impact in areas such as sustainable production, waste management and recycling?

Sustainability is not a separate agenda running alongside our business objectives; it is embedded directly within them. Each reinforces the other, and together they help strengthen our business. This approach is reflected in the areas in which we invest heavily: solar energy, recycling and circular packaging.

Our commitment to a circular economy means designing for recyclability, collecting post-consumer packaging across the value chain and recovering materials wherever possible. In the UAE, for example, we have introduced products in bottles made from 100% recycled PET, excluding caps and labels. However, infrastructure is only one part of the equation. We also invest in building the capabilities of our people and partners across the Gulf. For circularity to work, the entire system must move together.

How do you optimize operational efficiency in the face of increasing competition and supply chain costs in the Gulf region?

Our efficiency comes from focus. We prioritize what creates value, eliminate what does not, and hold ourselves accountable for execution.

We are placing our strongest focus on our Supply Chain and Commercial infrastructures. We are constantly looking for

new ways to do things better. Part of this involves leveraging our digital efforts, including artificial intelligence and analytics, to allocate resources more dynamically. This covers media, trade spending and commercial execution, as well as optimizing internal planning and route efficiencies to keep our products moving faster and at more efficient costs.

However, I also do not want us to view artificial intelligence merely as a buzzword or a magic tool capable of solving every problem. Better data and tools lead to better decisions. Yet the human element remains critical throughout this process. Coca-Cola's magic lies in the combination of global expertise and deep local understanding. Human connection and lived experience cannot be removed from that equation.

That is why we are building a team that is agile, curious and technology-enabled, while also remaining connected both internally and to the markets we serve. A major part of this is investing in internal talent and providing teams with the training and tools they need to grow in their roles. Whether it is supply chain optimization or frontline capability, the goal is not merely precision; it is consistency built on genuine connection.

What are Coca-Cola Al Ahlia's growth objectives for the next five years? In particular, what is your vision for digitalization, data analytics and e-commerce integration?

I am joining the company at a time when we have transformed into a smarter, faster and more decisive business over the past several years. It gives me great pride and confidence to say this. Our next chapter is about building on that foundation: staying rooted in our mission, strengthening our staying power, and leveraging scale while operating with greater granularity. Concretely, this means delivering executional excellence, embedding digital across all operations and using data to make sharper decisions.

In addition, the UAE gives us access to a broad and diverse talent pool with a wide range of experiences. Part of our long-term strategy is to attract the best talent and skill sets from this pool. Equally important is developing the talent we already have by upskilling our teams, building clear career paths and investing in the digital infrastructure that supports them, all the way down to factory and field levels.

You can only create value when nothing falls through the cracks, whether we are talking about systems or the people who run them. We need close partnerships and must ensure that the system works holistically. If we achieve this, we will be well positioned to lead Coca-Cola into its next chapter of growth.



Trust is the Real Currency of Kenya's Digital Economy

Guest Author: Kerissa Varma, Microsoft Chief Security Advisor for Africa



Commentary

Africa's digital economy is accelerating at a remarkable pace, drawing millions of first-time users into mobile money, e-commerce, digital lending and AI-enabled public services. But its continued success will depend on whether people believe the digital systems they use are safe, accountable and worthy of their personal data, money and participation.

Fraud, identity theft and cybercrime are actively shaping how Kenyans choose to engage with digital services, and they are fast becoming the single most important factor in whether an organisation earns a customer or loses one. Trust is no longer a soft reputational asset – it is the critical infrastructure of the digital economy and the factor that will determine whether Kenya's digital momentum translates into lasting, inclusive growth.

TransUnion's H1 2026 Digital Fraud Trends in Africa report found that the security of personal data has overtaken product quality as the leading factor African consumers weigh when deciding whom to transact with online. In Kenya, 91 percent of consumers rank confidence that their data will not be compromised as their top consideration, well above the global average of 67 percent.

As the PwC 2025 East Africa Digital Trust Insights report finds, this is reshaping behaviour in ways that carry direct consequences for companies.

Fraud has become a barrier to growth, not just a security cost

Trust is hard-won but very easily eroded, and consumers are quick to act on their concerns. Eighty percent of Kenyan consumers say they will not return to a platform where fraud has occurred, and 67 percent say they have already switched to a different website because of security concerns, far above the 50 percent global benchmark.

Exposure to fraud attempts is widespread. The Global Anti-Scam Alliance's 2025 State of Scams in Africa study found that 83 percent of surveyed adults in Kenya experienced at least one scam in the preceding year, while more than 70 percent of consumers in Kenya reported being targeted by fraud in a single three-month period, against a global average of 43 percent.

A third of those who lost money were caught through third-party seller scams on otherwise legitimate e-commerce

platforms, with fraud increasingly migrating into trusted environments rather than obviously suspicious ones – a shift that makes verification and transparency more important than ever.



Kerissa Varma, Microsoft Chief Security Advisor for Africa

Identity is now the front line

What unites these patterns is identity. Fraudsters are moving away from crude, easily detected attacks towards the exploitation of genuine credentials and established trust. Microsoft's 2025 Digital Defense Report confirms that attackers are increasingly bypassing firewalls to log in rather than break in. Deepfake incidents in Africa surged sevenfold from Q2 to Q4 of 2024, as AI tools made it easier to create fake identities and manipulate biometric data.

AI is intensifying this risk by making fraud cheaper, faster and easier to personalise. The Digital Defense Report noted a 195 percent increase in AI-generated identity documents used to defeat verification checks, with AI-driven phishing now roughly three times more effective than traditional campaigns. Attackers are also increasingly harnessing AI to craft phishing messages tailored to local languages and cultural contexts and to impersonate trusted individuals.

Data theft was the goal in nearly 80 percent of the cyber incidents Microsoft investigated on the continent, driven overwhelmingly by financial motives. INTERPOL's 2025 Africa Cyberthreat Assessment identified online scams, business email compromise and digital sextortion as the continent's most reported cyberthreats, with cyber-related offences now accounting for more than 30 percent of all reported crime in West and East Africa. Tellingly, 90 percent of African countries reported needing significant improvement in their law enforcement or prosecution capacity – a capability gap that fraudsters are actively exploiting.

Kenya is proving that scale and safety can coexist

Despite the statistics, Kenya is demonstrating that it can grow digital participation without a proportional rise in fraud. The rate of suspected digital fraud in Kenya dropped from 9.3 percent to 5.0 percent, falling below the global average. Consumer vigilance and improved controls are working in tandem. African consumers are ahead of many global peers in adopting secure verification, with fingerprint biometrics now the preferred method, reaching 63 percent in Kenya against a global average of 53 percent.

This appetite for mobile-first, layered security is a strategic asset that forward-looking organisations can build on. Kenya now has an opportunity to set global standards rather than simply catching up, proving that inclusive digital growth and hard-edged security are not competing priorities but the same objective.

"In Kenya's digital economy, trust is the infrastructure on which everything else is built."

The leadership imperative

The lesson for Kenyan business and government leaders is that trust can no longer be delegated to the security team as a technical afterthought. It is a boardroom-led growth imperative that requires organisations to design friction-right customer journeys, communicate openly when incidents occur and extend protection across the entire customer life-cycle rather than concentrating it at onboarding.

This will require investment in adaptive, real-time fraud detection, continued adoption of strong digital identity verification and phishing-resistant authentication, and deeper collaboration and intelligence-sharing across sectors and borders.

In Kenya's digital economy, trust is the infrastructure on which everything else is built. The businesses and governments that understand this first will not only reduce fraud; they will earn the loyalty of digitally engaged Africans who have made it clear that, if these objectives are not met, they will take their trust and their transactions elsewhere.



Interview

Kiperin Türkiye Expands Globally Through Science and Digitalization

Mehmet Mustafa Koç | E-Export Manager, Kiperin Türkiye

Bringing together a scientific approach, digitalization, and sustainable growth within a single strategy, Kiperin Türkiye is focused on expanding its strong position in the local market on a global scale. Reaching more than 14,000 pharmacies across Türkiye, the brand currently exports to more than 20 countries while accelerating its international journey through R&D investments, clinical studies, its multi-channel sales structure, and data-driven e-commerce strategies. We spoke with Mehmet Mustafa Koç, E-Export Manager at Kiperin Türkiye, about the brand's success story, its growth model based on science and innovation, its e-export strategy, its digital transformation journey, and its future goals in global markets.

Which elements stand out in Kiperin Türkiye's success story?

There are three key elements at the foundation of our success: science, quality, and digitalization... Today, consumers do not simply purchase products; they also evaluate brands in terms of reliability, transparency, and scientific approach. We conduct all of our product development processes in line with this understanding. Our strong R&D infrastructure, care-

fully selected raw materials, quality standards, and the importance we place on user experience all play an important role in the growth of our brand. In addition, we adapted to the digital world at a very early stage. We view e-commerce not merely as a sales channel, but as a strategic platform through which we communicate directly with our users. This perspective has accelerated our growth both in Türkiye and in international markets.

What kind of roadmap are you following in e-export?

For us, e-export is not simply about sending products to different countries. We move forward by analyzing the consumer habits, expectations, and digital purchasing behaviors of each country. Today, we export to more than 20 countries. Throughout this process, in addition to our strong logistics infrastructure, we also invest in digital marketing, localization, customer experience, and sustainable operations management. We evaluate each market according to its own dynamics and develop strategies accordingly. We consider bringing the quality standards we have developed in Türkiye to global markets to be one of our most important goals.

Could you tell us about Kiperin's scientific studies? How do these studies differentiate Kiperin from its competitors?

Science is one of the strongest building blocks of our brand. Today, we have seven clinical studies published in international scientific journals. These studies not only demonstrate the scientific approach behind our products, but also serve as an important indicator of our R&D culture. When developing a new product, we plan every stage in light of scientific data, from literature reviews and ingredient selection to formulation studies and quality processes. We closely follow the continuously evolving world of science and update our product portfolio accordingly. We believe that sustainable success is only possible through a scientific approach and continuous innovation.

How does your strong pharmacy network in Türkiye support your global growth?

We reach our consumers through more than 14,000 pharmacies across Türkiye. For us, this is a highly valuable indicator of trust. Our strong presence in the pharmacy channel increases our brand awareness while also enabling our users to access our products easily. In addition, we have created a multi-channel growth model through our own e-commerce website and marketplace operations. Today, we see physical and digital channels as an ecosystem that supports one another. This structure also provides us with valuable experience as we expand into international markets.

What do you think today's consumers expect from brands?

Consumers are now much more conscious. They care not only about the ingredients of a product, but also about its production process, quality standards, and the transparency and reliability of the brand. For this reason, we aim to build a long-term relationship of trust with our users. We place great importance on sharing the scientific approach behind our products, presenting our ingredients transparently, and continuously improving the user experience. We believe that trust is at the foundation of brand loyalty.

How would you summarize Kiperin Türkiye's digital transformation journey?

Digital transformation is no longer a choice; it is one of the fundamental elements of sustainable growth. We take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the digital world, ranging from data-driven decision-making processes and AI-

powered analytics to performance marketing, SEO, and content strategies. While continuously improving our e-commerce operations, we adopt an approach that places the user experience at the center. We view digitalization not merely as an investment in technology, but as an integral part of the way we do business.

What goals lie ahead for Kiperin Türkiye in the coming period?

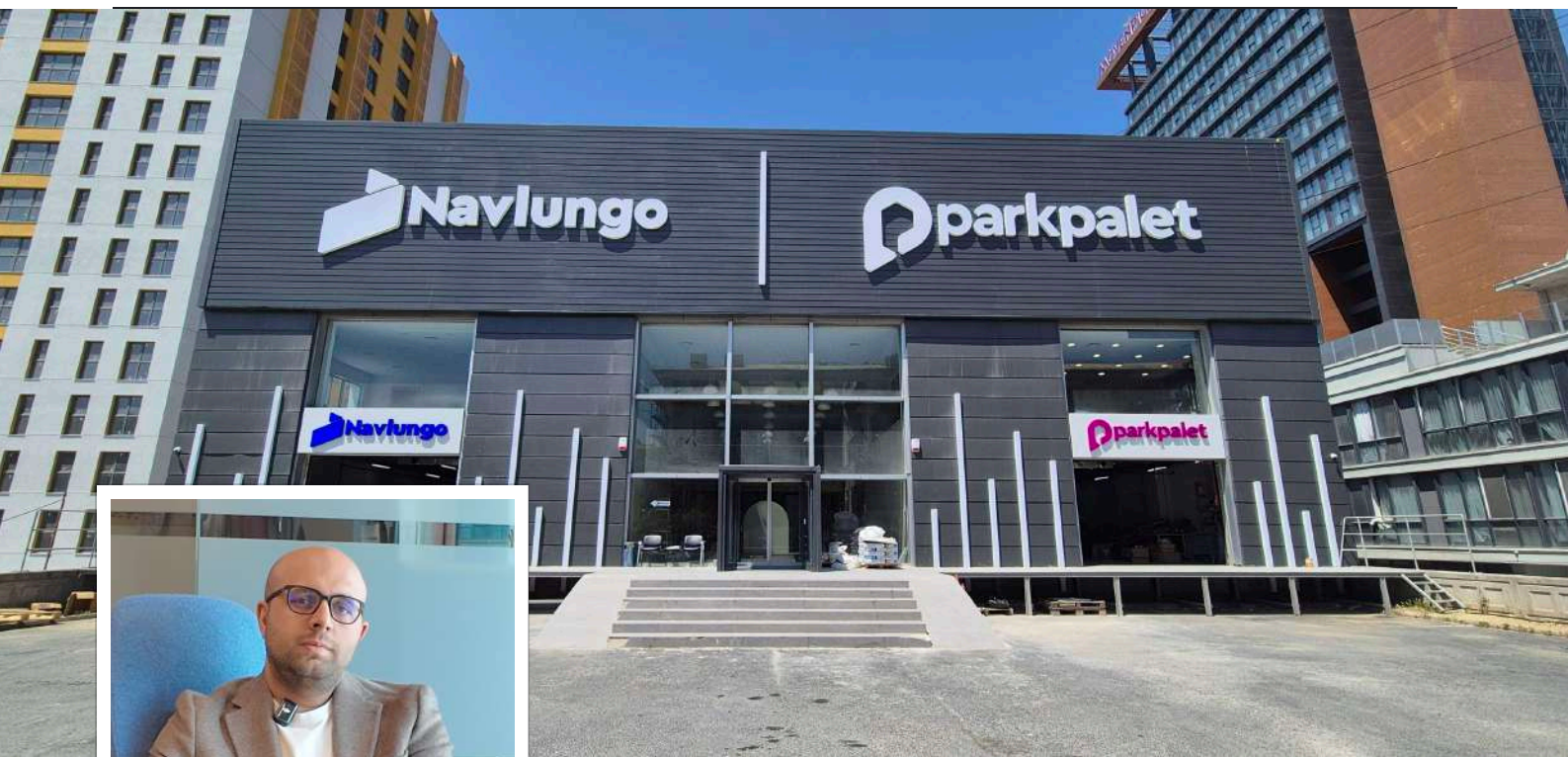
Our most important goal is to reach a broader user base on a global scale by increasing the number of countries to which we export. In addition, we will continue our new product development activities, R&D investments, and scientific research without slowing down. While expanding our investments in digital commerce, we also aim to strengthen our international collaborations. We continue our efforts in line with our vision of becoming a health and wellness brand born in Türkiye and recognized worldwide.

You were honored with the "Ecom Brands 100" award as part of WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026. What does this award mean to you?

For us, this award is not merely an indicator of success, but also an important milestone demonstrating that the vision we have worked toward for many years has gained recognition on an international scale. From the very beginning, our goal as Kiperin Türkiye has not been simply to become a brand that develops high-quality products, but to build a global brand centered on scientific approach, digital transformation, and sustainable growth. Receiving the "Rising Star" award at WORLDEF, one of the most important organizations in the world of e-commerce and e-export, demonstrates that we are moving in the right direction and serves as a major source of motivation for our entire team.

Do you have a message for the industry and entrepreneurs?

There are many highly valuable brands in Türkiye that manufacture to world-class standards, have strong R&D infrastructures, and are capable of competing on a global scale. Our experience shows that when high-quality products, the right strategy, digitalization, and a sustainable vision come together, international success becomes inevitable. We see the award we received not only as a success for Kiperin Türkiye, but also as an important indicator of the potential of Turkish brands in global markets. In the coming period, we will continue to draw strength from science, invest in innovation, and remain a brand that creates value for the world from Türkiye.



Interview

A Story That Began with a Question Became a Global Logistics Platform: Navlungo

İsa Korkmaz | Co-Founder and CEO, Navlungo

Navlungo's journey, which began with the goal of digitalising international logistics processes from end to end, started when four engineer colleagues working together asked: "Why can't logistics services be managed as easily as purchasing an airline ticket online?" Following two years of field research, the company began operations in 2019. With its software-driven approach, Navlungo enables importing and exporting companies, e-export businesses and individual sellers to access real-time logistics quotations and manage all their operations through a single platform. Today, the company offers a technology-driven digital logistics ecosystem spanning more than 230 countries.

Through Navlungo Academy, the company has provided more than 2,500 sellers with training in e-export, sales and logistics. With its global marketplace integrations and solutions for international shipping, fulfilment and returns management, Navlungo aims to reduce the barriers to cross-border trade. We spoke with Navlungo Co-Founder and CEO İsa Korkmaz about the company's founding story, its growth strategy in the European and MENA markets, the flexible operational model it has developed in response to geopolitical crises, and the role of artificial intelligence in the future of the logistics industry.

How did NavlunGO's story begin?

NavlunGO was founded to simplify logistics processes for businesses seeking to engage in international trade. We view logistics not merely as a transportation service, but as a process that must be managed through technology. Our mission is to provide a digital logistics infrastructure that enables businesses to reach destinations around the world more quickly, easily and efficiently.

What role does NavlunGO play in its target markets across the region?

Türkiye's position as a strategic bridge between Europe, the Middle East and Asia provides a significant advantage. By combining this advantage with technology, we support businesses in expanding into global markets. Europe and the MENA region are our priority growth markets. Cross-border e-commerce is growing rapidly in these markets, while the need for digital and flexible logistics solutions continues to increase every day.

How have geopolitical tensions in the Middle East affected your logistics operations?

Geopolitical developments can have a direct impact on the logistics industry. During such periods, we establish alternative transportation routes, diversify our operations by working with different business partners, and provide our customers with transparent information that enables them to take swift action. Our flexible and technology-driven infrastructure is our greatest advantage in navigating these processes.

"Our flexible and technology-driven infrastructure is our greatest advantage in navigating these processes."

What solutions do you offer to the logistics industry in response to crises and challenges in the Middle East?

During periods of crisis, our customers' greatest need is to maintain uninterrupted operations. By offering different transportation alternatives through a single platform, we enable them to select the most appropriate solution quickly. Our international shipping, fulfilment and returns management solutions, in particular, provide businesses with considerable flexibility during these periods.

How do you manage your logistics operations in the MENA region and Europe?

We assess each market according to its own dynamics and shape our operations in line with local requirements. Thanks to our strong business partnerships and technological infrastructure, we can manage operations across different countries through a single platform and adapt quickly to changing market conditions.

What are NavlunGO's goals?

Our goal is to transform NavlunGO from a regional success story into a logistics technology company operating on a global scale. To achieve this, we will continue expanding into new markets, increasing our investments in technology and developing artificial intelligence-powered solutions.

What is your artificial intelligence strategy? How do you assess the impact of artificial intelligence on the industry?

We believe that artificial intelligence will fundamentally transform efficiency and decision-making processes in the logistics industry. We actively use artificial intelligence to optimise operational processes, enhance the customer experience and develop smarter logistics solutions. In the coming period, artificial intelligence will become one of the most important factors providing a competitive advantage in logistics.

Commentary

The EU's Search to Balance China-origin E-commerce Pressure

Guest Author: Ömer Faruk Doğan, Ambassador



Ömer Faruk Doğan, Ambassador

China, which has made great strides toward dominating world trade, appears to have far exceeded its targets according to the first-half 2026 foreign trade figures. According to data from the China Customs Administration, China's foreign trade volume in goods reached 3.75 trillion USD in the first six months. Within this framework, China's exports in the first half of 2026 totalled 2.2 trillion USD, while imports totalled 1.58 trillion USD. In the first six months, China recorded a trade surplus of over 1 trillion USD.

According to the same data, compared with the same period last year, China's exports grew by 13.4%, while imports grew by 22%. Total trade volume increased by 16.9%. China's largest markets are led by the United States and the EU.

China's e-commerce surge puts pressure on the EU and Türkiye alike

China is striving to establish dominance not only in goods trade but also in e-commerce, and the EU appears to have been significantly affected by this China-origin e-commerce activity.

According to EU data, China's e-commerce volume directed toward the European Union (EU) is growing exponentially, particularly influenced by platforms such as Temu and Shein. China's e-commerce market volume in the EU has reached 167.4 billion dollars, and 91% of low-value packages under 150 euros entering the EU are of Chinese origin. This massive flow toward the EU corresponds to approximately 12 million packages per day. According to European Commission data, 4.6 billion low-value (under 150 euros) e-commerce packages of Chinese origin enter the EU annually, roughly 12 million per day.

China's share of the EU's low-price e-commerce segment has reached 91%. Within EU e-commerce, the highest demand is in the clothing and footwear category at 40.31%, followed by consumer electronics and home decoration products.

In order to protect its domestic market and prevent tax losses, the European Union has tightened controls and taxation on e-commerce packages arriving from China. In February 2026, it narrowed the previously applied customs-free exemption for low-value packages and introduced stricter VAT requirements for e-commerce platforms, as well as compliance obligations under the DSA and GPSR.

Although these legal regulations placed some downward pressure on China's growth in the EU market (an estimated 3.2% drag on the annual compound growth rate), they proved insufficient to produce the effect the market expected. For this reason, the EU has increased its pressure on Chinese e-commerce platforms, strengthening import controls on goods from brands such as Temu and Shein and raising taxes on packages valued at under 150 euros.

As this new measure, even the EU's introduction of a flat 3-euro tariff on packages previously falling below the 150-euro customs threshold failed to produce the desired effect,

prompting a serious review of the business models of Chinese online retail giants AliExpress, Shein, and Temu, with the aim of exerting real impact on these platforms.

This is regarded as the latest step in the official proceedings initiated in 2024 over violations of the European Digital Services Act (DSA). The Commission has stated that it has formed the view that AliExpress failed to establish an effective system for detecting and removing products that do not comply with legal standards, and that the platform, taking advantage of delays and possible disruptions arising from the intensity of EU controls, treated the matter lightly.

According to the European Commission's investigation, despite repeated EU warnings, AliExpress continued to host large quantities of illegal products, including dangerous toys and hazardous cosmetics, leading the Commission to conclude that the platform had exploited the EU's understanding and approach. The Commission further stated that it had determined AliExpress failed to properly enforce its sanctions policy, allowing stores that sold illegal products to continue actively selling on the platform even after being penalised.

It was also emphasised that the platform's brand authorisation system, intended to prevent the sale of counterfeit goods, had proven ineffective, as it was being circumvented to offer counterfeit products despite protective measures for brands and sellers, and that insufficient measures had been taken to prevent such abuse. Taking all of this into account, on Monday, July 20, the European Commission decided to impose a 550 million-euro fine on AliExpress, which has 193 million users, for violating the Digital Services Act (DSA).

Prior to this new decision, at a session held before the European Parliament on March 23, experts from the Commission stated that following an examination of more than 30,000 products shipped by Shein, AliExpress, Temu, and Amazon, failure rates were found to be very high across many categories: 65% of cosmetics shipments, 60% of personal protective equipment shipments, and 63% of food supplement shipments were examined, and laboratory tests found health or safety risks in 81% of the products tested.

On the other hand, our country too is under trade pressure from China. According to recent statistics, the total foreign trade volume between Türkiye and China has reached approximately \$ 53 billion. While Türkiye's imports from China stand at roughly 49-50 billion dollars, our exports to China remain at 3.3-3.4 billion dollars. In light of these figures, Türkiye's foreign trade deficit with China has risen above 46 billion dollars.

Within the framework of our Customs Union agreement with the EU, many countries with which we have signed FTAs, having increased their exports on the basis of the advantages Türkiye obtained under those FTAs, have unilaterally revised the agreements on the grounds that the trade balance had turned against them, and have imposed additional customs duties on Turkish-origin consumer goods. Many North African countries can be cited as examples of this.

It is inevitable that, in the long term, the unsustainable imbalance in our bilateral trade with China will have a significant negative impact on our medium-scale manufacturing SMEs, particularly those producing consumer goods. The number of retail chains selling extremely low-priced consumer goods, disconnected from any real cost logic, is increasing significantly across all our provinces, especially in shopping malls.

Although additional customs duties have been introduced for products entering the country via e-commerce by post, this has proven insufficient to curb the cost-detached pressure exerted by China and to restore balance in the domestic market.

Our current Customs Union agreement with the EU, based on Decision 1/95, directly enables Türkiye to adopt a common stance against third countries. It is important to emphasise this point, and it is legally possible for a similar process to be pursued in our own country, based on the laboratory examinations and assessments conducted by the European Commission's SANCO and related units regarding third-country products.

It is considered an essential requirement that our Ministry of Trade effectively exercise its Market Surveillance and Inspection authority, that the relevant units under our jurisdiction, foremost among them the Turkish Standards Institute (TSE), which plays an active supervisory role in imports, evaluate the matter with the utmost care and fairness, that additional measures parallel to those of the EU be adopted without delay for the protection of both consumers and our SMEs against unfair competition, and that serious initiatives be undertaken to correct the otherwise inexplicable foreign trade deficit in our trade balance with China.

It is likewise considered essential that the relevant provisions of the Customs Union Agreement No. 1/95 be evaluated in favor of our country, our consumers, and above all our medium-scale producers, and applied as a means of preventing unfair competition.

Interview



Azerbaijan Ecommerce Economy Organization, EcomX and Bonpara founder Orkhan Ahmadov was a guest of WORLDEF E-COMMERCE. Ahmadov shared his predictions on the future of AI-powered commerce. According to Ahmadov, in the coming period, competition will not be only between products; it will also take place between machine-readable data, real-time inventory infrastructure and AI-compatible payment systems.

Orkhan Ahmadov | Founder, Azerbaijan Ecommerce Economy Organization, EcomX and Bonpara



In the Future of E-Commerce, the Customer Will Be an AI Agent

Orkhan Ahmadov explained how artificial intelligence will transform the customer experience in e-commerce over the next 3–5 years, saying: “We think about this every day, and the conclusion I keep coming back to is this: We need to stop designing checkout for humans and start designing it for AI agents. This may sound counter-intuitive at first because today every conversation about checkout optimization is about human behavior: reducing fields, adding trust badges,

speeding up the page, adjusting the button color. All of these still matter. But within 3–5 years, on the other side of an increasing share of transactions, there will be no human at all. The customer will be the agent. And the agent does not care about your trust badges or your hero image; it looks at whether your product data is clean, whether your pricing is machine-readable, whether your inventory is accurate in real time, and whether your checkout can frictionlessly accept a pro-

grammable, transaction.”

agent-initiated

“Do not bolt AI onto your product later as a feature”

Orkhan Ahmadov continued: “Merchants that do not internalize this are about to become invisible to a major wave of demand. If the agent trying to make a purchase on behalf of its user cannot read your product attributes,



verify your delivery promise, and complete the transaction without human intervention, your beautifully designed checkout page means nothing.”

Addressing e-commerce founders, Ahmadov said, “Do not bolt AI onto your product later as a feature. Rebuild your infrastructure on the assumption that AI is both the operator behind the scenes and, increasingly, the customer on the other side of checkout. Merchants that make this transformation within the next 24 months will open up a structural gap that their competitors will not be able to close for years. Those that do not will find themselves falling behind in conversion, pricing and retention, and eventually becoming invisible to the agents shopping on everyone’s behalf.”

“The customer will be the agent.”

The Most Common Mistakes E-Commerce Founders Make

With years of experience in e-commerce, Orkhan Ahmadov described the most common mistakes made by early-stage e-commerce founders:

Building the product without talking to customers: Everyone talks about “customer discovery,” but almost no one actually does it. Founders fall in love with their ideas and spend six months building the product. Then they launch into silence.

Underestimating unit economics: They calculate gross margin; they forget CAC, returns, payment commissions, and the fact that a 30 percent discount wipes out all margins. They mistake revenue for profit. But it is not.

Trying to go horizontal too early: “We sell everything.” No, you do not. Pick one category, dominate it, then expand. Every successful marketplace started vertical.

Confusing traffic with demand: They run ads, get visitors and celebrate it. But visitors are not customers. Conversion, repeat purchase rate and LTV are the only metrics that matter.

Ignoring the post-purchase experience: They obsess over checkout and completely ignore what happens afterward: email, the unboxing experience, the first support interaction. This is where loyalty is actually built.

Hiring too fast and too senior: At an early stage, you need operators, not executives. Many founders hire a “Head of Growth” before they even have growth.

Not building in public / not using your network: Especially in our market, your community is your unfair advantage. Founders who try to build in silence cut off their own oxygen supply.

And the biggest mistake: Not actually listening to mentors. A founder schedules a session, sits down with someone who has lived through exactly what they are about to face, listens carefully, nods, says thank you, and then goes back and does exactly what they had already decided to do in their head. As if the conversation never happened. It is frustrating because the mentor can see the wall the founder is about to hit; they are already sharing the scars they have because they hit that wall themselves, and the founder still walks straight into it. Mentorship only works if you are willing to update your plan based on what you hear. Otherwise, you are just collecting opinions.

If I could give just one piece of advice: Talk to 50 customers before writing a single line of code. Your product will be 10 times better, and you will skip roughly a year of wasted work!



Analysis

Retail in MENASA: From Consumer Growth to Supply-Chain Resilience

By Shormishtha Ghosh, Founder & MD, In Tandem Global Consulting

The next retail frontier is being built across MENASA. For decades, MENASA was viewed largely as a collection of disparate consumer markets: the wealthy Gulf, populous South Asia and emerging African economies. Retail in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia has very different levels of purchasing power and infrastructure historically.

That distinction is becoming less useful. A new MENASA retail ecosystem is emerging, connected by digital commerce, mobile payments, logistics infrastructure, free-trade corridors and increasingly sophisticated consumers. The Gulf provides capital, logistics and global connectivity; South Asia provides scale, technology and consumers; and North Africa provides proximity to Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

The numbers are compelling. The MENA retail market was estimated at \$808.5 billion in 2024 and is forecast to reach approximately \$1.4 trillion by 2032, implying a CAGR of about 7.3%. At the same time, the broader Middle East and Africa e-commerce market was valued at approximately \$155.2 bil-

lion in 2025 and is projected to reach \$338.1 billion by 2031, representing a CAGR of almost 13.9%.

The opportunity is therefore no longer simply about selling more products. It is about creating an integrated retail infrastructure capable of moving products, payments, data and consumers across borders.

How and when the consumer behavior change

The pandemic was the first structural shock. Lockdowns accelerated online shopping by several years and the behavior persisted after physical stores reopened. The UAE provides a useful illustration. Its retail e-commerce market reached \$3.9 billion in 2020, up 53% year-on-year, with online retail accounting for 8% of total retail. By 2024, the UAE e-commerce market had reached approximately AED32.3 billion (\$8.8 billion) and is projected to exceed AED50.6 billion (\$13.8 billion) by 2029.

Saudi Arabia has experienced an even more dramatic digital transformation. E-commerce sales conducted through Mada

cards increased from SAR10.2 billion in 2019 to SAR197 billion in 2024—a roughly nineteen-fold increase in five years.

Selected e-commerce growth indicators

Market / indicator	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Saudi e-commerce sales via mada (SAR bn)	39	74	123	157	197
Saudi YoY growth	282%*	89.7%	66.2%	27.6%	25.5%
UAE retail e-commerce YoY growth	53%	~46%	—	—	~5%
MENA e-commerce YoY growth	—	—	—	—	13%

Saudi 2020 growth is calculated against the 2019 base of SAR10.2 billion. The Saudi series represents e-commerce sales through Mada cards and should not be interpreted as total e-commerce GMV. UAE 2021 growth is an industry estimate; consistent annual historical regional data are not publicly reported across all five years.

The pattern is important. The extraordinary pandemic-era growth rates are normalising, but the underlying market is continuing to expand at double-digit rates in several markets. This is the classic transition from adoption to penetration. The first phase was about getting consumers online. The next phase is about increasing frequency, basket size, categories and cross-border purchasing.

Logistics becomes the new retail battleground

Retail transformation is ultimately a logistics story. An interesting emerging paradigm is, logistics companies are becoming technology companies and retailers are becoming logistics businesses. A consumer may discover a product on Instagram, purchase it through a mobile wallet and receive it through a fulfillment center. The customer does not distinguish between retailer, marketplace, warehouse, courier and payment provider. The experience is judged as one system. This captures the changing economics of retail. The consumer is no longer comparing only price. They are comparing price + availability + delivery speed + convenience + returns.

From just-in-time to just-in-case- the shifting geopolitical paradigm

Geopolitical disruption is likely to produce one of the most significant structural changes in retail supply chains: the movement away from extreme just-in-time inventory. Retailers traditionally attempted to minimise inventory because excess stock tied up capital. But when shipping routes can suddenly become unavailable, the economic cost of having too little inventory can be even greater. The result will be more regional warehousing, multiple suppliers, diversified shipping routes and greater use of inventory analytics.

For MENASA, this could become an advantage. Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Cairo and Casablanca can increasingly function as interconnected regional distribution nodes rather than isolated domestic markets. The Gulf in particular has an opportunity to become the fulfillment layer between Asia, Africa and Europe. This is why investments in ports, free zones, airports, bonded warehouses, fulfillment centres and digital customs systems matter as much to the future of retail as shopping malls do.

The next five years: 2026–2030

The next stage of MENASA retail is likely to be defined by five forces.

■ E-commerce becomes embedded rather than experimental

Online retail will continue to gain share, but growth rates will normalise from the extraordinary pandemic years. MENA e-commerce was approximately \$34.5 billion in 2024, growing 13% year-on-year, and is forecast to reach about \$57.8 billion by 2029. Saudi Arabia expects e-commerce to increase from around 10% of retail sales today to more than 25% by 2035. This suggests that the next decade will not be about whether consumers shop online. It will be about how much of their total consumption becomes digitally mediated.

■ Quick commerce will mature

The promise of 10-minute or one-hour delivery will remain attractive in dense cities, particularly for grocery, convenience, pharmacy and everyday products. But the industry will increasingly move from growth-at-any-cost towards unit economics. Dark stores, micro-fulfillment centres and urban warehouses will therefore be judged not simply by delivery speed but by inventory turns, utilisation and profitability.

■ AI and supply chain resilience

Artificial intelligence will increasingly influence demand forecasting, pricing, personalisation, fraud detection, inventory allocation and customer service. The greatest impact may be invisible to the consumer. An AI system predicting that a particular product will sell in Riyadh during a specific week can move inventory before the order is placed. Another system can redirect stock from Dubai to Jeddah because shipping disruption makes one route more expensive. AI therefore becomes not merely a marketing tool but a supply-chain resilience technology.

■ Cross-border commerce will accelerate

The next major opportunity is not simply domestic e-commerce. It is MENASA e-commerce. An Indian beauty brand should be able to sell to the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt without establishing a traditional retail network in each market. A Saudi fashion brand should be able to access Indian consumers through digital channels. UAE-based platforms can become gateways for Asian brands entering Africa. Regulation, taxation, payments, data protection and customs remain obstacles, but digital trade agreements and interoperable payment systems can progressively reduce them.

■ Resilience will become a competitive advantage

Geopolitical risk is unlikely to disappear. Retailers will therefore increasingly ask four questions:

- Where is the product manufactured?
- Where is it stored?
- Which route does it travel?
- What happens if that route closes?

The answers will influence corporate strategy. A retailer with slightly higher procurement costs but five sourcing locations may outperform a competitor dependent on one country and one shipping corridor.

The MENASA retail opportunity

The central investment thesis is therefore broader than e-commerce. MENASA is building a connected consumer economy. Retailers need digital platforms. Digital platforms need payments. Payments require financial infrastructure. E-commerce requires fulfillment. Fulfillment requires warehouses. Warehouses require ports, airports and roads. All of these require data, AI and increasingly sophisticated financial services.

The opportunity consequently sits across the entire value chain. The strongest markets are likely to be those that combine consumer scale, digital adoption, logistics infrastructure and policy support.

Conclusion: Retail without borders

The retail story of MENASA over the next decade will not be written by shopping malls or marketplaces alone. It will be written by the infrastructure and eco systems connecting them. The pandemic created the digital consumer. Geopolitical disruption is now creating the resilient supply chain. The next phase will bring the two together.

By 2030, the winning retail businesses in MENASA are likely to be those capable of combining digital discovery, intelligent inventory, regional fulfillment, fast payments and resilient logistics. The region's greatest opportunity is to create something distinctly MENASA: a retail ecosystem linking the purchasing power of the Gulf, the population and technological depth of South Asia, and the strategic geography of North Africa.

News

Türkiye's Most Comprehensive B2B E-Commerce Platform ToptanTR Launches a TL 500 Million Investment Initiative

Sezgin Şener | CEO, ToptanTR



Sezgin Şener, CEO, ToptanTR

Türkiye's leading B2B e-commerce platform, ToptanTR.com, is entering a new period of investment and transformation as it steadily maintains its growth momentum despite challenging economic conditions. Bringing together producers, distributors, tradespeople, businesses and SMEs from across Türkiye within the same digital commerce ecosystem, the platform continues to lead the digital transformation of the traditional trade channel through its innovative business model.

Since its establishment, ToptanTR has focused on a direct, intermediary-free trade model from producers to tradespeople and has today become a major commercial infrastructure preferred by hundreds of thousands of businesses for their product procurement processes. Through its broad product range spanning food, beverages, stationery, cleaning products, cosmetics, electronics, pet supplies, home and living,

office products and many other categories, the platform provides businesses across Türkiye with fast, reliable and competitively priced procurement opportunities.

We spoke with ToptanTR CEO Sezgin Şener about the company's investments and future vision. Şener said that the company, which makes a significant contribution to the digitalisation of Türkiye's traditional trade channel, enables producers to distribute their products widely and in a controlled manner, while allowing tradespeople and businesses to access products at more advantageous prices. He added, "Through this structure, a more efficient, transparent and sustainable trade model is being created for both producers and buyers."

Strategic Investment of TL 500 Million

Sezgin Şener emphasised that ToptanTR is preparing for a comprehensive transformation across technology, operations, data analytics and growth through a total investment programme of TL 500 million, which it plans to implement in 2026. According to information provided by Şener, the company's priority objectives under the investment plan include:

- Expanding marketing and brand awareness activities
- Accelerating seller and buyer acquisition processes
- Making the technology infrastructure more robust and scalable
- Developing AI-powered commerce solutions
- Increasing the level of automation in operational processes
- Optimising logistics and distribution processes
- Strengthening data-driven commerce management capabilities
- Accelerating the digital transformation of SMEs and tradespeople

Sezgin Şener said: "With the planned investments, ToptanTR aims to make the user experience faster, smoother and easier, while also transforming direct trade between producers and tradespeople into a far more accessible structure. We are particularly focusing on solutions that will make it easier for businesses operating in the traditional trade channel to adapt to digital commerce. We also plan to invest in next-generation technologies in areas such as order management, campaign management, product discovery, inventory optimisation and data analytics. In line with the planned investment process, we aim to reach 10,000 active sellers, 1,000,000 product varieties, 500,000 active buyers and a much more

extensive trade network across Türkiye in the coming period."

"Producers Can Reach Tradespeople and Businesses Across Türkiye"

Sezgin Şener provided the following information: "The growth vision put forward by ToptanTR reflects not only an increase in user numbers, but also the objective of creating a sustainable, balanced and highly efficient commerce ecosystem. Thanks to the platform model we have developed, producers can reach tradespeople and businesses operating not only in major cities, but also in provinces, districts and neighbourhoods across Türkiye. This provides a significant growth opportunity, particularly for producers with limited access through traditional distribution channels. For tradespeople and businesses, meanwhile, the system reduces the difficulty of contacting different suppliers individually, while enabling them to compare thousands of products on a single platform and procure them at competitive prices."

An Ecosystem Strengthened by a Direct Trade Model

According to information provided by Sezgin Şener, the direct producer-to-tradesperson trade model at the heart of ToptanTR is creating a significant transformation in Türkiye's traditional trade structure. Through the platform, producers can deliver their products to businesses across Türkiye at lower operational costs. Tradespeople and businesses gain a cost advantage by procuring products at more competitive prices. Procurement processes become faster, more transparent and more efficient. The digital infrastructure makes order and operational processes easier to manage. Economic efficiency is increased by minimising intermediary costs in trade.

The structure developed by ToptanTR provides significant advantages, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses operating under cost pressures in the current economic environment. Beyond offering a marketplace model, the company aims to generate long-term economic value by establishing a sustainable trade network among producers, distributors, tradespeople and businesses.

"Our Technology Infrastructure Is Developed by CommerceMinder"

Stating that ToptanTR's entire technology infrastructure is developed by CommerceMinder, which operates within the company, Şener said: "Thanks to this infrastructure,

developed entirely through domestic engineering expertise, the platform gains critical advantages such as high scalability, strong data-processing capacity, advanced operations management, a flexible integration infrastructure, data-driven commerce management and operational independence. Through the systems developed by CommerceMinder, ToptanTR operates on a robust infrastructure capable of managing high traffic and high transaction volumes, while also gaining the ability to develop rapidly and innovate continuously."

Şener also stated that the company is carrying out significant work on AI-powered commerce technologies, data analytics solutions and automation systems. "At later stages, we plan to introduce many new technological solutions that will accelerate users' ordering processes, facilitate commercial decision-making and increase operational efficiency," he said.

A Strong Technology Venture Growing with Domestic Capital

ToptanTR stands out as one of the few e-commerce ventures continuing to grow without foreign investment. At a time when a significant share of Türkiye's e-commerce ecosystem is under the control of foreign capital, this structure, developed with domestic resources, offers a significant point of differentiation in terms of technological independence, sustainable growth and long-term strategic management. While the company regards strengthening Türkiye's trade

infrastructure with domestic technology as a strategic objective, it also aims to integrate producers, tradespeople and businesses in Türkiye more strongly into digital commerce processes.

"We Will Continue to Lead the Digital Transformation of Traditional Trade"

Sezgin Şener concluded: "With its robust technological infrastructure, extensive trade network, data-driven management approach and innovative business model, ToptanTR continues to digitalise Türkiye's traditional trade channel. Beyond being a system that simply provides product procurement, the platform is building an integrated commerce ecosystem that supports producers' growth, increases the competitiveness of tradespeople while enabling access to affordable products, improves efficiency in trade and strengthens the local economy.

With the investment initiative we will undertake, ToptanTR aims to assume a stronger role in Türkiye's digital commerce infrastructure, accelerate transformation in the traditional trade channel and become an important regional player in B2B e-commerce. As one of Türkiye's most comprehensive B2B e-commerce platforms, we will continue to lead the transformation of the sector over the long term through the strategic investments we make, the innovative technologies we develop and our vision of direct trade from producers to tradespeople."



**82**

Countries

22,000

Visitors

187

Brands

250

Speakers

35%

International visitors

Event

Digital Trade Ecosystem Came Together at WORLDEF ISTANBUL: 82 Countries, 22,000 Visitors

Focusing on the e-commerce, retail and artificial intelligence ecosystems, WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 was held with strong attendance and significant international representation. The event brought together visitors from 82 countries in Istanbul. Brands shaping digital trade, technology companies, retail leaders, logistics players, entrepreneurs, investors and decision-makers came together under one roof. WORLDEF CEO Omart Nart said, "WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 was not merely a

trade fair or a conference; it became a powerful platform enabling the e-commerce, retail, artificial intelligence and digital trade ecosystems to grow together."

WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 hosted 22,000 visitors over three days between June 11–13, 2026. At the event, 187 brands from different sectors opened stands, while 250 speakers took part in the stage programs. International visitors accounted

for 35 percent of the participants. Thus, WORLDEF ISTANBUL became a strong meeting point for the regional and global e-commerce and retail ecosystem.



At the event, which featured companies operating in e-commerce, retail, artificial intelligence, technology, logistics, fintech, SaaS, digital marketing and cross-border e-commerce, new collaborations, strategic meetings, brand encounters and networking opportunities stood out. WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 brought together not only brands in Türkiye but also companies seeking to expand into global markets with international stakeholders.

A Magnificent Opening Ceremony

A magnificent opening ceremony was held for WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026. The ceremony, hosted by WORLDEF CEO Omar Nart, was attended by Türkiye's Deputy Minister of Trade Mahmut Gürcan, Ministry of Trade Director General of Exports Mehmet Ali Yalçinkaya, Dubai Airport Free Zone and Dubai CommerCity Director General Amna Lootah, Dubai CommerCity Vice President Arjun Sarkar, and senior executives of e-commerce, retail and artificial intelligence companies.

In his opening speech, Omar Nart said: "In recent years, Türkiye has gained very significant momentum in trade, exports, entrepreneurship, technology and digital transformation. Thanks to the vision put forward by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the efforts of our Ministry of Trade and the entrepreneurial spirit of our private sector, our country is gaining an increasingly stronger position in global trade every day. As WORLDEF, we are very proud to be a part of this transformation. We believe that Türkiye has the potential to become one of the most important centers of digital trade."

Amna Lootah Invited Participants to WORLDEF Dubai 2027

Amna Lootah, Director General of Dubai Airport Free Zone and Dubai CommerCity, said, "Not long ago, digital trade was viewed as an opportunity; today, it has become a necessity that is transforming how businesses grow and how economies compete. In my role at Dubai CommerCity, I see that businesses are looking for three things: speed, access and certainty. We established Dubai CommerCity to create a seamless environment where companies can focus on innovation while we simplify the complexities of cross-border trade."



Amna Lootah, Director General of Dubai Airport Free Zone and Dubai CommerCity

Lootah continued: "Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, is transforming operations; however, technology alone is not enough. Growth happens when people, businesses and governments work together. The developing relationship between the UAE and Türkiye, with a trade volume exceeding \$45 billion, is a strong example of this. I look forward to welcoming many of you in Dubai for WORLDEF Dubai 2027, where we can continue building the future of digital trade together."

Mahmut Gürcan: E-Commerce Has Now Become the Main Driver of Trade

Türkiye's Deputy Minister of Trade Mahmut Gürcan said, "E-commerce channels, digital marketplaces and next-generation logistics solutions are reshaping the structure of trade every day. As Türkiye, in 2025, we achieved \$273.5 billion in goods exports and \$122 billion in services exports, reaching a total level of \$396 billion. While the global retail e-commerce volume is expected to approach \$7 trillion in 2026, e-commerce has now become the main driver of trade."



WORLDDEF CEO Omar Nart



Gürçan added: “As the Ministry of Trade, we attach importance to our companies benefiting from e-export support programs; we have increased the number of our target countries from 26 to 35. By establishing strategic collaborations with marketplaces such as eBay, Walmart, Amazon and TikTok Shop, we are increasing the global visibility of Turkish brands. We are also training e-export specialists through the Export Academy and collaborations with universities. With our strong logistics network and production infrastructure, we will continue working with all our strength toward becoming a regional hub in digital trade.”

Omar Nart: It Became a Powerful Platform Enabling Digital Trade Ecosystems to Grow Together

In a statement following the event, WORLDDEF CEO Omar Nart noted that WORLDDEF ISTANBUL 2026 had achieved significant success for the e-commerce, retail and artificial intelligence ecosystem, saying: “WORLDDEF ISTANBUL 2026 was not merely a trade fair or a conference; it became a powerful platform enabling the e-commerce, retail, artificial intelligence and digital trade ecosystems to grow together. Hosting 22,000 visitors from 82 countries in Istanbul once again demonstrated Türkiye’s potential to become a regional trade hub. The collaborations and connections established throughout the event produced highly valuable and productive results in helping brands expand into global markets.”

Drawing attention to WORLDDEF’s global vision, Omar Nart added: “Digital trade has now become an ecosystem that transcends borders, is strengthened by technology and grows through collaboration. As WORLDDEF, our goal is to take brands emerging from the MENA region and Türkiye to the world, bring global brands together with the region’s strong

players, and create a sustainable business network that shapes the future of e-commerce and retail. The strong interest we witnessed at WORLDDEF ISTANBUL 2026 shows that this vision has been strongly embraced by the industry.”



It Offered New Opportunities to the E-Commerce, Retail and Artificial Intelligence Sectors

During the stage sessions, panels and special gatherings organized as part of the event, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, next-generation retail, cross-border e-commerce, logistics technologies, marketplace strategies, customer experience and global growth models were discussed. Leading speakers from the industry shared their experiences and future visions regarding the transformation of digital trade with participants.

With its exhibition stands, stage programs, special networking events and global participant profile, WORLDDEF ISTANBUL



Türkiye's Deputy Minister of Trade Mahmut Gürçan

2026 offered new opportunities to the e-commerce and retail sectors. The event stood out as an important platform where trends shaping the future of digital trade were discussed, brands evaluated their strategies for entering new markets, and international collaborations were developed.



An Ecosystem Platform Supporting New Connections and Ideas: WORLDEF ISTANBUL

The major gathering at WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 also strengthened the event's position within the global digital trade ecosystem. The connections established among industry representatives from Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and other markets demonstrated Istanbul's potential to become a strategic meeting hub for international e-commerce and retail networks. Direct communication among brands, investors, technology providers and decision-makers from different geographies laid the groundwork for the devel-



opment of cross-border trade and the acceleration of collaborations targeting new markets.



By bringing together different components of the e-commerce ecosystem under one roof, the event also contributed to the development of cross-sector collaborations. Representing a broad value chain ranging from marketplaces to logistics companies, fintech organizations to SaaS providers, and retail brands to digital marketing companies, WORLDEF ISTANBUL enabled companies not only to reach new customers and business partners but also to closely evaluate different solutions and technologies. This interaction created an important environment for knowledge sharing, the development of new business models and the strengthening of international connections, particularly for companies targeting global growth.

At a time when digital trade is rapidly being reshaped by technology, data and artificial intelligence, WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026 stood out as one of the platforms where the industry's transformation agenda was discussed on an

international scale. Insights shared across various topics, ranging from AI-powered commerce applications and personalized customer experience to cross-border payment systems and next-generation logistics solutions, contributed to companies reassessing their digital strategies. The knowledge-, collaboration- and technology-driven interaction generated at the event demonstrated that WORLDEF ISTANBUL is not only an ecosystem platform that strengthens existing commercial relationships but also one that supports the creation of new connections and ideas for the future of digital trade.

The business world came together at VIP Connect

Meanwhile, a special networking event called “VIP Connect” was organized ahead of WORLDEF ISTANBUL 2026. The event hosted senior professionals from the e-commerce, retail, technology, artificial intelligence, logistics, payment systems, and digital trade ecosystems. Important collaboration meetings were held at the event, which attracted strong participation. Organized at Mandarin Oriental Bosphorus as part of WORLDEF’s 10th anniversary, VIP Connect offered participants a unique environment for developing business networks. Within designated time slots, participants had the opportunity to meet one-on-one and hold business meetings with company representatives from different sectors.

“We have been working for this for ten years”

Speaking during the program, WORLDEF CEO Omar Nart said, “It is a program where the right people meet the right opportunities at the right tables. As WORLDEF, we have been working for this for 10 years, bringing people, brands, and opportunities together.”

VIP Connect also saw senior-level participation from Dubai CommerCity, WORLDEF’s “Main Strategic Partner.” Dubai CommerCity is the first and leading free zone in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MEASA) region dedicated exclusively to the digital commerce and e-commerce sectors. Abdulrahman Shahin, Senior Vice President of Operations at Dubai CommerCity, who attended the program, said, “It is a privilege to be in Istanbul, a city with a long and historic bridge between culture and commerce. We are delighted to be part of such a dynamic global community of e-commerce and digital trade leaders. This is a celebration of collaboration. It reflects the growing energy between Dubai and Istanbul.”

Direct meetings were held on potential collaborations and commercial opportunities

Thanks to the specially designed networking format, participants established a large number of new connections in a short period of time while holding direct discussions on potential collaborations and commercial opportunities. Bringing professionals from different sectors together on the same platform created important opportunities for new business models and strategic partnerships.

VIP Connect not only strengthened existing business relationships but also contributed to laying the foundations for new collaborations between companies from different sectors. Throughout the event, participants had the opportunity to evaluate current developments in the e-commerce and digital trade ecosystem and exchange views on the future of the industry.



Gallery

WORLDEF ISTANBUL Through the Lens







Event Preview

WORLDEF Prime Antalya to Host Strategic Collaborations

Kremlin Palace, Antalya · December 8–10, 2026

WORLDEF Prime Antalya 2026, which will bring together decision-makers from the global e-commerce and retail ecosystem in Antalya, will be held at Kremlin Palace on December 8–10. The three-day, two-night Business Matchmaking Summit will bring together more than 3,000 participants from over 80 countries on the same platform. The three-day event will provide a closed-loop, performance-driven business development platform for retail brands, marketplaces, technology companies, and service providers from Türkiye, Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Russia.

Designed with an AI-powered matchmaking model

At the heart of the event will be an AI-powered matchmaking system designed to bring the right buyers together with the

right solution providers. Participating companies will share their technology needs, operational challenges, and solution areas 30 days before the event. Meetings will be scheduled in advance after mutual interest and alignment between needs and capabilities have been confirmed.

As part of WORLDEF Prime, only senior executives with purchasing and budget authority will be admitted to the one-on-one meeting areas. Retail and brand representatives are expected to consist of C-level executives, vice presidents, directors, or department heads.

Participation from more than 80 countries targeted

The event will host more than 3,000 participants from over 80 countries, more than 450 retail brands, more than 150

companies, and over 50 speakers. Sessions held on a single main stage will cover e-commerce, artificial intelligence, data analytics, logistics, payment systems, omnichannel, technology, and retail operations.

The event's target audience includes multinational companies, SMEs, manufacturers, sellers, investors, public institutions, retail brands, and service providers. Companies operating in logistics, fintech, digital marketing, marketplaces, store automation, artificial intelligence, data analytics, consulting, and fulfillment will also present their solutions at the event.

Business relationships will continue after the event

Following the summit, participants will be provided with a GDPR- and KVKK-compliant, verified meeting contact directory. In addition, the WORLDEF Prime digital follow-up platform will support the continuation of collaborations and commercial discussions. Industry professionals seeking to meet decision-makers shaping the future of e-commerce and retail, connect with new suppliers and technology partners, and explore regional growth opportunities are invited to WORLDEF Prime Antalya 2026 on December 8-10, 2026.

3,000+

Participants

80+

Countries

450+

Retail brands

150+

Companies

50+

Speakers

WORLDEF PRIME

MATCHMAKING SUMMIT

3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS

 **8-10 December 2026**

 **Kremlin Palace Antalya**

 **WORLDEF.COM**
 worldglobal



**Curated Connections.
Measurable Growth.**

**The Next-Generation
Business Network
for E-Commerce&Retail**



Business Growth
Opportunities



Curated Matchmaking
& Introductions



Global Commerce
Community



Exclusive Events
& Executive Access

CONNECTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO CREATE
MEASURABLE BUSINESS OUTCOMES.



WORLDDEF PRIME

MATCHMAKING SUMMIT

3 DAYS 2 NIGHTS

📍 8-10 December 2026

🏰 Kremlin Palace *Antalya*



WORLDDEF.COM



worlddefglobal