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The Mall of the Emirates in Dubai combines a wealth of stores in formats ranging from the mid-market to the most luxurious. **John Ryan** explores

Big shopping in Dubai



The Apple Store

Think of Dubai and three things probably spring to mind: beaches, big hotels and shopping. This is a small city, but it feels huge owing to the scale of the buildings that have appeared over the past 20 years, the development of which has seen Dubai transformed from a simple stop-off point to a holiday destination and commercial hub.

This is an emirate that has no natural resources. There is no oil here and therefore Dubai relies upon its location to attract those looking for a place to do business.

For many visitors the natural shopping destination is the Mall of the Emirates, a place so huge that it is possible to spend the best part of a day wandering its many levels without seeing everything. It is a good place in which to get a snapshot of just about every shop format there is, from the distinctly mid-market to the marble palaces on offer from the luxury fashion players.

Apple

Most people know the Apple form by now: the white logo is usually somewhere on the exterior of a store, while inside there are likely to be banks of wooden tables displaying iPhones and MacBook Pro laptops. Not so in this Apple branch, which opened at the end of October and does not feature a logo on the



outside. Instead, it is on a secondary location on the mall's third level.

The tech giant has clearly taken the view that it exercises sufficient regional pull to ensure shoppers will make their way up one of the centre's travelators to reach the store.

This is one of the new-format Apple stores (the first to receive the treatment was the Brussels branch, which opened in September 2015). The visitor is confronted by two lines

"A place so huge that it is possible to spend the best part of a day wandering its many levels without seeing everything"



of trees on entering the store. These are, in effect, giant pot plants that form an 'avenue' taking the eye towards a screen at the back of the store.

The screen is high-definition and Apple claims it is one of the biggest of its kind. Deft visual merchandising touches, such as the plain wood table with Apple Watches beneath glass and the wall panel with colour-blocked iPhone covers, make this an interior that entertains and, to an extent, justifies the price of the merchandise.

This is a large store and one that probably hints towards what will be revealed when the covers finally come off the refurbished Regent Street flagship in London.

Sephora

Outside the UK, Sephora has a degree of ubiquity that is no doubt the envy of many other retailers.

More pictures of Dubai's
Mall of the Emirates on
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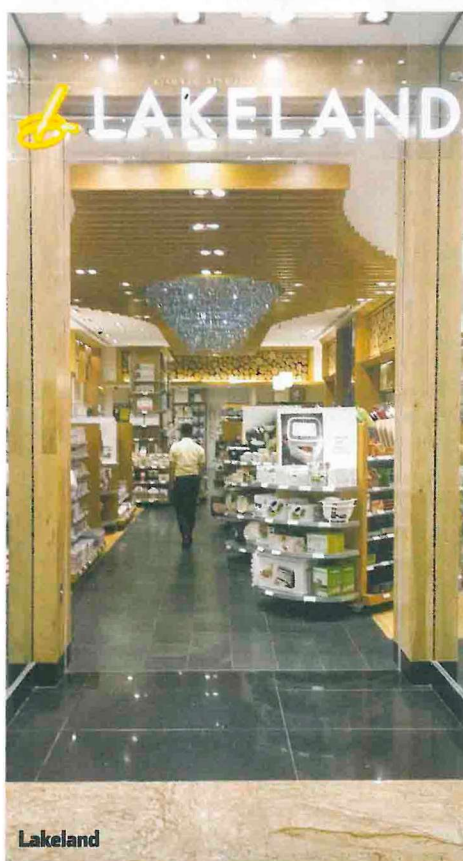


Increasingly Sephora is making the transition from a traditional purveyor of branded cosmetic products to a retailer that is notable for its use of in-store digital displays, ranging from the interactive to outsized screens that serve as digital wallpaper.

Lakeland

There is something strange about seeing the familiar in an unfamiliar context and – with the hot and dusty exterior of this mall – it is surprising to see reminders of an English rural scene. The Lakeland store uses light-coloured wood for its interior, while the high perimeter is dominated by faux logs stacked to create woodpiles contained by wooden frames.

This design is intended to remind onlookers of scenes in the English Lakes, and little concession has been made to the fact that this is Dubai, other than the discreet Arabic script that forms part of the point of sale in the window. If this were in a shopping centre in the UK, it would be a good, but unremarkable, iteration of a chain that has finely honed its act. In Dubai it is startling, largely owing to the context.



Sephora's Mall of the Emirates store is a large branch that makes good use of digital screens with brightly coloured content along the right-hand perimeter wall. The trademark black-and-white mint-humbag appearance of the interior is broken up by a series of structural high-gloss black goalposts that divide this deep store into distinct zones.

The Body Shop

This branch of The Body Shop is much like any other, but better. Where a fair number of its interiors look tired, this one is pristine and the lack of display windows and an open frontage make it inviting.



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▶ Product in the mid-shop is given definition by white-shaded pendant lights that hang just above the display tables, and the perimeter is zoned by strong white-on-black graphics that look fresh and clear. Couple this with highlight walls formed of faux brick painted dark grey to provide a contrast to the rest of the cream interior and the shopper is presented with a winning proposition.

And in keeping with several other beauty retailers, this shop features a large porcelain sink in the middle, making product demonstrations a simple reality.

Abercrombie & Fitch

The Abercrombie & Fitch store in the Mall of the Emirates is unusual because it has two entirely discrete entrances. The first door provides access to the main store, the sign above it stating Abercrombie & Fitch in a large font, while beneath this a lower-case line announces Abercrombie Kids. Walk round the corner and there is another door with the sign Abercrombie & Fitch Fragrance.

This is really two stores on a single site,

“Harvey Nichols windows are generally a talking point”

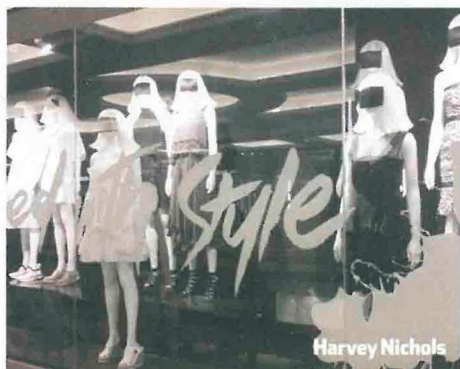


with the smaller fragrance one acting as a retail sub-brand.

Step inside the fragrance shop and the retailer succeeds in convincing that its scents are worth the money by allowing the shopper a lot of room to move, with just a single circular table positioned beneath a chandelier. The rest of the products are, for the most part, in a cabinet on the back wall, while dark wood and a grey marble floor contribute to the sense that this is a premium offer.



Abercrombie & Fitch



Harvey Nichols

Upscale department store Harvey Nichols has featured in the Mall of the Emirates since 2006. The multi-level shop was introduced to Dubai by commercial partner Al Tayer and is one of the luxury anchors in this centre.

It would be hard to miss the store owing to its monochrome windows – Harvey Nichols windows are generally a talking point and typically busy affairs.

In contrast, the store features separate male and female windows, white mannequins for the women and black for the men, and no other colours are used to interrupt the scene. The strapline ‘Dressed with Style’ is plastered across the glass, and the backdrop to the windows is stark. This eye-catching simplicity works well because there is so much going on everywhere else in the mall.