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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New Fashion Company in Dubai Unlocks the Market for Independent Brands**

New York, US, Tuesday, 10th February, 2015 – Dubai is one of the retail capitals of the world, with 80 million shoppers visiting Dubai Mall in 2014,<sup>1</sup> yet it is still very much an emerging market for e-commerce, said fashion entrepreneur Emma Ponsonby, who is building a new company to connect high-end boutique fashion brands with online consumers in the region.

“What really drew me most to Dubai is believing there is a unique kind of opportunity here to create not only a world-renowned company in global online fashion but something new and visionary, a true industry leader,” Ponsonby said.

Several trends point to the region’s potential, Ponsonby said. For instance, a growing majority of people in the region have mobile phones. On top of that, they are shopping international brands and gaining confidence with shopping online, and yet it remains a very underserved market for fashion e-commerce. Although some international brands do ship there, local marketing is typically limited to companies who have an on-the-ground presence in the region.

“Before, when e-commerce hadn’t really achieved liftoff, it was costly for brands to enter this region,” Ponsonby said, “so now is a great time to leverage the growing online consumer market and for international brands to take advantage of these early stages of growth and development.”

Ponsonby’s new company, Aquir.me, partners with high-end independent and emerging fashion brands from around the world, helping them solidify strong, trusted connections with local consumers, she said.

“The brands we represent will be able to gain a foothold in the fastest growing region in the world for e-commerce, and they will have local on-the-ground support, knowledge and direction.”

According to a 2013 study by PayPal, cross-border e-commerce is booming in the MENA region, with more than 70 percent year-over-year growth.<sup>2</sup>

“But until now, women in Dubai and the surrounding region have had very little access to independent designers’ collections,” Ponsonby said.

Another reason Ponsonby built her company in Dubai is that she found the city and the U.A.E. to be very open to a new entrepreneurial spirit.

“Being a female-led company, we’ve found the environment to be supportive of a woman as the head of a new business in the region. There are people here who are actively supporting women to start businesses. And I’ve met some incredible Emirate business women, who are exceptionally successful and visionary.”

Dubai is also unusual among international cities, Ponsonby said, in how far people are willing to go in order to see what is possible. This willingness to dream big is very congenial to her.

“One of my beliefs is that anything is possible. Having grown up in rural New Zealand, to be doing what I do now and travelling between London, Dubai and New York through out the year is beyond how I imagined my life turning out. So, I feel privileged to have the opportunity to explore new markets and support international brands expanding into new places where we’ve taken the time to understand and learn the local regulations.”

Now, Ponsonby said, one of her main drives in life is to provide opportunities for other women around the world to fulfill their dreams.

“Aquir.me is not just about helping brands expand into this region but to also empower women. We connect brands with our customers in a way that we’re able to share the brand’s story as well as build a personal relationship wherein the Aquir.me woman is able to express her unique self and individuality.”

“When you help make a woman feel more beautiful, you also empower them. I really believe that if more women had the confidence and support to actually dream, I mean dare to dream and to fulfill them, this could transform the world.”

1. <http://www.emaar.com/en/media-centre/detail.aspx?itemId=tcM:130-46807>

2. <https://www.paypal.fr/crossborder-insights/pdf/PayPal-Insights-E-commerce-MiddleEast-2012-2015.pdf>

## **Release Ends**

## About Aquir.me

Emma Ponsonby and the Aquir.me team are currently in New York for New York Fashion Week as well as connecting with U.S. brands who are interested in the U.A.E. market.

Brands interested in joining Aquir.me can visit [www.joinaquir.me](http://www.joinaquir.me) or e-mail [brands@aquir.me](mailto:brands@aquir.me) to find out more information and the invitation criteria.

Aquir.me is launching the new site in the U.A.E. this summer, together with a hand-picked selection of international brands who will be introduced into the region through concession stores on the Aquir.me website.

Emma Ponsonby is a New Zealand entrepreneur, based between London, New York and Dubai. As founder of Aquir.me and Emperia Ventures, Emma brings 13 years of experience in global fashion e-commerce entrepreneurship and consulting, and is a leading expert in key online technology and user experience trends. She is also passionate about leading a positive transformation of the industry.

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