
Kamco Invest - DIFC hosts a panel discussion on trends shaping the e-commerce Industry in the region

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Kamco Invest hosted a panel discussion on “Trends shaping the e-commerce industry in the region”. The event featured valuable insights from guest panelists; Abdulaziz Al Loughani, Chairman and CEO of Floward, and Sulaiman Al-Rubaie, Managing Director of Investment Management at Kamco Invest.

The event was attended by high-net-worth individuals and executives representing key institutional investors. The discussion was moderated by Anwar Sbaitan, Executive Director of Kamco Invest – DIFC, who shed light on the digital economy and e-commerce industry in specific.

Sbaitan mentioned that the tech scene has seen a slight downturn globally since early 2022 due to interest rate hikes, but there has been a recovery since Q1 2023, indicating a positive trend. He highlighted the resilience of the e-commerce sector in the GCC region, with unique dynamics allowing it to weather macroeconomic risks and maintain strong IPO activity. GCC's stock markets remain robust, attracting investor confidence due to strong businesses and family office listings and is now becoming attractive for tech IPOs which is the direction Floward is heading towards.

Al Loughani started by providing a comprehensive overview of the MENA e-commerce market, which boasts a substantial worth of approximately USD 40 billion with an outlook of substantial growth in the near future. He referred to Floward's addressable market which accounts for USD 12.6 billion that span the GCC, Egypt and Jordan. He emphasized that the key drivers of growth in the market include the increasing number of online transactions, a growing tendency toward gifting, high purchasing power in the GCC, and a sizable and expanding population of around 53 million in Floward's operating countries.

Al-Rubaie emphasized that Kamco Invest has been closely monitoring the evolving technology landscape and the technology sector continues to be a significant appeal to the company. He believes that numerous positive factors in the region will bolster investor confidence, with KSA playing a pivotal role due to substantial investment activity. Additionally, there are promising indications of increased capital market activity in other regional areas. The region's distinctive and robust businesses, coupled with family office listings, are expected to pique international investor interest, given its competitive positioning and established market presence.

The panelists further emphasized several key factors that are set to reshape the landscape of online buying and selling within the evolving e-commerce industry. These include adapting to changes in the business model, enhancing unit economics, ensuring reliability, and constructing a versatile portfolio of brands—all of which are crucial components to the changing dynamic.

Al Loughani explained that the integration of the supply process, coupled with a robust infrastructure enables them to take full advantage of their omnichannel presence, giving their business a competitive advantage over smaller competitors with marketplace business models.

Al Loughani commented, “Our fully integrated supply chain, seamless customer experience, and state-of-the-art infrastructure give us a significant competitive advantage. This allows us to maintain high product and service quality. Thanks to our widespread and efficient operations, we can provide same-day delivery services to our customers.”

The panelists then delved into the significance of collaborating with both local and international brands, securing strategic sponsorships, and establishing a distinctive selling proposition. According to them, setting these strategies are essential to enhance the brand's image, boost awareness, and establish a strong brand association, ultimately improving business adaptability and potential for success.

In a market where the number of available products continues to grow rapidly, Al Loughani emphasized the concept of creating a "house of brands." From his perspective, this approach ensures remaining distinctive and appeals to customers seeking unique and personalized options. He explains that through curating a portfolio of exclusive brands or offerings, companies can capture the attention of discerning customers and build brand loyalty.

A prominent theme that emerged during the discussion was the importance of adaptation and strategic expansion. The expansion into new verticals showcases the company's agility in responding to changing consumer preferences and market demands. This move will shed light on the significance of diversification and staying attuned to market trends.

Throughout the discussion, the panelists addressed the specific challenges and risks associated with e-commerce in the region. Amongst which, the vast geographic expanse of the region and varying levels of infrastructure development made ensuring timely and reliable delivery of products a complex task. They emphasized that investing in logistics infrastructure, utilizing fulfillment centers and innovative delivery solutions was essential to offsetting the challenges related to logistics and last-mile delivery infrastructure.

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