

ASUTIL set to redefine industry standards



With the Secretary General torch having passed from Jose Luis Donagaray to Carlos Loaiza-Keel, Enrique Urioste praises Loaiza-Keel's expertise, stating, "He's a great lawyer, lobbyist and has been directly involved in this industry for many years. It's a great honor and pleasure to have him join us, and to work with him."

In January 2024, Enrique Urioste assumed his role as President of ASUTIL, concurrently holding the mantle as President and CEO of Latin America and Caribbean at Avolta. Urioste's ASUTIL term, which spans two years, promises to usher in a transformative era for the duty free and travel retail industry across Latin America.

Urioste and his team are at the forefront of addressing the industry's pressing challenges and exploring untapped opportunities. "We have a great team of permanent staff, and they make it all

happen. We have a strategic alignment video conference every month," he says.

ASUTIL has set ambitious objectives to enhance the duty free and travel retail landscape in Latin America, with the primary focus to advocate for increased spending allowances across all countries, a move that could significantly boost the industry's growth and competitiveness.

Preventing the dominoes from falling

One of the most contentious issues facing the channel is the potential ban on tobacco products, a situation Urioste describes with candid concern. "Every time I use the word 'fight' against the banning of tobacco they criticize me; but it's literally a fight," he says. "My personal opinion is if we as an industry allow this to happen, it will be just the first domino to fall. Something else will come. Then we need to remove chocolate because of the sugar and then alcohol because it's dangerous, and at the end of the day we will end up selling God-knows-what."

ASUTIL is also looking at practical measures to enhance operational efficiency and customer experience across the region. Initiatives such as automating customs permits for cashier-less transactions and expanding home delivery services in countries where it's currently not permitted are examples of the association's efforts to adapt to global best practices and meet evolving consumer expectations.



With a distinguished list of speakers, networking opportunities, and the support of key sponsors, the ASUTIL Conference is a testament to the industry's resilience and potential for innovation

Conference in Bogotá

Looking ahead, the 2024 ASUTIL Conference in Bogotá, Colombia, embodies the spirit of unity and progress that Urioste and his team advocate. The conference is poised to be a pivotal gathering for industry stakeholders.

“What happens in Latin America is very different from what happens in North America,” Urioste says, discussing the decision to revise the ASUTIL Conference. “We decided it was better to focus on the specifics of each region with the identities that each conference has.”

With a distinguished list of speakers, networking opportunities, and the support of key sponsors, the event is a testament to the industry's resilience and potential for innovation, with Bogotá chosen not just a nexus of global connectivity but also an emblem of economic accessibility – a strategic choice that exemplifies ASUTIL's inclusive vision. The city's affordability and accessibility by direct flights from major cities worldwide make it an ideal meeting ground.

The event has already secured sponsorship from major operators and providers, including Avolta, Attenza, Colonia Express, Carilux Duty Free, Avianca, Mondelēz, and JTI. Limited opportunities are still available for other brands to support the conference.



A group photo from the 2023 ASUTIL Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Solid growth

The upward trajectory of travel retail in LATAM is evident. Urioste affirms the industry's strong performance. "Yes, in general, we are seeing solid growth," he states, mentioning significant increases in both the volume of travelers and the spend per passenger, encompassing regional and international voyagers alike.

While the resurgence is widespread, Urioste acknowledges a few outliers. "There are some exceptions that are still below, but very few," he notes. The momentum of 2023, deemed a "great year for travel retail in general," has continued. "The first two months of the year, started with solid growth on top of last year's numbers. So we are really optimistic about this year," says Urioste.

Carlos Loaiza-Keel, ASUTIL's new Secretary General, and Erik Juul-Mortensen, TFWA President, echo Urioste's optimism, highlighting the dynamic and rapidly growing nature of the South American duty free and travel retail market.



A snapshot from last year's ASUTIL Conference; delegates benefitted from a strong program and a number of networking opportunities