

Dufry ME finds opportunities and cements strategies



Alberto Iglesias, Chief Operating Officer, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Middle East for Dufry

While airports in the Middle East have been especially hard hit by the pandemic, the region has also shown stronger signs of recovery when compared to most other regions. Alberto Iglesias, Chief Operating Officer, Mediterranean, Eastern Europe and Middle East for Dufry, says: "There were variations from country to country depending on local restrictions and measures in place, but we are seeing signs of recovery in line with the rollout of the vaccination process."

Iglesias is positive that recovery will be established this year. He says: "2021 will be a year of recovery as the vaccination process gains momentum around the world and some restrictions can start to be eased."

Strategic growth

Dufry's fundamental growth strategy continues to be characterized by a combination of organic growth and merger and acquisition opportunities, and this will continue throughout recovery. The

Middle East and Asia are both earmarked as growth regions for the company. “A specific focus will be on growth acceleration in Asia, with first projects having been implemented in Hainan in 2021 already,” says Iglesias. The Middle East is also a strategic growth area for Dufry; the company will be concentrating on organic growth and evaluating any strategically viable M&A opportunities should they appear in the region in line with company strategy based on several pillars.

Digital strategy

Digitization is a key focus for Dufry. Iglesias says the deployment of the company’s digital strategy significantly helps to attract more customers to the shops, increase sales and complement the physical shops and traditional strong impulse buying behaviors of its affluent and captive audiences. “Dufry’s digital strategy builds on a multi-channel approach to increase customer touchpoints and includes four key elements, all of which are active in our Middle East operations. These include our New Generation Store concept in the Amman Queen Alia International Airport, our Red By Dufry customer loyalty program, the Reserve & Collect online ordering platform, and Dufry’s proprietary social media channel, Forum by Dufry.”

Snapshots from Amman Duty Free below:







Customer loyalty

The Red By Dufrý customer loyalty program is now live in 239 locations in 48 countries, and is being continually expanded to further operations worldwide. Iglesias says, “The Red By Dufrý take up in the Middle East has been positive, with customers enjoying the exclusive advantages it offers such as discounts at Dufrý stores and specific airport benefits. Members also receive personalized notifications on promotions and offers tailored to their preferences as they approach the airport, which helps us to increase conversion of travelers into customers and to attract them to our shops.”

Moving ahead

All levels of Dufrý have worked in close alignment to find, plan and implement solutions to mitigate the impact of this crisis and lay the foundations upon which to build. Iglesias says that the company has taken the necessary steps to ensure the team is well prepared to accelerate sales and efficiency during this recovery phase, allowing Dufrý to emerge from the crisis in a strong position. “Throughout the Group, Dufrý is committed to moving on with confidence and conviction. With this positive attitude, we continue to assess opportunities across all regions of the Middle East,” he adds.

Memorable experiences

Travel retail is an important channel to bring brands and new releases to the world; given the current safety standards and restrictions it is necessary to change the way these are done. Dufrý is up to the challenge, says Iglesias. “Dufrý stores will be bringing all the most relevant activations and launches of the travel retail sector to our customers as we have always done, as soon as recovery accelerates. We have very good, experienced teams at Dufrý at both a global and local level to handle this in the appropriate way. We will work closely with our brand partners and suppliers to ensure that any plans are implemented in line with all required health and safety protocols, to provide a safe working and shopping environment for our staff and customers alike.”

Iglesias says Dufry will continue to focus on creating memorable shopping experiences for customers. “By constantly improving our shops and developing best-in-class retail formats, as well as by implementing innovative cross-channel marketing initiatives and extending our online services, allowing us to increase customer engagement. Moreover, intelligence we collect in our regular customer interviews shows that customers intend to visit duty free shops when at airports and feeling safe in the respective environments.”

Dufry’s marketing teams are working closely with brand partners to develop appropriate campaigns and promotions to attract customers to our stores. “Our sales representatives — increasingly supported by digital technology — will be available to provide customers with more detailed advice and product information,” says Iglesias.

Sense of place

In addition to offering customers great promotions, novelties and exclusive products, Iglesias says an unparalleled sense of place is a key element of an attractive customer shopping experience. “This includes local product offerings, as customers also increasingly want to complete their travel experience by bringing home memories, as well as internationally recognized brands that are well known and much liked,” he concludes.