

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Delvaux explores brand history in celebrating Dubai boutique

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Iranian model Farnoush Hamidian serves as the face of the new campaign. Image credit: Delvaux

By NORA HOWE

Richemont-owned Belgian leather goods house Delvaux is garnering excitement for its initial step in the Middle East, a newly opened boutique at the Dubai Mall, with a playful and informative campaign.

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To celebrate the opening of the first Delvaux boutique in the region, the brand launched a short film campaign unveiling the history of the leather goods maker from the perspective of Iranian model and friend of the house, Farnoush Hamidian. She speaks openly about her relationship with the brand and its influence on the fashion and leather industry.

"It is a modern campaign that manages to give a nod to the brand's long, storied history, yet move its positioning into current times," said Michelle Kluz, partner of the consumer practice at consulting firm **Kearney**, Chicago. "Picking a well-regarded fashion influencer also introduces a cool factor to bring in a slightly younger generation, and makes it relevant to today, while still maintaining a focus on quality."

Dive into Delvaux

The film opens with Ms. Hamidian sitting in front of a green screen reciting her lines for the advertisement. To cultivate a more authentic and natural message, she throws the script away to speak honestly about the brand.

"They invented handbags," she proclaims. "It is always with me it is a part of me."

"Delvaux is like family to me," she continues. "Delvaux is not just a brand, it is history, class and style."

Ms. Hamidian was born in the northern part of Iran, but moved to Germany in 2014 at the age of 28 to begin her career as an international model.

Ms. Hamidian candidly explores the new Delvaux space

In 2016, she stood alongside Anna Dello Russo for Dolce & Gabbana's Middle East campaign shot by Luca and Alessandro Morelli. She continued her relationship with the Italian brand through 2018, when she was featured in the **#DGLovesBari** campaign.

She has also appeared in the pages of *Vogue Arabia*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour* and was featured in a 6-page editorial and interview in L'Officiel Italia's 2018 September issue.

Now, she serves as the face of Delvaux's latest collection and physical retail strategy.

"If you want to be exclusive, you go for Delvaux," Ms. Hamidian says. "Each bag has a different mood, each mood has a different bag."

For the boutique's grand opening, visitors were greeted by a window display inspired by the Atomium, a symbol of Belgium, raised for the World Fair in Brussels in 1958 the same year Delvaux's Brilliant handbag was created.

The entrance hall features a selection of antique emporte-pièce leather cutting tools from Delvaux's studio in Brussels. Framed by a marble molding, a small leather goods bar replicates the classic European café tradition.

A vestibule adorned in soft burgundy tones leads to a lounge that is decorated with a De Stijl-inspired, wallpaper in metallic hues. The private space invites guests to discover the collection in an intimate setting.

"According to Chalhoub Group, personal luxury sales in the GCC totaled \$9.7 billion in 2021, up 23 percent from 2019," said Marie Driscoll, managing director of luxury and fashion at Coresight Research, New York. "The luxury shopper has changed, too, shopping more locally, willing to experiment and retailers and brands are responding, opening up stores and pop-ups to meet local GCC demand.

"According to Chalhoub Group, 60 percent of luxury is now purchased in-country," she said. "The GCC is a growing force in luxury and as such, opening a shop in Dubai is a wise choice."

[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Delvaux (@delvaux)

A bar that embodies European cafés sits at the heart of the store

Delvaux also has plans to open its second store in the Middle East later this year in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

"Dubai and the broader Middle East is an entry into an entirely new market, but where luxury is already very deeply entrenched," Ms. Kluz said. "It will play well to international shoppers who already know the brand, as well as locals who have no doubt shopped the brand when traveling internationally."

"The store looks fresh and modern, and its larger size caters well to the way locals shop, given that shopping is often a family affair in Dubai," she said. "Also, entry into the most prime mall, Dubai Mall, is a key signal of Delvaux's luxury positioning."

Surge of physical retail

Despite the acceleration of ecommerce due to the COVID-19 pandemic, luxury brands continue pushing physical retail strategies forward.

After seeing significant growth in physical retail at the start of 2022 ([see story](#)), French fashion label Herms unveiled a new store and exhibit in Doha, Qatar ahead of this fall's FIFA Men's World Cup.

The Qatari capital is now home to a new Herms boutique in Place Vendôme, a Parisian-inspired luxury shopping destination. Elsewhere in the city, the house is also hosting a touring exhibition at the National Museum of Qatar ([see story](#)).

In May, Italian fashion house Fendi announced the opening of a new boutique in Mykonos, Greece.

The boutique on the Greek island is located in Nammos Village, a hub beloved for its shopping destinations. The new location is inspired by Mediterranean culture combined with Fendi house codes ([see story](#)).

Even longtime ecommerce giant Amazon recently opened its first physical fashion store in Los Angeles.

From personalized shopping to innovative fitting room experiences, Amazon wants to integrate the benefits of shopping online into the physical environment ([see story](#)). Amazon Style opened in late May at the Americana at Brand retail complex in Los Angeles.

"People still want to touch and feel goods, particularly at a luxury level, but a key element in physical retail is the experience of buying luxury, and the personal touch afforded by the channel," Ms. Kluz said. "In the Middle East, where shopping together as a family is a popular pastime, a physical presence is important for brand building and the overall brand experience."

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