

TECH 20

The Tech 20

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Julie Stevanja



1 Julie Stevanja Stylerunner founder

From the brink of collapse, to being backed by one of the most advanced omnichannel players in Australia – Julie Stevanja is set to have a massive 2020. Stylerunner, an activewear platform co-founded by Stevanja in 2012, entered into voluntary administration last year before being snapped up by retail empire Accent Group. “We are ecstatic to be part of the group,” Stevanja says. “They are going to bring enormous investment, resources and support behind the Stylerunner brand and help us grow this to be our biggest and best yet.” Accent Group saw its own digital sales rise 131% last year as it rolled out the launch of click-and-collect and click-and-dispatch options in Platypus and Hype, as well as the integration of new payment options. Backed with the company’s intel – as well as a vibrant activewear offering including P.E. Nation and Jaggad – Stylerunner is well armed to return to glory this year.

2 Madeline George Boohoo Group country manager

Boohoo Group reported record trade for the last four months of 2019, clocking revenue growth of 44% across all key demographic regions. This surge saw the e-commerce giant pull £473.7 million in revenue for the period, drawing 13% of this outside the Europe and US. With brands such as Boohoo, PrettyLittleThing and Nasty Gal

under its stable, the business has a triple presence in the lucrative millennial market. Boohoo Group country manager Madeline George is tasked with maintaining market share, using localisation and geo-targeting as a core strategy. “Seasonality is the biggest difference here,” she says of the Australian market. “All of our content our customers see in our shop front (homepage) is shot specifically for Australia. Every month we drop a capsule collection for Australia that is designed specifically for us in-house, and covers the core categories that we know our girl is shopping. Content for us is driven by our influencer strategy. Influencers are at the heart of what we do and this is what dictates the direction of content, as well as the distribution,” George says.

3 Georgia Chewing Just Group internet and marketing general manager

Premier Retail, parent company of Just Group, smashed its target of \$100 million in eCommerce sales by two years. There’s no slowing down either, with another 31.7% spike in 2019 to \$148 million. Georgia Chewing and her team are now turning their attention to offshore growth, with transactional websites for Just Jeans, Portmans and Jay Jays launched in New Zealand over in FY19. In announcing the result, the company confirmed it had also shut 35 under-performing stores during the period in favour of tech-first strategies. “Where landlords do not continue to invest in overall shopping experiences or adjust their rent expectations in line with the performance of their own centres and the major shift in consumer behaviour, further store closures may be necessary.”

4 Felicity McGahan Strandbags MD

When Felicity McGahan took over the helm of Strandbags in July 2018, she was taken aback by the numbers. The accessories chain sells one wallet every six seconds. A handbag every five. A suitcase every 12. McGahan felt there was one last pillar to cement: “Moving the business forward into the future.” Within six months, her team mined insights from a database of three million customers to devise a future blueprint. This culminated in the launch of Strandbags’ Chadstone flagship last year: three times the standard footprint, with digital screens and iPad-equipped staff. McGahan also employed a store experience director, Susanne Greening-Summers, and a marketing and digital director, Caroline

Viska. “We’ve never invested more capital – from stores to people to technology to marketing,” McGahan says.

5 Fanny Moizant Vestiaire Collective co-founder

The luxury second-hand market is forecast to grow 12% this year – significantly higher than the broader retail industry at 3%. Already worth US\$24 billion, luxury resale is expected to swell to an impressive US\$52 billion in the next two years. Fanny Moizant’s platform, which allows consumers to shop and sell preloved designer merchandise, is part of the boom. The French entrepreneur has relocated to Hong Kong in a bid to drive continued growth across Asia, Singapore and Australia. Australia is among the top performing markets globally, with consumers gravitating to designer purchases over pure luxury brands. The average basket size in Hong Kong for instance is €4000 compared to Australia’s \$400. That being said – it’s also one of the top markets for Italian designer brand Gucci. For Moizant, the future of luxury resale will be in the implementation of customer first AI. “Our curators will put new products through an algorithm so we know if it is desirable or not,” she says of the selection process. “Within that algorithm we also integrate the quality of the piece and, of course, the authenticity.”

6 Jodie Bongetti Supre GM

In an age of digital consumption, there’s no denying the power of a well-thought influencer strategy. Millennial brand Supre took this to another level when it celebrated 35 years of business in 2019, inviting over 60 influencers and customers for a cruise on Queensland’s Noosa River. Merchandised to



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Zoltan Csaki



encourage social media content, it included branded life rings and fender, as well as two swings on the upper deck and DJ influencer Flex Mami on the decks. #SupreSailsAway was projected to its own follower base of over one million. “With our product looking better than ever and a strong, consistent brand voice, we felt it was the right time to showcase who we are as a brand and get our customers onboard for the next chapter, no pun intended,” Jodie Bongetti says. From partnering with influencer Sarah Ellen at the age of 16 to creating an underground micro influencer program rewarding fans, the brand has an evolving social media and influencer marketing strategy.

7 Zoltan Csaki Citizen Wolf co-founder

By 2030, it is predicted the fashion industry will use two earths’ worth of resources, with the demand for clothing increasing by 63%. How do you continue to produce garments without widespread environmental damage? For Zoltan Csaki, the solution took nine months of research and development. “We’ve built our own magic fit algorithm so we can deliver perfectly fitting, tailor-made t-shirt based only on your height, weight, age and for women, bra size as well. Our position is that the industry needs to move to on-demand manufacturing.”

8 Alan Thomas Alice McCall head of digital

When it comes to tapping into the lucrative Chinese consumer market, Alan Thomas is all about strategic timing. In the lead up to Golden Week, he rolled out Chinese payment wallets Alipay and WeChatPay on www.alicemccall.com. Alice McCall was one of the first retailers in the country to offer the payment methods both in-store and online. “Not only does it streamline the payment process for Chinese customers in Australia, it’s more convenient for Chinese visitors and students, who already have money saved in those particular wallets.” Alipay currently accounts for 7% of all transactions in boutiques throughout Australia, with Thomas expecting the new online offering to increase sales.

9 Erica Berchtold The Iconic CEO

Late last year, The Iconic opened the largest online fashion fulfilment centre in Australia. It has one of the largest mezzanines and pick towers in the Southern Hemisphere. Called

‘Yennora 2’, the site is located next to the online retailer’s existing fulfilment centre in South West Sydney. It increased the online retailer’s inventory capacity by 1.55 million units and took total capacity to 3.75 million units. The Yennora 2 expansion meant it could now satisfy over 50,000 customers per day with fulfilment in as little as 10 minutes. “The Iconic is the future of retail and we are excited to start the New Year with a bang,” Berchtold says.

10 Thomas Coellner H&M country manager

H&M Group reported online sales growth of 30% in the third quarter of fiscal 2019, as it continues its strategy of integrating online and the store. While the global retail giant has previously taken a conservative approach to eCommerce, it is ramping up its digital offerings in the new year. This includes the launch of an Australian transactional site in the second half of 2020, spearheaded by country manager Thomas Coellner. “We are extremely excited to launch online shopping in Australia later this year. This significant milestone will fully round out H&M Australia’s multi-channel offering. We look forward to providing 24/7 access to our fashion and creating new experiences for our customers.”

11 Ryan Gracie Catch Group CMO

If there’s one guru who’s across the power of SEM marketing, it’s Ryan Gracie. Performance and search marketing has delivered “huge activity” for Wesfarmers-backed Catch Group, with around \$1.2 million spent per month via Google. Affiliates, SEO and email are also significant in the marketing mix: “We send 18 million emails per week just with Catch, so two a day, three on Wednesdays and

three on Sundays. We send push notifications twice every day so we’re in the business of communicating constantly.”

12 Matt Jones Head of digital at Country Road Group

Country Road Group’s online sales for the first half of fiscal 2019 were up 6.2%, representing just under a quarter of the company’s total sales. As Country Road MD Elle Roseby revealed at Ragtrader Live Melbourne last year, Matt Jones and his team aren’t taking a passive stance when it comes to growing this share. Country Road alone receives around 2000 customer feedback points a week, leveraging market segmentation data to drive sales and re-engagement. “We believe in our stores, our people and our product and we use technology to empower those areas of our business,” Roseby says.

13 Arnna Johnstone Reebok Pacific brand director

“Right now, as brands, there is far less loyalty than there’s ever been,” Arnna Johnstone says. “It’s up to us as business people to keep customers – and to keep them over the long term.” Reebok Pacific has used a mix of celebrity, sport and consumer brand ambassadors to drive engagement and conversions. Last year, an Australian activation featuring Gigi Hadid resulted in 647 million earned media impressions. Meanwhile, its Face of Reebok campaign directly engaged customers to create content, with 2.5 million social media impressions, eight winners and two photoshoots.

Erica Berchtold



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14 Dane Patterson
Surfstitch brand and eCommerce general manager

Dane Patterson appreciates the power of data – it's not just the numbers, it's the insights. When the online retailer conducted a customer segmentation piece – exporting over seven year's worth of transactional information for the project – it was used to craft a CX strategy encompassing campaigns, content and ranging. "30% of our customers are what we classify as our really high-value customers," Patterson says. "They've got an average transaction count of over 23, so if you shopped anywhere 23 places you're a passionate fan. We target a lot of activity to that group." Surfstitch has also created new content and product strategies, such as the launch of a quarterly newspaper 'Post' and brand exclusives such as the early release of Huf X Pulp Fiction.

15 Sami Gilroy
Spell & The Gypsy Collective digital strategy manager

With 80% of revenue drawn from direct sales, Spell & The Gypsy Collective continues to invest in these channels. Last year, it appointed both an enterprise commerce platform and an eCommerce development and growth studio. Sami Gilroy says the technology enables Spell & The Gypsy Collective to efficiently manage unique content-rich shopping experiences in different

markets, as well as integrating location-specific information such as payments and fulfilment. It also greatly assists in content production. "Now we have the ability to preload campaigns, homepage changes and promotions our team can plan weeks in advance, with robust testing and approval processes, meaning nothing is missed or overlooked. Greatly improving the workflow for our team has given them space to focus on bigger picture improvements."

16 Paul Kotrba
Seafolly CEO

Under the leadership of Paul Kotrba, Seafolly has raised the tech stakes with a number of digital firsts. This includes the launch of Australia's first interactive change room mirror, known as 'Magic Mirror'. Seafolly's launch into the Chinese market via eCommerce platform Tmall also set a new record – unleashed in just 90 days. "With CAGR category growth in mainland China above APAC average we selected Tmall as our preferred entry point due to the ease of setup and access to a massive database," Kotrba says.

17 Tammy Hembrow
Influencer

If anyone knows how to leverage a 10.7 million follower base on Instagram, it's Australian fitness influencer Tammy Hembrow. This year, the young mum of two extended her Saski clothing venture by launching a boxing collection ahead of a show at New York Fashion Week. To launch the range, she released three boxing circuits with Ryan Evers on her fitness app Tammy Fit, which boasts half a million users worldwide. For Hembrow, the key to brand expansion is based on assessing the market for untapped opportunities. "While mixed martial arts is really popular, I wasn't seeing a lot of clothing options out there for women."

18 Roxy Jacenko
Entrepreneur

Since starting her fashion PR agency Sweaty Betty in 2004, Roxy Jacenko has continued to morph her business model according to changing market forces. This has included a number of digitally-led businesses such as The Ministry of Talent, which was among the first to offer formal digital influencer representation in Australia, as well as The Social Union, a social media content creation and management agency. "One of the



Ryan Gracie

key things for me when I started Sweaty Betty PR was to ensure that I evolved, that I didn't just stick to what I knew but continued to push the boundaries and offered clients ways to communicate beyond traditional and became the one stop shop," Jacenko says.

19 Scott Evans
Noni B CEO

When it comes to investments, particularly in the digital space, Scott Evans is all about strategy. Late last year, Noni B and Alceon Group acquired majority equity interest in EziBuy. The acquisition will increase online sales to approximately \$200 million, representing 20% of total group revenue. The deal will also allow Noni B access to EziBuy's database of over two million loyal customers, with a significant amount of these based in New Zealand. "This is another exciting step forward for the Group, consolidating our position as one of Australia's leading apparel retailers," Evans says.

20 Carolyn Mackenzie
Forever New MD

From 'connected' change rooms in its flagship stores to image technology on its eCommerce site, Forever New is, pardon the pun, forever new. Now, Carolyn Mackenzie is extending the boundaries in digital content with the launch of its own podcast series, Unforgettable Moments. "We are proud to be one of the first Australian fashion retailers to launch a podcast series and we hope that the Forever New woman will relate, find inspiration and enjoy listening to each episode," she says. "We are thrilled to be expanding our offering as a brand to create content with meaning that our customers can resonate with." ■



Tammy Hembrow