

Imperial Brands promotes the new generation



Imperial Brands' new-generation vaping product myblu was introduced to the Americas travel retail market at the Summit of the Americas in March

The world is changing, and Imperial Brands is changing with it. As the tobacco category faces the challenge of new trends in smoking behavior, the company is wholeheartedly embracing the evolution.

Currently, the "ground-breaking" trend is the consumer desire for new-generation products, according to Christian L. Munstermann, Sales & Marketing Director Global Duty Free & Export, Imperial Brands.



Imperial Brands' Christian L. Munstermann and Patricia Augustin standing by their brand new booth at the Summit of the Americas show last month

Munstermann spoke with *Americas Duty Free* magazine at the Summit of the Americas tradeshow in March, where Imperial Brands Global Duty Free & Export introduced its next-generation vaping brand myblu.

This year, the company's completely revamped booth took the theme of Global Connections, in line with the company's overall strategy of connecting consumers with their favorite brands as they travel around the world.

"Our theme represents our belief in Global Connections," explained Múnstermann. "We're constantly seeking new tobacco trends while addressing global consumer needs. We aim to connect these needs with solutions and our goal is to always offer the best quality and most relevant portfolio in each location."

He gives the example of a British consumer who is traveling to Miami or Orlando on a cruise, so the company ensures its Lambert & Butler brand is available at the airport. "In the Americas, in Asia, and in Europe, we are connecting the different nationalities with our brands."

The biggest domestic markets for Imperial Brands are the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and these are the nationalities it focuses on in duty free.

Múnstermann acknowledges that as a new product, a lot of education is necessary for the consumer, so he can understand how myblu works and what nicotine level is the right one. He reveals that initially, consumers tend to opt for the tobacco flavor, despite the fact that there are other new and exciting options available, such as mint and honey - the latter dubbed "Honeymoon".

"Education is quite important, especially in duty free, when you have time to talk to the consumer about the technology and how does this whole thing work. It's all about the simplicity and convenience of the product, and consumers can try out different flavors. And if they already have the system, it's about how often does the consumer repurchase the product. That's where we see good numbers -and distribution is increasing around the world. But it's quite a challenging category, as we

know we are not alone. The smoker will decide what is the best offer.”

Münstermann notes that the location of the vaping category within a duty free store can be a conundrum, as it’s a product for smokers but it isn’t a tobacco product, although it contains nicotine. It is normally placed close to tobacco products, as this is the most logical place for the consumer to find it.

Asked about airport rules around vaping, he admits that they are complex and it depends on the country and even on the local authority. People can vape in-store at some airports, he says, but vaping is not allowed at all in others. In duty free, normally if you can smoke, you can vape, but it depends on the location. And inflight, some airlines are including vaping in their no smoking bans.

Turning to trends, the crushball is still in vogue, as are different flavors. “When we see a trend, we bring it into our brands, for example the Lambert & Butler mint crushball. We are connecting the innovation to the consumer.”

Connections are also important in the retail world. “As we don’t have stores, we need retailers as partners to sell our products, and we are connecting with them on a global level. For example, Dufry is the biggest retailer for us. We want to make sure we have a global consistency - this is very important.”

As a global team operating in four different locations, Global Duty Free & Export needs to operate in an intensive way, and in line with its 2022 strategy. “Global Connections is our guiding principle in everything we do,” he enthuses.