

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



Tariffs Bite
The Trump administration's tariffs have taken effect – but China is still up in the air and imports have surged. **Page 2**



Call Sophie
Saks has partnered with NLX and Amazon Connect on a virtual voice assistant called Sophie for customer queries. **Page 3**



Goop Grows
Goop is focusing more and more on beauty, and is expanding into Ultra brick-and-mortar as a result. **Page 14**



Copenhagen Cool

Copenhagen is the epitome of Scandi style – and at no greater time than during the city's fashion week. But the looks have become less predictable and more eclectic than in the past, like the one seen here. *For more of They Are Wearing, see pages 4 to 8.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON JEAN

BUSINESS

Ralph Lauren Raises Outlook As Q1 Profits Climb 30.7%

- But CEO Patrice Louvet told WWD that tariffs could make the retail world trickier to navigate in the second half.

BY EVAN CLARK

Ralph Lauren Corp. charged past first-quarter expectations and raised its outlook for the full fiscal year, even with some trepidation over how consumers will react to the impact of higher tariffs.

Net income rose 30.7 percent in the quarter to \$220.4 million from \$168.6 million a year ago. Adjusted income increased a slightly faster 34.9 percent to \$236 million, or \$3.77 a diluted share – 22 cents ahead of the \$3.50 earnings per share analysts forecast, according to Yahoo Finance.

Revenues for the three months ended June 28 increased 14 percent to \$1.7 billion, an 11 percent bump-up in constant currency.

Investors, who had driven shares of the company up 90 percent over the past year, decided to take a step back given the cloudiness going into the fall and sent shares of the company down 6.5 percent to \$283.34.

Despite that decline, the firm has been one of fashion's standouts on Wall Street and has a market capitalization of \$17.2 billion – about three-times the combined market cap of competitors Capri Holdings and PVH Corp.

There are a lot of elements to the company's stock price expansion over the longer term – Ralph Lauren has been steadily increasing its average prices by pumping more into the brand and solidifying its image while also navigating all the operational complexities of tariffs and a global supply chain.

But a lot of it seems to be that, even after nearly 60 years in the business, Ralph is still Ralph.

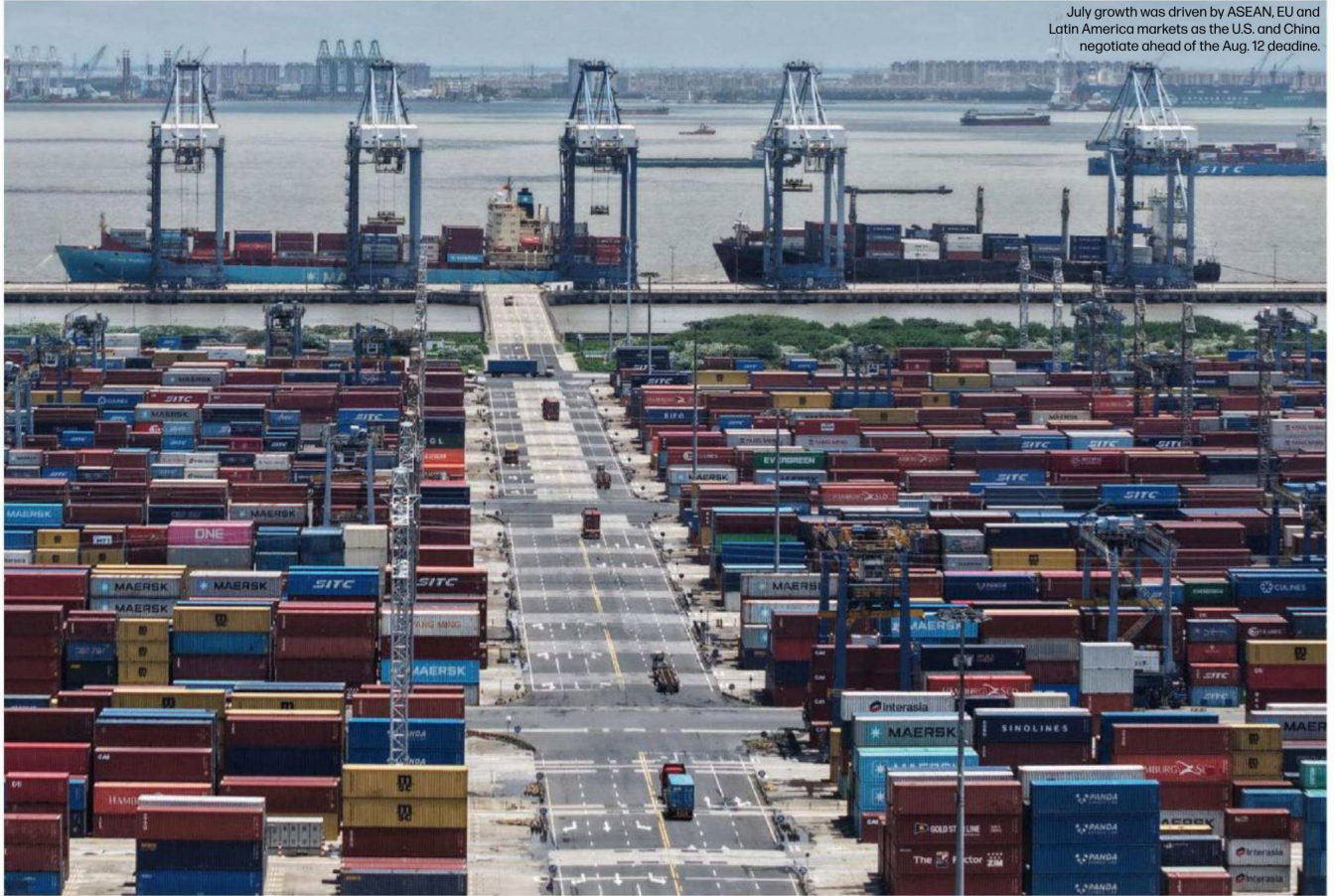
"What we stand for – aspiration, optimism, individuality and authenticity – inspires people in every corner of the world," said Ralph Lauren, executive chairman and chief creative officer, in a statement. "And we are bringing these values to life and inviting people to step into their dreams in new and powerful ways – from our first-ever fashion presentation in Shanghai this April to our MLB World Tour Tokyo Series activations and our Women's Polo presentation in Paris."

Despite being the player that so many of the American fashion brands have aspired to be – each in their own way – Ralph Lauren continues to stand on its own.

Patrice Louvet, president and chief executive officer, told WWD Thursday morning: "It's very difficult to pigeonhole Ralph Lauren in a specific box because of the breadth of our product offering, because of the breadth of our price

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

China's Exports Surge as Global Trump Tariffs Take Effect



July growth was driven by ASEAN, EU and Latin America markets as the U.S. and China negotiate ahead of the Aug. 12 deadline.

● Thursday saw dozens of nations integral to the fashion supply chain hit with steep, double-digit duties.

BY GLENN TAYLOR AND KATE NISHIMURA

Four months after President Donald Trump declared the U.S. “liberated” from pervasive global trade imbalances by implementing a new tariff regime, a revamped set of duties on the country’s most prominent trade partners has gone into effect.

Thursday saw dozens of nations integral to the fashion supply chain hit with steep, double-digit duties. The European Union’s 27 member countries now face 15 percent tariffs on U.S.-bound exports, while Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Pakistan were all hit with 19 percent tariffs and Bangladesh and Vietnam saw their duty rates set at 20 percent.

Earlier this week, the president threatened to elevate tariffs on India, already set at 25 percent, to 50 percent due to the country’s continued purchase of Russian oil. He slapped Brazil with an analogous sky-high rate for pursuing criminal charges against its former president, a Trump ally.

But one key U.S. trading partner — and the historic object of Trump’s most fervent ire — faces a separate deadline. The three-month bilateral tariff truce between the U.S. and China expires Tuesday, and state

officials on both sides have been fervently negotiating with the aim of brokering a deal before the 55 percent tariffs on Chinese shipments kick in.

Whether the pause is extended (as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Thursday is likely) or another resolution is reached, importers have been clamoring to ensure that their China-originating goods are loaded onto vessels bound for U.S. shores before the pause is due to expire.

Chinese exports grew 7.2 percent year-over-year to \$321.8 billion in July in a sign of strength for the market as shippers rush product out of the country ahead of a looming negotiating deadline with the U.S.

The country’s outbound shipments heavily outperformed the 5.4 percent jump calculated by a Reuters poll of economists, and represented an acceleration over export totals in May (4.8 percent) and June (5.8 percent).

The ongoing trade war between the trans-Pacific powerhouses has resulted in a collapse in goods sent directly from China to the U.S., with exports falling 21.7 percent in July, according to data from the General Administration of Customs.

But July figures from the National Retail Federation’s Global Port Tracker still indicate some semblance of a pull-forward, with major U.S. ports expecting to pull in 2.1 percent more 20-foot equivalent units than the year prior — the most containers entering the country since May 2022.

American companies that are still

importing cargo from China via ocean or air are likely looking to get out in front of a potential increase in price — again.

Both the U.S. and China engaged in talks in Stockholm to prevent tariffs from returning to the elevated levels they reached in April and May. The U.S. had hit Chinese goods with tariffs as high as 145 percent, with China retaliating with an 85 percent duty before the countries agreed in May to mutually reduce their tariffs for 90 days.

When including a 20 percent punitive duty for fentanyl trafficking, U.S. tariffs on Chinese exports currently stand at 55 percent.

The deadline for the countries to negotiate a new trade deal is Aug. 12. If a deal is not made, the tariffs before the May truce would go back into effect.

Lutnick indicated in a Thursday interview on Fox News that it is likely that the countries will come to an agreement that would extend the deadline for another 90 days.

But even with the tenuous relationship with the U.S. knocking down export numbers to the country, China has been able to more than make up for the gap elsewhere.

The country’s shipments to the 10 countries comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations increased 16.7 percent year-over-year. This includes markets like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

China has increasingly relied on third countries such as ASEAN to circumvent tariff barriers and for the manufacturing of final products or components. The White House has explicitly targeted Vietnam and Thailand as countries that are participating in this transshipment process, with the U.S. hitting the former with a 40 percent tariff for goods transshipped into the U.S. from China.

Outbound shipments to the European Union increased by 9.2 percent in July, while exports to Latin America ticked up 7.7 percent. Africa had the largest increase in shipments on the receiving end at 42.4 percent.

Maersk CEO Vincent Clerc said in a second-quarter earnings call that the strength of Chinese exports to the rest of the non-U.S. world will dictate the wider growth of the container market.

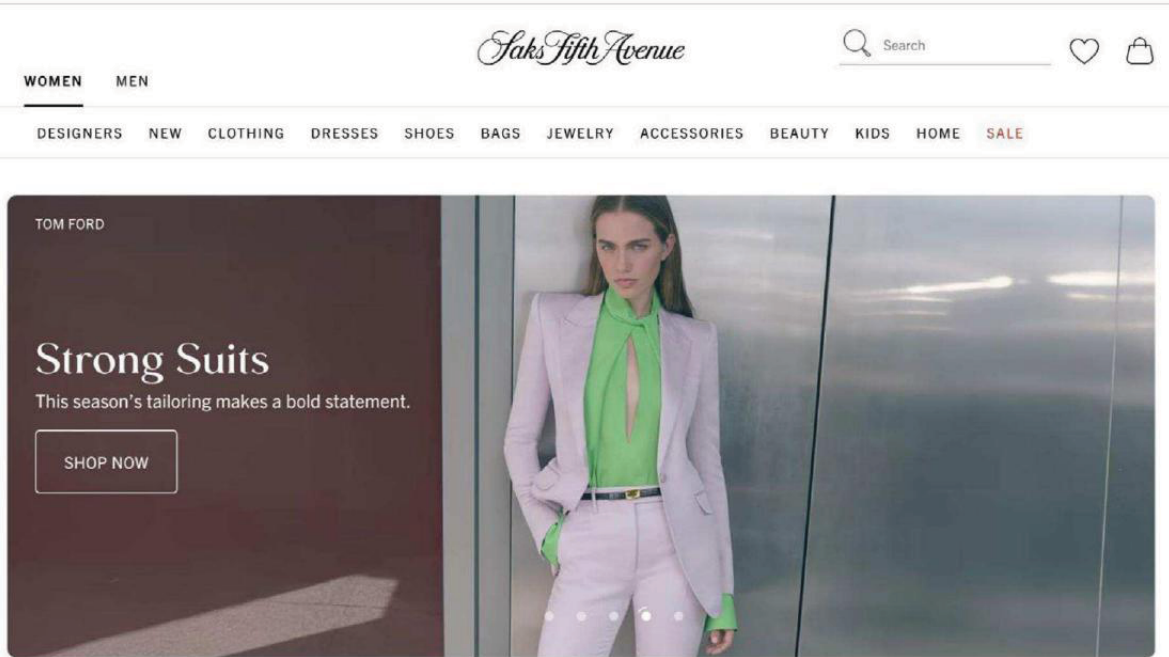
“On the back of the industrial successes that they’re having and the overcapacity that there is in China, this could actually carry stronger market growth than anticipated for a few years,” said Clerc.

China’s imports, meanwhile, rose by 4.1 percent year-over-year last month to \$22.3 billion, representing the sharpest gain since July 2024. The numbers defied expectations of a 1 percent decline in the month, and build on a 1.1 percent gain in June.

The strong import month points to improved domestic demand as Beijing has placed a stronger focus on stimulating consumer spending.

BUSINESS

Saks Fifth Avenue's New AI Venture: Virtual Voice Assistant



A Saks Fifth Avenue homepage.

- NLX and Amazon Connect partnered with the luxury retailer to provide a virtual voice assistant responding to customer inquiries.

BY DAVID MOIN

Saks Fifth Avenue is getting deeper into AI.

The luxury retailer has partnered with two tech companies, NLX and Amazon Web Services, to provide an AI-powered virtual voice assistant for conversations with customers.

Shoppers can call Saks and ask “Sophie,” the virtual assistant, questions about the status of orders and returns, details on their gift cards, store assistance, price match policy and other subjects.

There is also an optional texting component, so if Sophie requests your order number or zip code, you can submit a text with the information, or continue to speak to the virtual assistant. With some tasks, such as changing a password or an address, it’s not necessarily practical over a voice-only interface, particularly if a customer does not speak clearly enough. NLX has patented its dual virtual voice and text exchange capability.

Saks Fifth Avenue customers also still have the option to request a human assistant.

Such virtual voice technologies are widely used by banks, tech firms, health care organizations and 411 directory assistance, but not so much by retailers, with a few exceptions such as Amazon and Walmart. Saks Fifth Avenue implemented the NLX technology in April but just decided to publicize it after piloting it on a limited basis to remove any kinks before fully rolling it out. With the NLX proprietary no-code platform and with the help of Amazon Web Services, Saks built, tested and analyzed voice-first, generative AI-powered conversations in a matter of

weeks without needing to tap IT resources.

In the future, Saks could enable its virtual voice assistant to respond to a wider set of questions including inquiries on private label credit cards, or to help customers asking for suggestions when they are searching for merchandise. Other possibilities are extending the technology so customers can converse in languages other than English, and extending the technology to Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman and Saks Off 5th, which along with Saks Fifth Avenue, are part of Saks Global.

“In a nutshell, NLX enables anyone from individuals to very large organizations to build and deploy these conversational applications,” said Andrei Papancea, chief executive officer of NLX, which specializes in conversational AI with a platform for building and managing chat, voice and multimodal applications at scale. “So if you’re a brand like Saks, or United or Toyota which are also our customers, and you want to provide your end customers with the ability to talk to your brand in this free-form natural way, the NLX platform allows you to build such applications.” Comcast and United Airlines are also NLX clients.

Amazon also provides the critical infrastructure for operating this technology through its cloud services business unit, Papancea said. NLX stands for natural language experiences, which in technology refers to interactions between humans and computers involving everyday language, not technical inputs. “Saks Fifth Avenue understands that its customers expect excellence in everything, and their post-purchase service experiences are no exception,” Papancea said.

“At its core, luxury is personal. By thoughtfully integrating advanced technology like NLX, we are not replacing the human touch, we are enhancing it,” said Jessica Bengtzen, vice president of service centers for Saks Global, who listed several

advantages to using the NLX technology. She said it “deflects high-volume inquiries and provide immediate support with no wait times, and improves the customer experience with intuitive, conversational self-service. These time savings scale to measurable gains in workforce efficiency, service speed and bottom-line performance, all while increasing customer satisfaction and driving loyalty.”

Bengtzen also indicated that by redeploying some of the workforce, service improves “across all facets of the customer journey.” Basically, it reduces agent call volume for routine inquiries, enabling them to focus on complex customer needs and prioritize more meaningful customer interactions.

So far, the voice technology has decreased agent call volume by about 20 percent, Saks said. “We are pleased with the early results and positive customer adoption,” said Bengtzen. “If this momentum continues, we anticipate deploying more broadly across our Saks Global brands.”

AI technology can also lead to a reduction in headcount and costs. Asked if the implementation of the virtual voice system has led to, or could lead to some headcount reduction, Bengtzen replied, “With this technology, our intention is to enhance our teams’ capabilities, enabling them to work smarter. By automating routine tasks, we’re empowering our teams to focus on higher-value interactions that require human judgment, creativity and care.”

As previously reported, Saks Global is seeking to reduce annual expenses by approximately \$600 million through consolidations and cutbacks. Saks is navigating a tough business climate marked by a global slowdown in consumer luxury spending which is complicated by Saks’ efforts to repair relations with

vendors and catch up on hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid bills. Some vendors have recently been made whole, others not as of yet.

Saks Global, considered the largest multibrand luxury retailer in the world, operates 70 full-line luxury store locations, additional off-price locations and five e-commerce websites. Aside from its latest tech innovation with NLX, the group also uses AI for personalizing marketing communications to customers through its websites and mobile apps involving suggesting products they might be interested based on past preferences on styles and brands, as well as for sales data, and other purposes. Saks has a history working with Salesforce, which uses AI for predictive analytics, personalization and customer relationship management, as well as Amazon, which uses AI for Alexa. In April, Saks Fifth Avenue launched on

Amazon’s Luxury Stores platform with a storefront. Both Amazon and Salesforce provided financial support for Saks Global’s \$2.7 billion acquisition of the Neiman Marcus Group in December 2024. Two apparel industry giants also invested in Saks Global’s purchase of NMG, the Authentic Brands Group and G-III.

Saks’ technology initiatives are integral to the agenda at the Saks Global to “reset” the luxury customer experience, as the company’s chief executive officer Marc Metrick has said. The agenda centers around intensifying personalization and bolstering customer service, and involve several operational aspects and integrations, such as inventory sharing between Saks and Neiman’s which is currently being tested in one market, enriched data, deeper customer insights and smoother interactions with consumers, and utilizing AI to a greater degree.

Thinking of AI innovations for the future, Papancea said: “Saks Fifth Avenue could roll out, if they were interested, an ‘AI personal shopper.’ You go and be like, Hey, I’m going to a gala at the Met in two weeks. Here’s the theme. What should I wear? And then it won’t just come back to you with like textual descriptions. It will give you product recommendations, add them to your cart if you accept, and be able to even check out and pay in that conversational experience. That would also be leveraging unique capabilities from NLX.”

Asked if some customers believe they are conversing with a real human versus a virtual voice, Papancea replied, “What we recommend to customers is they don’t misrepresent that they’re talking to a real person like they should say, Hey, I’m the Saks AI assistant. My name is Sophie. I’m here to assist you or to take you to a customer support agent. That’s our recommendation to brands.”

THEY ARE WEARING

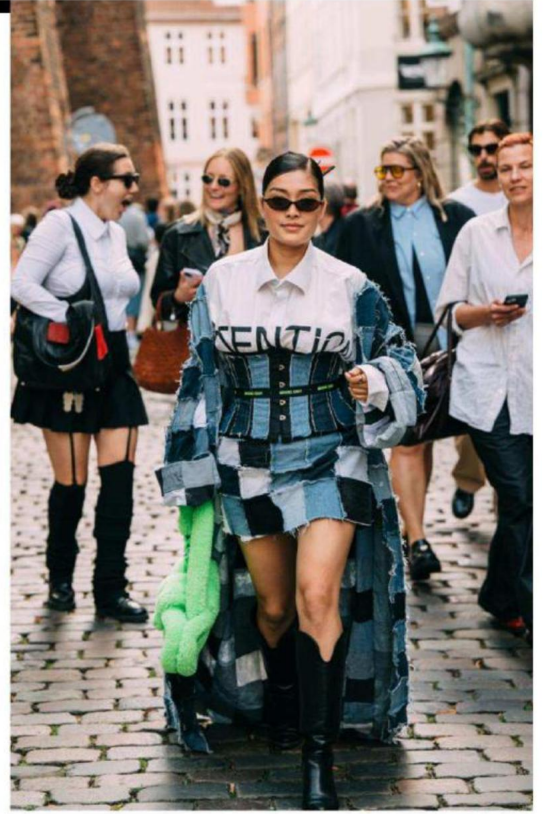
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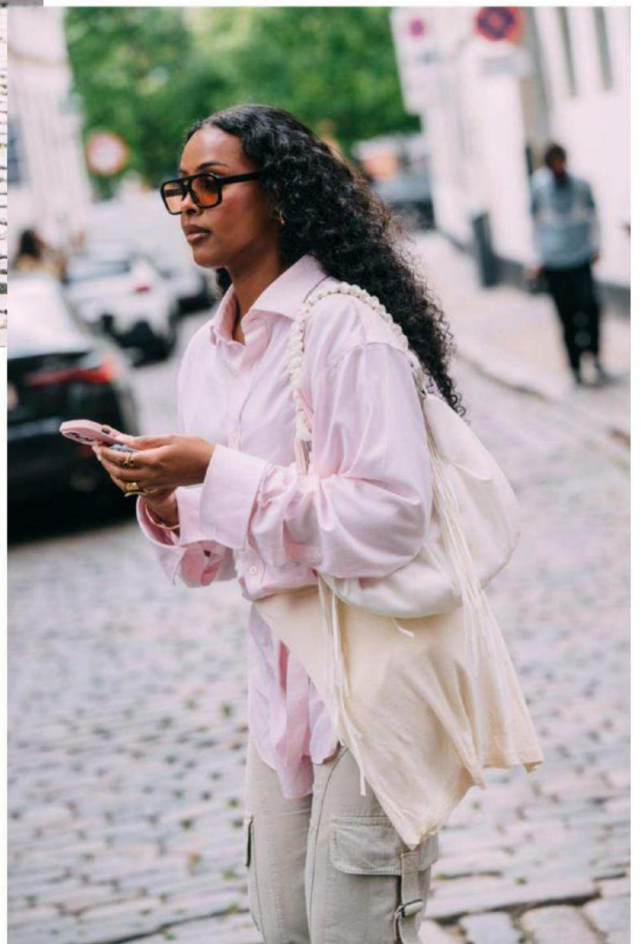
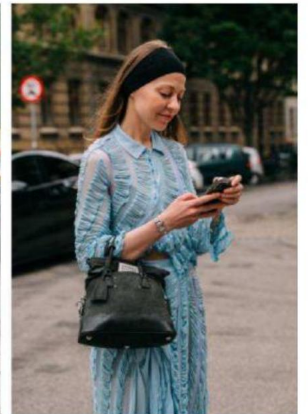
The Danish capital is the center of Scandi style but the looks are more eclectic than in the past.

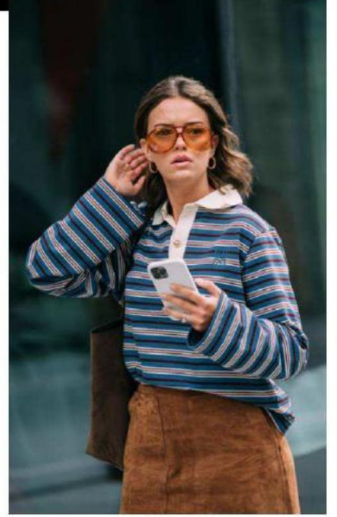
BY ALEX BADIA PHOTOGRAPHS BY JASON JEAN











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BUSINESS

Simon Property Group Elevates Eli Simon to Chief Operating Officer

● The promotion places Eli Simon in line to potentially succeed David Simon, his father, as the next chief executive officer of the nation's largest shopping center owner and operator.

BY DAVID MOIN

The Simon Property Group has promoted Eli Simon, executive vice president, chief investment officer and director, to chief operating officer.

Eli will work directly with David Simon, chairman, chief executive officer and president, who is also Eli's father, on all aspects of the business, including property performance, new development projects, the company's strategic investments, and brand strategy.

The promotion, revealed Thursday, puts the 37-year-old Eli Simon squarely in line as the potential successor to his 63-year-old father, who has been undergoing treatment for cancer for several months.

Asked if Eli's promotion represents succession, Simon Property Group provided WWD with a statement that read: "The board made this appointment. The board is always focused on succession planning and evaluating the talent available and roles to be filled."

The position of chief operating officer

has been vacant since Richard S. Sokolov moved up to his current role as vice chairman in 2019.

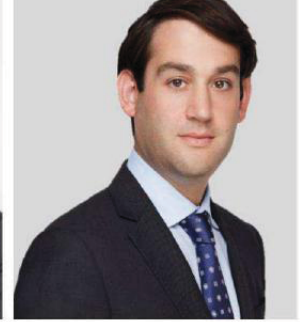
Eli Simon joined the company in 2019, leading the company's investment strategy for both real estate and non-real estate investments, including new business sourcing, strategic corporate investments, and the execution of various real estate transactions. Before joining the company, he was the principal and head of North American Lodging at Och-Ziff Capital Management and Och-Ziff Real Estate, where he oversaw all lodging related investments, including asset and portfolio acquisitions, operating company investments, and lending opportunities.

Simon also said that Jonathan Murphy and Eric Sadi have been named copresidents, North American Real Estate. They will oversee Simon's North American real estate portfolio and all three of the company's platforms – Malls, Mills and Premium Outlets. They will also be responsible for asset management and leasing strategies. Murphy and Sadi, respectively, joined the Indianapolis-based company in 2010 and 2006, and have served in various capacities throughout their tenures. Since 2020 they have been copresidents of Simon's Mall Platform, overseeing the revenue stream, occupancy, and merchandise mix for the company's malls.

David Simon



Eli Simon



"One of the hallmarks of Simon's success is the strength and depth of our management team," David Simon said in a statement. "As we work to further advance our growth, I am pleased with these leadership appointments. Our culture of innovation will continue to be a strategic asset for us."

Larry Glasscock, lead independent director, said in his statement, "These executive appointments position Simon to continue to deliver long-standing industry-leading results by delivering an exceptional product and environment for our consumers and retailers."

This week, Simon, a real estate investment trust, posted a solid second-quarter financial report, with David Simon characterizing business as remaining "robust" and the demand for retail space as "unabated."

"There's a lot of geopolitical stuff going on, obviously, and a lot of domestic political stuff going on. Tariffs swing back and forth. There's interest rate uncertainty. You name it. However, you have unbelievable stores that are able to manage that, and retail demand is

really unabated," said CEO Simon during Monday's conference call with investors and industry analysts. "The physical shopping environment continues to be the place to be...So we're quite bullish about what we've done, what we are doing, and where we are going, despite all the headlines that are out there."

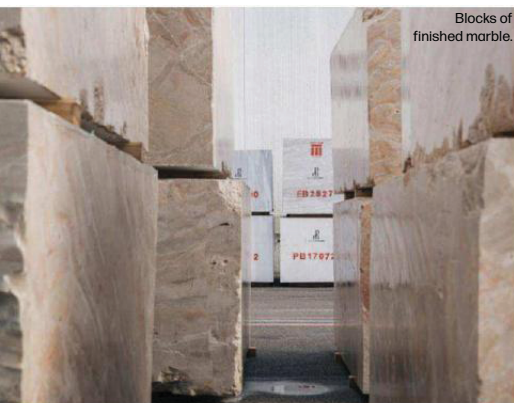
Among Simon's most major properties are the Roosevelt Field mall in Garden City, N.Y.; King of Prussia mall in Pennsylvania; Sawgrass Mills in Sunrise, Fla., and Woodbury Common Premium Outlets in Central Valley, N.Y.

Second-quarter net income attributable to common stockholders was \$556.1 million, or \$1.70 per diluted share, compared to \$493.5 million, or \$1.51 per diluted share, in 2024. Industry analysts expected \$1.55 a share.

Real estate funds from operations (FFO) were \$1.15 billion, or \$3.05 per diluted share, as compared to \$1.1 billion, or \$2.93 per diluted share, in the prior year, an increase of 4.1 percent. Occupancy as of June 30 was 96 percent, a 0.4 percent gain compared to 95.6 percent on June 30, 2024.

HOME DESIGN

New Discoveries Abound for Italian Marble and Fine Stone Companies



Blocks of finished marble.

of a path intertwined with economic and geopolitical hurdles to which the sector has become accustomed.

"This achievement underscores how our product consistently ranks first in terms of material quality and craftsmanship," trade show organizer Adolfo Rebughini, general manager of Veronafiore, told WWD.

Veronafiore, in the Italian city of Verona, is gearing up to welcome 1,400 exhibitors from 50 countries and more than 50,000 operators and professionals from 150 nations to Marmomac, the international trade show for the stone supply chain.

At Marmomac, which will take place Sept. 23 to 26, Italian white marble takes center stage as one of the most successful products internationally, Rebughini said.

The demand for classic Italian marbles, from Carrara to Calacatta, is experiencing significant growth in the luxury construction sector, both in private settings and in the hotel and spa industries. Especially in China and the Gulf region where bright interiors contrast with the warm climates. Highly prized colored marbles are also in great demand: Rosso Verona, Travertine, Perlato di Sicilia, Pietra Serena, Trani

Bronzetto, Palissandro Botticino and Porfido.

According to fine stone industry consortium Confindustria Marmomacchine, exports of Italian stone materials in 2024 rose 3.8 percent in volume, reaching 2.1 million tons. In value terms, exports reached 2.18 billion euros, marking a 5.8 percent rise compared to 2023.

Raw materials, which account for 21 percent of exports, increased by 10.7 percent, while exports of semi-finished and processed materials (which make up 79 percent of the total) grew by 4.5 percent.

The U.S. is the industry's top market according to Confindustria Marmomacchine. In 2024, exports of processed Italian natural stone to the U.S. rose 14 percent to 542 million euros. Germany ranked second with 125.2 million euros worth of exports, down 1.7 percent, while France was up 9.5 percent to 115.6 million euros. Emerging markets like Saudi Arabia featured prominently with 84.5 million euros, surging significantly, up 37.2 percent. China was the top consumer of raw materials with exports totaling 229 million, up 27 percent, followed by India at 46.7 million, down 14.7 percent.

Italian companies, in the meantime, are eagerly exploring new geographical areas that could serve not only as markets but also as sources of raw materials and partners for joint development. In particular, East Africa, where countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania

offer underdeveloped deposits and a rich geological diversity, are one such opportunity, Rebughini explained.

The Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, is not only a major buyer but also a region investing in the exploration and development of its natural resources. Finally, in Latin America, there are countries that present a growing market for businesses. In particular, Brazil boasts more than 1,200 types of marble, quartz, granite and ornamental stones. Numerous Italian companies, he said, are already operating mining sites there. As a result, Veronafiore also organizes Marmomac Brazil in São Paulo, a leading trade fair for Central and South America, as well as for operators in the U.S.

The 59th edition of Marmomac aims to highlight all the "veins" of the storytelling of fine stone – from production, to technological advances and how it is refined from a raw block to finished material.

In an effort to compete with more design-forward events, the 2025 layout of the The Plus Theater, the curatorial Pavilion of the fair, has been inspired by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, an urban model for the center of Paris, drawn between 1922 and 1925.

Looking ahead, the marble and stone market exports to foreign markets are expected to rise 4 to 6 percent in value terms in 2025. Risks to that forecast include unexpected tariffs and, or a worsening geopolitical situation. It is challenging to make a realistic forecast today due to the uncertainty surrounding U.S. economic policy, Rebughini commented, adding that the recent EU tariff that fixed duties at 15 percent will still spur a decline in export volumes to the U.S.

● Fair organizers of Marmomac told WWD that new quarry sites and foreign markets will drive the marble and stone sector to growth in 2025, despite an uncertain economy.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

MILAN – Since the ancient Romans began excavating marble more than 2,000 years ago, the average price of Italian natural stone per ton has reached a record 1,016.4 euros. This new height is the culmination

BUSINESS

Lectra's Maximilien Abadie on Reshaping Fashion's Future



Maximilien Abadie

● The executive behind the acquisition of Launchmetrics was appointed deputy CEO in June.

BY RHONDA RICHFORD

PARIS – Behind the scenes of fashion's digital reinvention sits Lectra, the France-based technology company quietly shaping much of what we wear. In June, the company appointed Maximilien Abadie deputy chief executive officer.

Abadie joined the company 14 years ago, and was pivotal in its acquisitions of traceability platform TextileGenesis and trend analysis tool Launchmetrics, the latest in a flurry of deals he has spearheaded since 2018.

More than one third of the world's clothing is designed by brands with Lectra technologies, according to the company's data, reflecting its widespread behind-the-scenes influence in manufacturing. With fashion contributing more than half of Lectra's revenue, the industry will be "the vast majority" of the company's future investment strategy, Abadie said.

Lectra started as design and sizing software for the fashion industry, later expanding into production equipment. The group now has a SaaS-oriented acquisition strategy, with more expected in the coming months to support its growth.

For Abadie, who stepped into his latest role in June, Lectra's ambitions stretch into steering the fashion world into what he calls the "fourth industrial revolution" – a future defined by AI, cloud computing and real-time data analysis.

The shift is fundamental and will boost brands' revenues, as well as sustainability, he believes. "Fashion is a loop," said Abadie. "You need to create, manufacture and market quicker than before. And before the steps were siloed – first you were focusing on create, then manufacture, then market. But now everything starts from the market."

Abadie believes we're in the midst of a move from the top-down "push"

model of the past, when brands would dictate trends and drive production, to a "pull" model, where consumer demand influences everything from design to manufacturing and distribution.

Brands must understand consumer demand, identify trends, determine pricing and position products competitively – all at the same time. "Everything goes in parallel now," he said.

It's a shift that will fundamentally change the fashion industry, Abadie asserted.

In response to this transformation, Lectra has pursued an aggressive acquisition strategy, snapping up six companies over the past few years.

Among them is Launchmetrics, acquired in January 2024, which provides brands with analytics tools to evaluate ROI from runway shows and media campaigns. It goes beyond the runway – though that, too, is expanding with invitation and event management tools – to assess consumer brand sentiment.

Despite ongoing economic challenges across the fashion sector, Lectra reported a 10 percent year-over-year increase in revenue for the 2024 fiscal year to 526.7 million euros.

Launchmetrics, consolidated as of January 2024, contributed 41.2 million euros, and fashion overall accounted for 50 percent of the company's 2024 revenue.

Launchmetrics' latest initiative aims to analyze consumer perception through AI-driven analysis of buzz, mapping words like "responsible" or "innovative" to track how brands are perceived in real time.

"We track every post on social media, every magazine and newspaper," Abadie said. Using an algorithm, it can gauge if response is positive or negative, and analyze what images are most popular by use in articles or posts.

This kind of visibility is increasingly valuable in a fast-paced environment where consumer attention must be maintained constantly amid the clamor of Instagram and TikTok, and "new-in" drops.

Abadie described this as a step closer to the "see-now, buy-now" model, where

new products can reach consumers within weeks of being showcased on the runway, instead of months.

"Products now, they are coming to the store on a regular basis – if not every month, twice a month or every week," Abadie said. "So the goal for the brands is really how they can attract consumers on a regular basis to the stores, how they can create several reasons for the consumers to go back."

That same real-time agility is also reshaping production timelines. Lectra's technologies allow brands to adapt to be closer to a "see-now-buy-now" model – products paraded on the runway can hit the shelves within a couple of weeks, rather than months.

"By interconnecting people around the same data...all those creative mindsets now, they can get a product in the hands of the consumers in a few weeks," said Abadie. "That's a tremendous shift."

On the sustainability front, Lectra's TextileGenesis platform seeks to improve supply chain transparency by tracing certified fibers such as organic cotton and recycled polyester. The system uses blockchain-inspired technology to track materials across the supply chain and flag discrepancies, such as mismatches between

the volume of garments produced and the available supply of certified fiber. If they don't match, there has been some mixing of fibers or misreporting along the way.

"If you are not, as a brand, capable to know who is behind your supply chain, you cannot master it," Abadie said. "You cannot influence the decisions, you cannot make commitments."

The platform has tracked 2.6 billion garments to date – up from 2 billion at the beginning of the year – with over 15,000 suppliers across Asia, Europe, and South America participating.

"Without traceability, there's a risk of fraud. There's a risk of greenwashing," Abadie said. "That's what we're trying to solve."

Other manufacturing products enable real-time adjustments in production planning. According to the company, this improves agility in responding to market fluctuations, while its on-demand production platform aggregates orders and aligns manufacturing with actual demand to reduce overproduction and waste, and allow for smaller, more frequent collections.

One company cited by Lectra has reportedly used the system to produce 5 million made-to-measure shirts in Vietnam for the U.S. market.

Driving all of this transformation is AI – not as a buzzword, Abadie noted, but as an embedded, working reality. "There are more and more concrete applications of AI, notably in fashion," Abadie said. "Our belief is that the only way to shorten lead time, to close the gap between consumers and the brands, to use material resources in a responsible manner so to avoid CO2 emissions and so on – the only way is by digitizing the task and automating processes."

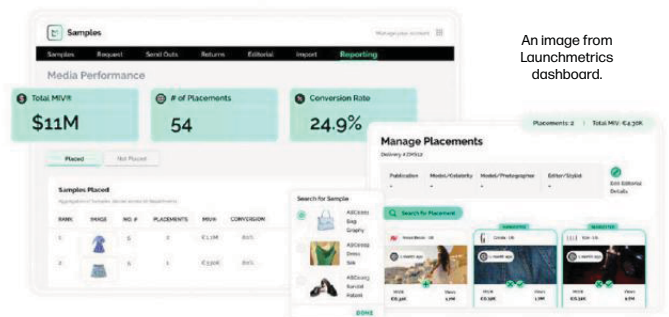
The cloud, resisted a decade ago by fashion executives concerned about ensuring IP secrecy, is now essential. "Ten years ago I had an interesting discussion with a very famous luxury company" which refused to use the cloud, said Abadie. "Now I can tell you if you are not in the cloud, you are not competitive."

Abadie also rejected the notion that technology and creativity are in conflict. Instead, he argued, technology allows designers to iterate and execute ideas more efficiently.

"People are pitting one against the other, creativity and technology," Abadie said. "I don't know why. Technology is leveraging the creative mindset of everyone, because you can iterate much more than in the past."

An AI-empowered designer can test ideas, communicate specifications, and move from sketch to store faster than ever.

"If the rest of the value chain is digitized and the designer is not, then you create a conflict. Only technology can remove this barrier," he said, noting that design does not come from the tech, but the tech is used to promote creativity. "I think it's highly correlated – this notion of emotion and technology. Emotion starts from the product itself."





BUSINESS

Kontoor Strengthens 2025 Outlook

- The company saw an unexpectedly strong performance from its new acquisition, Helly Hansen.

BY ANGELA VASQUEZ

Kontoor reported strong second-quarter 2025 results driven by better-than-expected organic revenue growth, gross margin expansion, operating efficiency and cash generation and an unexpectedly strong performance from its newest acquisition, Norwegian performance brand Helly Hansen.

Kontoor's revenue for the second quarter increased 8 percent to \$658 million compared to the prior year. Second-quarter results include the contribution from Helly Hansen, which closed on May 31.

Following a strong first half and increased clarity around its tariff mitigation strategies, the company is raising its full-year outlook. Revenue is now expected to be in the range of \$3.09 billion to \$3.12 billion, representing growth of approximately 19 to 20 percent compared to the prior year. This compares to the prior outlook of 17 to 19 percent growth.

Additionally, Kontoor now expects Helly Hansen to contribute approximately \$455 million to 2025 revenue, compared to the prior outlook of \$425 million.

The company's outlook assumes a 30 percent reciprocal tariff on China and a 20 percent reciprocal tariff on all other sourcing countries, except for Mexico. Kontoor's

imports from Mexico to the U.S. remain exempt under USMCA. A combination of targeted price increases, sourcing and production optimization within its global supply chain, inventory management, supplier partnerships and other initiatives will be employed to "substantially offset" the impact from recently enacted increases in tariffs over a 12-to-18-month period.

"To support our momentum, we are making incremental demand creation investments to fuel accelerating revenue growth and continued market share gains," said Scott Baxter, Kontoor Brands president, chief executive officer and chairman. "While we will continue to manage the business prudently in light of the environment, the third quarter is off to an encouraging start, and we enter the second half of the year from a position of strength."

In the second quarter, Wrangler brand global revenue was \$461 million and increased 7 percent compared to prior year. The heritage brand's U.S. revenue increased 9 percent, driven by an 8 percent increase in wholesale and a 16 percent increase in direct-to-consumer, including an 18 percent increase in digital. However, international revenue decreased 4 percent compared to prior year, driven by a 5 percent downturn in wholesale partially offset by a 4 percent increase in DTC.

"Wrangler has had an excellent first half of the year," Baxter said, adding that Wrangler saw its 13 consecutive quarter of market share gains as measured by Circana in its men's and women's bottoms

business. The Western business grew midsingle digits, combined with strength in Wrangler's core denim. Additionally, he said Wrangler's female business continues to surpass expectations, and the brand is now in "chase mode" for many styles.

Lee continues to be a brand in transition. Global revenue decreased 6 percent to \$166 million compared to prior year, though the results were consistent with expectations. In the U.S., revenue decreased 5 percent driven by a 7 percent decrease in wholesale partially offset by a 3 percent increase in DTC. Lee international revenue decreased 6 percent driven by an 11 percent decrease in wholesale partially offset by a 3 percent increase in DTC.

Kontoor will roll out the first brand-equity campaign for Lee in more than a decade in September. Built on Lee's authority in denim, the campaign will be supported by strong product, followed by enhanced distribution. Baxter said the campaign speaks to the strength and quality that has defined Lee for more than 135 years, reimagined for a younger generation of consumers. "Test results have been very encouraging, and we are excited to bring the new vision to life ahead of the holiday season," he added.

Helly Hansen global revenue was \$29 million for the month of June. Sport and Workwear revenue was \$17 million and \$9 million, respectively. Musto brand revenue was \$3 million. U.S. revenue was \$5 million and international revenue was \$24 million.

The company is creating an "investment

roadmap" to accelerate Helly Hansen's growth. "We see significant opportunities in the U.S. through a combination of wholesale and retail expansion, as well as investments in product innovation, category expansion and demand creation to increase brand awareness," Baxter said.

With Helly Hansen being under-penetrated in key accounts, he said Kontoor is developing plans to unlock new distribution channels starting in 2026. Product and category expansion is another opportunity. In the near term, Baxter said the brand will expand its lightweight and cooling platforms to increase penetration in southern climates. The company also plans to capitalize on its position as a leading brand in ski and sailing to grow Helly Hansen's outdoor segment. "We think that consumer all kind of navigates to the same area and shops in a very similar pattern. You'll see us in some of the more outdoor specialty opportunities," Baxter said.

Workwear is another category of Helly Hansen's business with a long runway for growth, especially in the U.S. where it has minimal impact. Baxter said the company aims to scale growth across three strategic categories – construction, high visibility and footwear – with a good, better, best framework. "We think there's incredible innovation in the workwear business globally that we haven't seen here in the United States, and Helly is going to allow us to go ahead and bring that into this huge workwear environment in a pretty significant way," he said.



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EXCLUSIVE

Goop Doubles Down On Beauty, Expands Into Ulta Stores

- The wellness brand is entering 800 Ulta Beauty locations on Sunday.

BY RYMA CHIKHOUNE

Goop Beauty, the wellness-rooted brand founded by Gwyneth Paltrow, is entering a new phase as it rolls out across 800 Ulta Beauty stores nationwide on Sunday. With six products featured on Ulta's "Brand New Skincare We Love" endcap, the brand is expanding in mass retail after first launching online on Ulta.com in June.

"We're off to a really strong start online on Ulta," Paltrow told WWD, citing the \$68 72-Hour Supercharged Hydrating Water Cream Moisturizer and the \$38 Daily Detox Foaming Cleanser as early standouts with consumers. "I do like the challenge of trying to understand, who is the Ulta customer and what is she looking for, and what is her age, and how does she want to be spoken to?"

The expansion comes amid a larger recalibration at Goop. After reportedly laying off 18 percent of its 216-person workforce last year, the brand is now doubling down on beauty.

"It's our biggest business. It's our most profitable business," Paltrow said, confirming that beauty is Goop's top revenue and gross margin driver. "So much so that some board members along the way have been like, 'Hey, do you guys really want to still be doing all

this other stuff?' But the answer for me, categorically, is yes."

Beyond beauty, the lifestyle offering includes Goop Kitchen (coming to New York next year, Paltrow said), fashion via G. Label, wellness content and retail, with new brick-and-mortar stores in Aspen and Newport Beach. "We have a lot in the pipeline," Paltrow continued. "We have a couple of fun announcements coming, one in August, one in September."

A pioneer in bringing modern wellness into mainstream culture, Goop has a renewed focus on brand clarity, Paltrow added.

"I sort of pulled back this last year and really started focusing on brand," she said. "I've done a ton of brand work this year...getting super clear about who we are, on paper." While that work hasn't been shared publicly yet, Paltrow said she's energized to continue investing in storytelling and brand awareness.

Goop Beauty said second-quarter sales were up 21 percent year-over-year, with wholesale revenue increasing 73 percent year-over-year. Partners include Sephora, Credo and Amazon, among others. "We're having a fun growth year," Paltrow said of beauty.

Goop's offerings stand out in the increasingly crowded "clean" beauty category through transparency and credibility, claimed Gina Lucania, Goop's



Gwyneth Paltrow

vice president of sales and marketing in wholesale. "What gets us in the door is the name, but the name doesn't get us out the door. So that's where the products really have to stand on their own," she said, adding that performance-driven formulations sustain sales and long-term consumer trust.

"The younger generation is obsessed with results. And I think we really deliver on those things in a way that I don't think many brands do," Paltrow contended. "My beauty philosophy has always been to get

the skin as beautiful as possible so that the woman feels as confident as possible."

Lisa Tamburello, vice president of merchandising at Ulta Beauty, said Goop's positioning fits the retailer's Conscious Beauty strategy. "We're thrilled to welcome Goop to our assortment," she told WWD in a statement. "The brand's clean intersection where beauty meets wellness perfectly complements our commitment to offering differentiated and Conscious Beauty choices, across skin care, body care and more."

FASHION

Virality-Driven Beauty Brands Reshaping Industry, but Sustained Momentum a Challenge



Sarah Cheung, founder and face of Satchel.

- A report highlights the TikTok-fueled growth of brands like Medicube, Anua and Satchel Beauty while emphasizing innovation and retention for long-term success.

BY KATHRYN HOPKINS

A report by Spate and YipitData shows that TikTok-fueled momentum is translating into meaningful share gains for a cohort of next-gen brands across the beauty industry.

Among the key gainers are Medicube and Anua, which rank as the top two skin care brands on TikTok with 10.6 billion and 9.3 billion views, respectively.

"Virality is being driven by curiosity. Consumers are excited by new product innovation, as well as new application techniques," Yarden Horwitz, cofounder of Spate, said. "Brands like Medicube are winning by launching clinical innovations such as microneedling serums, while also launching new technique innovations with sensory, TikTok-friendly formats like boba creams and peel-off masks that change color once fully absorbed."

Horwitz added it's important, too, to distinguish that a majority of views for many such viral brands are coming from paid content – whether it's from paid sponsorships with top influencers or eligible-for-commission content with microinfluencers.

At 4.5 billion views, Satchel Beauty, known for its Peel-Off Lip Liner Stain, is the second most viral makeup brand on the platform. "This product isn't just going viral; it's changing how consumers engage with makeup," said the report.

With 2.3 billion views on TikTok, Lattafa was the top fragrance brand. In the hair category, brands like Wavytalk, Karseell and Tymo are redefining consumer expectations with styling tools and treatments that deliver dramatic, camera-ready results.

According to the report, these brands are not just disrupting category leaders – they're also changing how consumers shop, with platforms like Amazon becoming key destinations for impulse and trend-driven purchases over traditional retailers.

Yipit's data shows Medicube and Anua are gaining meaningful traction in Amazon's skin care space, with Medicube in particular climbing rapidly to reach 2 percent of total category share as of May 2025. As these emerging brands grow, legacy staples like CeraVe and Neutrogena are losing ground – highlighting a category in flux as consumer interest shifts toward

newer, buzz-driven brands.

However, while these brands are making a splash, sustaining that momentum remains a major challenge, with many struggling to translate early hype into long-term loyalty.

The report used skin care brand Cosrx as an example. After a strong start in 2024, its share began to taper off by mid-2024 and remained on a gradual decline into 2025, suggesting the brand's viral momentum – fueled in part by the popularity of snail mucin – may have plateaued. As Cosrx lost share, both Medicube and Anua gained traction, each expanding their footprint through the first half of 2025.

"Ongoing product innovation and launches will help these virality driven brands maintain momentum," said Horwitz. "Medicube has continued to launch new products and formats, and despite first taking off in the U.S. in 2024, they're still seeing over 1,000 percent year-over-year growth in 2025."

Entering retail is also key, added James Hart, president of YipitData. "If you want longer-term success, you need to have a plan around not only direct-to-consumer, but also specifically which online retailers and which brick and mortar retailers you're going to be working with."

For retailers, the report's message is clear: Make space for virality-driven brands or risk losing relevance to more agile distribution platforms.

BUSINESS

Midtown South Mixed-use Plan OK'd With Housing, Fashion in Mind



Seventh Avenue/Fashion Avenue in New York.

- The area is centered around Herald and Greeley Squares and located roughly between West 23rd and West 40th Streets and Fifth and Eighth Avenues.

BY ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

New York City Council's Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises and Committee on Land Use voted to approve the Midtown South Mixed-use rezoning plan that greenlights 9,500-plus new homes, including more than 2,800 permanently affordable homes.

Prior to Wednesday's unanimous vote, New York City Mayor Eric Adams and the department of city planning championed the plan, despite some fashion-related businesses speaking out publicly about the potential toll on fashion-related tenants. City Council members Erik Bottcher and Keith Powers, whose respective districts fall within the area, responded to some fashion-related appeals.

Known as MSMX, the rezoning impacts four areas centered around Herald and Greeley Squares and located roughly between West 23rd and West 40th Streets and Fifth and Eighth Avenues, with the Garment District comprising a portion of that. In addition to housing, the plan aims to strengthen Midtown South's economy and bolster jobs through light manufacturing, office space and retail. The Garment District is the hub of the \$400 billion American fashion industry. Fashion employs 180,000-plus people in New York and generates more than \$11 billion in wages annually.

The plan will lead to residential development in a neighborhood where it is largely scarce, and will include affordable housing for the first time. It will come with \$488 million in community benefits and infrastructure improvements, geared for the Garment District and businesses, as well as parks, public transit, and other neighborhood resources. Some of the new initiatives are meant to further set up Midtown South as a center of creativity, craftsmanship and economic opportunity.

Established between 1900 and 1925 for apparel manufacturing, the neighborhood remained that way for decades until some manufacturers started to head south. The district's fashion-related jobs decreased

after more domestic manufacturing shifted offshore in the 1970s and 1980s, and then the North American Free Trade Agreement further impacted domestic jobs and production. As some fashion companies moved out to more affordable neighborhoods or closed, the neighborhood's vacant spaces were leased by nonfashion businesses, hotels and nonprofits.

Generations of American designers including Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, Vera Wang, Tommy Hilfiger, Bill Blass, Oscar de la Renta, Carolina Herrera, Adolfo, Stephen Burrows, Thom Browne, Prabal Gurung, Liz Claiborne, Claire McCardell, Bonnie Cashin, Norman Norell and others established their companies in the Garment District. In the past decade though, numerous designers, especially younger ones, have opted to run their businesses in other parts of Manhattan, outer boroughs and in some instances other states, where commercial rents are more affordable.

With Wednesday's vote, the City Council secured more than \$121.9 million in programs and partnerships for the Garment District including preserving manufacturing, offering up to \$25 million in tax abatements to support the preservation of industrial space, restarting the M-Core program to support the creation of below-market space, offering \$50 million in the Greenlight Innovation Fund, launching the CFDA Local Production Fund with \$1.8 million in public-private funding, continued investment in the Garment District Alliance's \$2.5 million per year Business Development Collaborative, and debuting Midtown Made to support designers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs.

Acknowledging the city's support of New York City's fashion industry, the Council of Fashion Designers of America is pleased to see the fashion sector's concerns reflected in the plan, according to Steven Kolb, chief executive officer and president of the CFDA. He noted the CFDA Local Production Fund "underscores a shared belief in sustaining garment manufacturing and independent design in the city."

According to Kolb, the CFDA appreciates Bottcher and Powers, Mayor Adams' administration and the New York City Economic Development Corp. meeting

with the CFDA and directly addressing its interests, "ensuring that creativity, industry and community remain at the center of Midtown's future."

"It's also important to us that the plan prioritizes funding requirements for the Garment District Alliance, which will now operate with greater transparency and include industry representation on the selection committee. We welcome the continued investment in workforce training, below-market production space and branding initiatives that support and elevate local designers and manufacturers," Kolb said.

The Council also secured more than \$340 million for street improvements, upgrades to parks, playgrounds, local MTA subway stations and bus routes, and funding for local hospitals and emergency medical services. Investments in local schools like the High School of Fashion Industries will also get a boost.

Last year, advocates for the New York Fashion Workforce Coalition rallied together over concern that buildings would be demolished and manufacturing would be diminished with the rezoning. However, increasing the allowable floor area ratio and the use of air rights have upped the neighborhood's property value and the coalition's activism, according to supporter Katie Sue Nicklos, CEO and owner of Wing & Weft Gloves.

As a small business owner and glove maker in the rezoning area, she said she is really hopeful that "the city's commitment to fashion, theater and entertainment will not only preserve our ecosystem, but also begin to rebuild what we know could be here and that has been worn away," Nicklos said.

Encouraged that nearly 20 percent of the MSMX plan has been carved out to be nonresidential – versus all of it initially, she also praised the city's efforts to support designers and makers in the neighborhood. Most importantly, there will be some oversight of the new program between the coalition and a point person at the NYCEDC, who has not yet been named, Nicklos said. The aim is to ensure the programs are working and available to the area's network of 200 to 300 small businesses "so that they know what's possible and to drive businesses to the district," Nicklos said.

"The most important thing is that the city listened to us. A whole bunch of people got together to lend their voices to protect our cultural impact not only on New York, but the city, the state – the world really," she said. "The most important part to note is that the city doesn't take our industry for granted. They are doing the right thing in moving forward and protecting our industry."

Peg Breen, president of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, said the businesses and people, who work in the Garment District, deserve a lot of credit for being "very persuasive and very persistent." Pleased as she was that some of the area's buildings will be protected, Breen said the notion that some city

officials consider some of the others to be tear-downs is rather startling.

The city recently named five buildings as New York Landmarks – the Barbey Building at 15 West 38th Street, the Fashion Tower at 135 West 36th Street, the Furcraft Building at 242-246 West 30th Street, the 29th Street Towers at 214 and 224 West 29th Street and the Lefcourt Clothing Center at 275 Fifth Avenue. There are plenty more substantial buildings that could be individual landmarks, and are already eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, Breen said. "I don't think there's a need to take any of them down. If the others can be converted to housing without demolishing, that's great," she said.

Noting how the Midtown South project overlaps with two historic districts – part of Ladies' Mile and Midtown South, Breen said, "They should just leave historic districts alone. All of the historic districts put together make up only 5 percent of the entire city."

While new buildings and modifications to existing ones are allowed in historic districts, they are meant to blend in with the rest of the area, Breen said. "Historic districts are important to the city in terms of quality of life and our identity," she said.

Part of the draw of rezoning Midtown South was the prospect of converting commercial buildings that were no longer appropriate or in use into housing, Breen said. "That's a terrific idea and that should be done. The jury is out about whether letting developers build taller and taller buildings is going to solve our problems for the housing."

In a statement, Adams said that with Wednesday's vote, "We're taking another step forward in helping to create a more dynamic Midtown South where New Yorkers of all income levels can live, work and play. Not only will this plan deliver thousands of new homes for this central neighborhood, but it also represents a down payment on our vision of 100,000 new homes across all of Manhattan over the next decade."



Employees at work at a glove manufacturer in the Garment District.

Ralph Lauren Raises Outlook As Q1 Profits Climb 30.7%

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Ralph Lauren



From Ralph Lauren Purple Label men's spring 2026 ready-to-wear collection.



Patrice Louvet

architecture. We recently sold a \$300,000 watch, and then we also sell packs of tennis socks for \$15.

"It is all about authenticity," Louvet said. "People see that. I have lunch with Ralph every week when neither of us are traveling and the thing that we always talk about is, are we staying true to who we are?"

"It's so tempting in this industry to chase a trend, to want to create a trend, to copy what someone else is doing," he said. "It's so tempting to do it, and it might work in the near term, but over time you end up diluting what you stand for and you end up confusing the consumer. We are in an industry where a number of brands are a little lost right now in terms of what they stand for and who they are. And we work very hard to stay true to who we are."

He framed it as a fidelity to both value and values.

"We put a lot of emphasis on value perception," he said. "Value perception isn't just about price. It's about how's the storytelling, what's the product experience,

what's the shopping experience. And then you put that relative to the price that we asked for. We know the consumer is discerning, and we're putting a lot of emphasis on making sure that relative to the competitive set, we provide a very attractive value."

It's an approach that seems to have connected with shoppers around the world in the first quarter, when average unit retail prices increased 14 percent through the brand's own stores and website.

By region:

The brand's total North American revenues rose 8 percent to \$656 million, with comparable sales up 12 percent.

The European top line advanced 16 percent to \$555 million, or 10 percent in constant currency, with comp sales also up 10 percent.

Revenues in Asia grew 21 percent to \$474 million, a 19 percent increase in constant currencies, with an 18 percent comp sales rise.

Louvet said Ralph Lauren was taking share from just about everyone.

"We are seeing consumers coming from brands that might be below us from a pricing standpoint, but consumers are excited about what we have to offer," he said. "We are seeing trade across from competitors that are playing at our price tiers. And that's both true in the Polo world and in the luxury space of Collection and Purple Label.

"Then we are seeing, I wouldn't say it's direct trade-down, but I do think consumers in that [top] tier are redirecting their spending. I suspect we are benefiting somewhat from consumers redirecting money they used to spend on maybe handbags and hard luxury like jewelry and watches, now [buying] into our apparel."

Accordingly, the company has grown more confident on the year ahead and is now projecting revenues will increase in the low- to midsingle digits on a constant currency basis, up from the low-single digit forecast made in May. The operating margin for fiscal 2026 is now expected to expand by 40 to 60 basis points in constant currency. Before, the firm said that it would grow operating margin only "modestly."

Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData and an astute retail observer who readily calls out poor performance and management missteps, lauded Ralph Lauren's "stellar set of numbers."

"Ralph Lauren is doing a great job of attracting younger consumers to the brand," Saunders said. "Through a combination of refreshed marketing campaigns and very strong social media activation, our data indicate that Ralph Lauren has successfully increased both penetration and spend among younger demographics. Placing Ralph Lauren in important cultural moments, such as Selena Gomez's outfit at the Oscars, also cements the more youthful stance of the brand. All of this has been achieved without sacrificing the older consumer base that has long shopped Ralph Lauren."

The company's performance comes against a macro backdrop that's been tough and could be getting tougher.

Louvet said: "We're cautious in the back half disproportionately in North America because we don't know how consumers are going to respond to what will likely be a more inflationary environment. We have heard many companies across industries talk about how they will increase pricing to deal with tariffs among different interventions. And we don't really know how the consumer's going to respond to all these expected increases across industries."

Next month, Louvet will reveal more of the company's plans for the future at an investor day, particularly for its "high potential" categories, women's apparel, handbags and outerwear.

"We'll be sharing the size of prize of these categories that we play in," Louvet said. "We've only just begun."



Manny Jacinto Talks 'Freakier Friday'

Jacinto stars in the long-awaited sequel film with Lindsay Lohan and Jamie Lee Curtis.

BY LEIGH NORDSTROM PHOTOGRAPH BY LEXIE MORELAND



Manny Jacinto

“People have seen me in comedies, or they’ve see me do action stuff, but nothing where it’s just something with heart and something that’s kind of grounded.”

MANNY JACINTO

It would be rather disappointing if Manny Jacinto didn’t have a good story of first meeting the original “Freaky Friday” cast upon joining the sequel. Luckily, Jamie Lee Curtis makes a memorable first impression.

“The first time I met Jamie was in the makeup chair, and she told me to screw myself because apparently she mistakenly tried on my pants, and I guess they didn’t quite fit, and she was offended by that,” Jacinto says. “And after we got through that hurdle, it was all hugs and laughter.”

Jacinto joins Curtis, Lindsay Lohan, Chad Michael Murray and more for “Freakier Friday,” the long-awaited follow up to their 2003 hit film, in theaters Friday. Jacinto plays Eric, husband to Lohan’s character Anna.

“There’s this obvious sense of pressure to get it right, and I think everybody feels that, but I’ve always felt so taken care of by the people that are part of the team,” Jacinto says of joining the cast. “You feel like the new kid in school and you’re nervous and you want to be a part of the cool kids. And luckily, the cool kids are actually cool and welcoming.”

Jacinto had heard rumors about another “Freaky Friday” movie but didn’t give it a second thought until Nisha Ganatra, the film’s director, asked to meet.

“She mentioned the type of character that she would love for me to play. We talked about the first movie and we talked about just each other’s work,” says Jacinto. “She was a big fan of my work, and I was a big fan of hers, and it kind of just came together in such a beautiful way because we not only got to build this character together, but we collaborated for a number of different scenes, and she’s very kind of on her feet and likes to try things,” he adds. “We found a lot of magic through kind of exploring together.”

Eric marks the first time Jacinto, 37, has played a father onscreen and the role at first took some getting used to. “I was like, ‘damn, am I that old?’” he jokes.

Not only was he drawn to the opportunity to play a positive father figure, but being the romantic lead was its own novelty.

“I definitely wanted the opportunity to just play that straight man anchor that carries the heart of the film,” says Jacinto, who is best known for the NBC comedy series “The Good Place.” “People have seen me in comedies, or they’ve see me do action stuff, but nothing where it’s just something with heart and something that’s kind of grounded.”

After press in New York, Jacinto, who was born in Manila and raised in Vancouver, will head to the Philippines for a special screening of the film. The trip marks his first time going to the country for work.

“A lot of articles are saying ‘Manny’s finally coming home,’ which is very, very sweet,” he says. “I’ll get to see some family as well and show them that I’m doing OK, that it’s all not just a lie.”

Fashion Scoops



Elaine Welteroth with her child.

More Charity

MAC Cosmetics is expanding its philanthropic efforts with a \$200,000 Viva Glam Fund grant to The Victoria Project in partnership with BirthFund, the nonprofit founded by journalist and maternal health advocate Elaine Welteroth. The grant will support midwifery-led, maternity care for 30 underserved families across the U.S.

"I met with the team [at MAC], they were already leaning in, super supportive of what we did," Welteroth said. "It felt really exciting to know that we had this additional funding in our pocket. We applied it toward covering the full amount for all of our families in cohort four, which is being distributed basically, imminently, so August through September."

Since its 2024 launch, BirthFund has raised more than \$3 million to cover midwifery bills for families losing insurance or otherwise falling through systemic gaps. The organization is expanding to support midwives in training, addressing a shortage exacerbated by lack of funding.

"There is no funding available for community midwives," Welteroth went on. "Many have been in training for years while working other jobs just to keep the lights on."

Beyond funding, MAC will help amplify the message through social storytelling and postpartum makeovers for mothers.

"The entryway is beauty, but really, what we're addressing is so much deeper," said Welteroth. "Beauty is a

universal equalizer, just like motherhood."

According to the World Health Organization, midwifery care could avert 80 percent of maternal and infant deaths. And yet access to this care remains limited, especially for marginalized communities.

Welteroth's own home birth experience inspired the creation of BirthFund and its partnership with The Victoria Project, which together aim to address systemic barriers such as cost, racial inequity and lack of access to trusted providers.

Launched in 1994 to support those impacted by HIV/AIDS, and now focused on broader equity issues, MAC Viva Glam has raised more than \$535 million. Its campaign continues to donate 100 percent of the

selling price of its Viva Glam lipsticks to global causes.

"For decades, Viva Glam has championed communities that are too often overlooked," said Rachel Lockett, vice president of marketing for MAC North America, as part of a statement. "With this grant, we're honored to help fund holistic, midwifery-led maternal care for families who need it most."

—RYMA CHIKHOUNE

Clarifying Controversy

Omaha Fashion Week, the event's owner Brook Hudson and producer Mary Reynolds-Secher and the fashion designer Kelli Molczyk have issued a joint statement regarding the controversy that upended

last winter's event.

During Molczyk's show on Feb. 28, which was part of OFW, some attendees took offense for what has been described as an apparent swastika on the back of a jacket. Some attendees described the emblem as a hate symbol. After being banned from the event, the designer said it was a pinwheel pattern from a repurposed quilt.

In an Instagram post after the incident last winter, Reynolds-Secher had referred to being "appalled at the sight of a hate symbol walking on the runway. Those who know me know I staunchly stand against everything that symbol stands for. The anger that it evoked in me was palpable and I had to calm myself before talking with anyone. I have been involved in this community for 20 years and continue to work to build a safe welcoming space for everyone that I love."

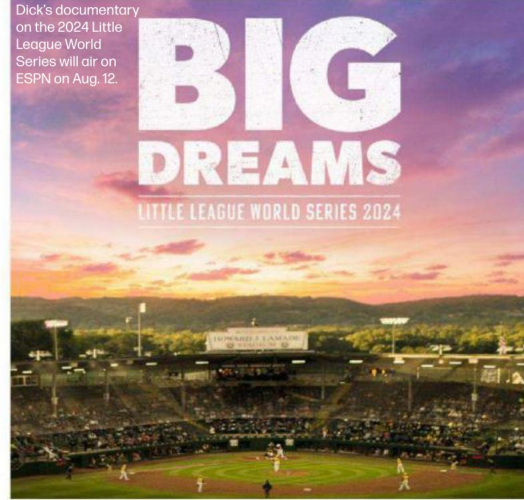
All parties seem to have resolved their discourse. Their statement read, "Regarding a concern raised with a design incorporated into an article of clothing by Ms. Molczyk, OFW has concluded that Ms. Molczyk followed OFW protocols for a headlining designer, and that she had no intent to display a hate symbol of the garment (during) Omaha Fashion Week. Ms. Molczyk acknowledges that she was so close to the design it never occurred to her that persons unfamiliar with the quilt pattern could see it as a symbol of hate."

OFW has invited her to apply to participate in future OFW events. The next installment will be Aug. 20 to 23 in Omaha, but she said Thursday that she does not plan to participate during that show.

The designer is based in Kearney, Neb., where she runs and designs her sustainable-focused company Re-deFind. With more than 25 years of experience in the fashion industry, Molczyk specializes in outsourced freelance work in styling and apparel design. She uses thrifted and discarded pieces and material from people's closets and homes to recreate fashion-forward items.

Her newest collection is called "The Vanilla Fields Collection" with items like a blazer, mother-of-the-bride top and dinner pants retailing for less than \$100. The assortment has been made from such repurposed textiles as

Dick's documentary on the 2024 Little League World Series will air on ESPN on Aug. 12.



lace tablecloths, curtains, sheets, table runners and secondhand men's clothing.

The designer declined an interview request Thursday, stating that she was unable to comment further on the matter.

—ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

Sports Shows

Dick's Sporting Goods is getting into the sports content business.

The Pittsburgh-based retailer has launched Cookie Jar & a Dream Studios, an in-house content and production studio "dedicated to telling powerful, human-centered stories through the lens of sport," the company said Thursday.

The goal for the studio is to offer storytelling that will highlight the determination, triumphs and heartbreaks of sports.

Although the studio is new, the retailer has been dabbling in sports storytelling for more than a decade. In 2014, it debuted its first documentary feature, "We Could Be King," which won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Sports Documentary. This past spring, the company picked up a second Emmy for "The Turnaround," a documentary that tells the story of Philadelphia Phillies' superfan Jon McCann.

Over the past 10 years Dick's has produced five feature-length films and 10 short-form or episodic documentaries, with additional projects in the hopper.

"Dick's believes that sports have the power to change lives," said Mark Rooks, vice president of creative, entertainment and sponsorships at Dick's.

"And we've seen through our work how true that is for so many who have excelled, triumphed against the odds, and been defeated in sport. There are so many incredible and inspiring human stories that deserve to be told, and we could not be more excited to showcase how individuals, teams and communities are shaping sport, bringing people together and unifying and building communities for thousands."

The official announcement of Cookie Jar & a Dream Studios coincides with the premiere of "Big Dreams: The Little League World Series 2024" documentary. Produced in partnership with Imagine Entertainment and MLB Studios, the film will premiere on Tuesday at 9:30 p.m. ET on ESPN.

"Big Dreams" is a great example of the kind of projects Cookie Jar & a Dream Studios aims to produce," said Rebecca Covington, senior director of creative production at Dick's. "Being able to share big sports moments with fans is something that drives our team, and we look at the upcoming years with great excitement as we know there will be so many unforgettable stories deserving of the spotlight."

The name of the studio derives from the history of Dick's, which was founded in 1948 by 18-year-old Dick Stack, who borrowed \$300 from his grandmother's cookie jar to open a small bait-and-tackle shop in Binghamton, N.Y. Today, the company is the largest sports retailer in the U.S. with more than 850 stores under the Dick's Sporting Goods, Golf Galaxy, Public Lands and Going Gone nameplates.

—JEAN E. PALMIERI



The designer uses discarded textiles for some creations.