Vic Bageria:

Nothing overtakes retail

Can e-commerce take the throne instead of different shopping malls and store? Will retail stores be just pro forma platforms its costs are on those responsible for it without any return? If this is what's the technological advance wants and that is adopted successfully by the region, then what explains the increase in retail spaces by no less than 10% in GCC countries? And what explains the value of retail sector surpassing 72 bn $ annually in GCC countries?
Vic Bageria, founder and CEO of SAVANT DATA SYSTEM has an answer for these questions that these two commercial sectors are not contradicting, but complementing each other. He points as well through this interview to a new investment port in this matter.

Written by – Tamim Al-Hakeem

E-commerce is deep in the lifestyle of most of US society since almost 17 years, but the ME region is new to e-commerce compared to western countries. From this point, Vic Bageria founder and CEO of SAVANT DATA SYSTEM confirms that the impact of e-commerce sector in the region is different from its impact in western countries, as the region's countries are developing retail sector depending on e-commerce, and these two sectors, according to him, are complementing each other.

Bageria says that the idea of establishing SAVANT DATA SYSTEM, is based upon commercial and technical focus, which is connecting retail world to technological advances, where it can use modern technology to enhance sales of those working in retail sector and provide the best solutions for this field.

The company was established in UAE, based in Dubai, and it has several offices in other countries such as KSA and India, Knowing that its business base is spread across more than 38 country to serve around 400 retailer.

Bageria tells us that one of the main reasons the company is based in Dubai is that he noticed individuals and families going to different shopping centers is a dominant lifestyle across different segments of the countries population, ▶▶

Vic Bageria,
founder and CEO
of SAVANT DATA
SYSTEM

SAVANT DATA SYSTEM participated in GITEX despite its focus in the first place on exhibitions related to .. sector

Company in brief:

SAVANT DATA SYSTEM is among the companies specialized in the field of retail stores technological solutions, that conduct logical analysis and smart calculation in businesses related to retail sales in centers, banks, museums and hotels. The company works on providing unmatched awareness and understanding of what is associated to sales to customers' transactions and the behavior related to them through tracking the path of support chain data.

SAVANT DATA SYSTEM focuses greatly on the customer it also works with statistical organizations to understand clients' shopping activities and habits in stores to increase sales, clients' experience and to decrease unnecessary expenses and obstacles to development.

and refers that projects promised to establish dozens of commercial centers until 2020 just encourages the company to expand and increase its business range in the country.

The company is keen on offering good customer experience in retail stores, as it offers stores dealing with it general information and data that help them increase their sales. In this regard, Bageria says: "We provide data related to number of people who visited the store, and what are the spots in the store that attract most visitors attention, how much time shoppers spend in the store, and what goods they bought, this is because such data help traders improve their sales.

Acceptance challenges

It is normal that modern technology services face a lot of rejection before becoming one of business foundations. This is what it was like to SAVANT, as Bageria commented: "Our first challenge was changing the consumers' dominant

mindset to adopt the technologies we provide. We needed 3 years since foundation to make our first sale, due to lack of this technological culture or even the existence of a simple level of trusting technology culture".

No doubt awareness was the cornerstone of company's work in the first three years and it still does that in a slower pace, since most of retailers today are aware of the importance of these technologies in a totally different way from the first years. Bageria clarifies: "In the beginning we conducted a lot of awareness lectures and sessions or even going to chambers of commerce and we were face by rejection most of the times".

Today, this reality differed for retail stores solutions field, since it became a part of the reality in different commercial stores and centers. This is may be clear through SAVANT's participation in GITEX TECH WEEK that was held mid of last October, where Bageria explained it was "The

▲ The company conducts logical analysis and smart calculation services in businesses related to retail sales.

Seventh time we participate in GITEX TECH WEEK in DWTC. Despite we focused in the first place on exhibitions and forums specialized in retail sector, yet the technological side is a main part of our business and our motive for constant participation in this exhibition."

Regional Expansion

The list of company's main clients include Alshaya Academy, Chalhoub Group, Altayyar Group, Landmark Group, Jashnmal Group, Mall of the Emirates, Oasis Center, REEF Mall, Wahat Hili Mall, Sahara Centre, and The Avenues mall in Kuwait to mention a few.

The company also has a strong presence in Qatar and deals with several commercial centers in it, and one of its newest works is providing its works in Al Hayat Plaza that is being constructed currently in Doha. Bageria explains that company's presence in Qatar, is based on its established position in UAE, since most of its clients in Qatar are former clients in Dubai. Bageria

says: "The reason of expansion in Qatar is my vision that it is an important and growing market, and there are a lot of important aspects to invest in, despite the difficulty of doing some transactions there compared to other countries".

In regards to presence in the region, he confirms: "Our company is considered the only local company specialized in the field of providing these technologies for retail stores, but companies operating in this field are foreign companies that come to the region to expand their influence and investments.

On the other hand, the company's future plans involve targeting African market with its solutions and services, particularly specific countries like Egypt and Angola. However, Bageria assures that "We have to better strengthen our foothold in the region, initially."

Triple business strategy

SAVANT works on providing two products in the next phase, to support the

Retail trade in numbers:

A new analysis from Dubai Chamber predicted retail trade in UAE would reach 200 bn AED by 2017, with a growth average of 5% annually, along with expectations of continued rise in consumer spending across various segments on the medium-term, to stabilize at the verge of 4% annually, leading consumers' spending to be more that 750 million AED next year.

The analysis that was based upon data from Euromonitor, information out of a study from A.T. Kearney research and other sources clarified that consumer's confidence wasn't negatively affected from expectations of slowing economic growth in the region, as retail sales data and consumer spending indicate retail trade sector is growing faster than UAE economy overall.

Retail and wholesale trade sectors in state of UAE are considered of vital and important sectors, they make more than 11% of country's GDP and around 30% of Dubai's GDP. The analysis indicates that retail spaces rose by 7% during 2014 up to 1.6 million sqm, while retail sales in UAE reached 173 bn AED in 2014 by growth percent of 6% compared to 2013.

This is reflected on retail sales per capita a year, which reached 20 thousand AED. Moreover, there are projects under construction to expand existing shopping centers or plans to build new ones and more of entertainment venues.

New platform for business intelligence

SDS, that provide business intelligence technologies for retail sector, banks, museums, airports and nightclubs and serve more than 400 retailer, has lately launched its subscription-based platform.

Since its establishment back in 2000, SDS provided support for organizations in their pursuit of increasing their operations efficiency and achieving more success. The leading company promises to focus entirely on enhancing shoppers experience, where its analytical software and expertise in retail enabled several companies specialized in retail sales to understand the shopper journey, leading to increase the sales volume of a single store, promote client experience and limit unnecessary costs.

Talking about platform details, Vic Bageria, founder and CEO of SAVANT DATA SYSTEM, stated: "Our subscription-based platform for business intelligence provides a set of wide ranged tools combine data from different applications, as it enables the companies of making decisions via giving the ability in the right time to reach data related to business intelligence such as reporting, dashboards, KPIs and other related analyses. Companies are able – after being armed with high level business intelligence technologies provided by our platform – to engage in predictive analytics and make smarter decisions to optimize business outputs.

In the difficult times such as our current days, companies are forced to determine their needs of resources worthy of focusing on in order to move to cloud computing phase. Moving infrastructure of any company's IT has many key elements that should be in mind to assess technology's impact on business. Companies should determine whether they are able to support the new application and how will it affect their functions. Companies also need to know the right time to stop working, and whether it can afford additional training costs. Moreover, SMEs, in particular, need to ask themselves if buying the new technology is in line with their business budget. This is the point made easier for companies by the platform; which enables them of paying while working – making them able to work on operational level without incurring a lot of overhead.

SDS's platforms become greatly beneficial due to enabling organizations of sharing smart businesses data in their operations, since SDS's high quality platforms were designed to ensure accuracy and confidence in making decisions, and keeping companies a step ahead of competition.

Decreasing software and infrastructure expenses is of main benefits resulting from acquiring platform for business intelligence from SDS, they also decrease implementation and management expenses. Platform work on saving time as they work faster plus it is easy to prepare, so it enables people conducting business of making profit the correct way. During the event SDS delivered a live lecture about the product through focusing on its ability of transforming the way companies practice their business.

Paktia says that retail stores are here to stay, but online stores are here to help them.

▲ The first challenge faced the company is changing the dominant mindset of consumers to adopt retail solutions and technologies.

> Most people's behavior in the region is limited to checking the item on online store, then head to retail stores in shopping centers to look for the item and buy it.

product launched by the company lately for small and medium-sized enterprises, keeping in mind it is always setting its future business strategy in a timeline form of 3-year-range.

In this regards, Bageria clarifies that SAVANT doesn't look towards far future in its business, but to work constantly on thinking realistically and adapting to its environment, so as to launch products that match this reality not to be behind or ahead of it.

The latest product of the company, according to Bageria, offers solutions to modern or small retail stores that may not be able to afford the high costs of required technological solutions.

E-commerce is no obstacle

Bageria explains that through his presence in USA, he noticed a wide spread of e-commerce. Though this sector is growing rapidly and constantly in the region, but it is a bit different from US.

This is how Bageria shows that despite the biggest store in the world is available in our smart phones, yet most people's

behavior is limited to checking the item on online store, then head to retail stores in shopping centers to look for the item and buy it.

Looking at statistics published in this regard, Payfort indicates that more than 60% of shoppers purchases via the internet are electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets and computers, all of which their description online is no different from their actual form.

Regarding other goods like outfits, fashion and perfumes etc. are still not widely bought via the internet due to the need to go to commercial shops to check its form and size. Here, Bageria says this is the reality, according to official numbers that confirm the growth of retail sector in the state of UAE. For example, Commercial Registration and Licensing Sector in Dubai's Department of Economic Development recorded 39 thousand business license in the 3rd quarter of 2016, with growth of 10% compared to same period of 2015. Bageria concludes: "Here we see that retail stores are here to stay, but online stores are here to help them". ab