

Exclusive interview: Mauritius Duty Free Paradise's newly appointed CEO aims to transform company



Anoop Nilamber, the newly appointed CEO of Mauritius Duty Free Paradise (picture above), has set out his strategy in an exclusive interview with *Gulf-Africa Duty Free* magazine.

The former banker, who has worked in Paris at HSBC, was formerly an Economic advisor at the Ministry of Finance in Mauritius, before joining Mauritius Duty Free Paradise three months ago.

“It’s been very hectic [since I joined], as we are preparing our business transformation plan. Strategy is one thing but most important is execution. My aim is to transform the organization and to ensure we are well prepared to compete with regional and international competitors,” he said.

“My vision is to bring the organization to another level. Our staff will be at the heart of this transformation plan this is why our key agenda will be HR among others. Other investments are planned in new marketing tools such as digital tools.”

Mauritius Duty Free Paradise operates three airport stores in Mauritius and also trades on Rodrigues island, east of Mauritius. The business generated €60 million (US\$68.8 million) in 2018.

As part of the strategic plan, the retailer’s first task will be to review the business processes in order to address efficiency in the execution of the activity.

“We need to be pro-active. We need the right tools which help us to take good and quick decisions,” he said.

Investing in digital

Technology is a key area for improvement. “We need to move into digital tools to sell – via social media, and design new ways to catch more customers. We will be investing heavily in digital.”

Mauritius Duty Free Paradise already has a loyalty program, which will be revamped. Because most of the operator’s customers use Air Mauritius, Nilamber is planning to strike a partnership with the carrier. “We need to capture their loyal clients,” he said.

Most of the passengers are tourists from Europe, and the main market is France. In the peak season there are around 50 flights arriving in Mauritius daily, with around the bulk of passengers from Europe.

The island is seeing more customers from Dubai and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East, and also from China, India, South Africa, and Australia.

New opportunities

Thanks to a planned increase in capacity at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport over the next three years, the size of the company’s shops is also set to expand.

The medium to long-term plan is to enter the East African duty free market with potential partners. “Our objective is to become a regional player,” he said.

“We’re very close to Africa and we are part of the African continent. Given our proximity, we need to go outside of Mauritius to find new opportunities – in Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Madagascar – and we need to find partners there.

“In the next three years I expect we will be able to have at least a foot in one of those countries. We have the know-how, the experience and the right products.”