

Qatar Duty Free strengthens leadership with six senior appointments



The six key appointments just announced support QDF's operations of over 200 retail and dining outlets. The six are shown here with Qatar Airways Group Chief Retail and Hospitality Officer Thabet Musleh

Qatar Duty Free (QDF) has appointed six senior executives to support its expanding operation of over 5,000 employees across 78 nationalities, marking a significant expansion of its leadership team for 2025.

Vanessa Lixiong Xian becomes Head of Strategy and Program, bringing 15 years of retail and program management expertise. Reporting to Chief Retail and Hospitality Officer Thabet Musleh, she will drive strategic initiatives across retail and F&B divisions while enhancing operational efficiency.

Former Formula 1 and British Airways executive Katie Kiddle steps into the newly created Head of Loyalty role to develop data-driven customer engagement strategies. Sonia Marie Imasdounian, with experience from Flutter International and Marriott International, joins as Head of HR to lead talent development initiatives.

Joanne Morris, bringing 22 years of retail experience including roles at Whyte & Mackay and Beam

Suntory, becomes Confectionery Category Manager. Sara Di Carlo, formerly Retail Director for Dolce & Gabbana Northern Europe with extensive LVMH group experience, takes the role of Head of Luxury Retail Operations. Ria Chauhan rounds out the appointments as Head of Beauty Procurement, leveraging 20 years of experience from Marks & Spencer, Harvey Nichols and the Chalhoub Group.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Retail and Hospitality Officer Thabet Musleh commented, "At Qatar Duty Free, our ambition is to deliver excellence across our operations and continue to push boundaries as a leading retailer. Vanessa, Katie, Sonia, Joanne, Sarah and Ria bring a fantastic blend of expertise, experience, and energy to our senior leadership team. Together, they will help us to strengthen partnerships, inspire our amazing team of employees and elevate our signature 'experientricity' for our customers.

"We pride ourselves on the calibre of our people. These new additions reflect our commitment to attracting top-tier talent and ensuring our business continues to grow and thrive. I look forward to the impact they will make as we embark on the next phase of our journey."

The appointments support QDF's operations of over 200 retail and dining outlets. The retailer's recent accolades include Airport Retailer of the Year and Best New Specialty Shop for Dior Luxury Beauty Retreat at the 2024 Frontier Awards, seven titles at the Airport Food & Beverage (FAB) + Hospitality Awards 2024, while Hamad International Airport secured "World's Best Airport for Shopping" at the SKYTRAX World Airport Awards 2024.