

Dubai Duty Free inks Tencent deal to enhance Chinese tourist experience

By **Hibah Noor** on May, 21 2019 | Retailers



The strategic agreement was signed by Dubai Duty Free COO Ramesh Cidambi and Norman Tam, General Manager, Hong Kong and Taiwan Office, International Business Group, Tencent, in Shenzhen, China

Dubai Duty Free has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Tencent Holdings Limited, a leading provider of internet services in China, which aims to enhance the Chinese visitors' travel and shopping experiences at Dubai Duty Free.

The deal aims to leverage Tencent's expertise and digital platforms in China, while building upon Dubai Duty Free's global status as a retail destination, in order to boost the retail operator's integrated marketing outreach in China.

The collaboration also seeks to enhance the Chinese visitors' travel experience in Dubai using Tencent's Social and Smart Retail Solutions. These include WeChat Pay, WeChat Mini Program and Tencent Cloud.

The co-operation also deepens Dubai Duty Free's insight into the Chinese travelers' consumption behaviour, the operator said.

The signing of the agreement took place earlier this year at Tencent Binhai Tower in Shenzhen, China. The ceremony was attended by Ramesh Cidambi, Chief Operating Officer of Dubai Duty Free, and Norman Tam, General Manager, Hong Kong and Taiwan Office, International Business Group, Tencent.

Commenting on the agreement, Colm McLoughlin, Executive Vice Chairman & CEO, Dubai Duty Free said: "China is an important market for us, and Dubai Duty Free is continually looking at ways that will further enhance our appeal to Chinese travelers. With its long-standing reputation for innovation, Tencent is an exciting partner for Dubai Duty Free and we look forward to working with them in the coming year."

Ramesh Cidambi, Chief Operating Officer, Dubai Duty Free, added: "I was very impressed during my visit to the Tencent offices in Shenzhen and to see first-hand this remarkable success story. We believe that this collaboration with Tencent will dramatically increase our engagement with Chinese travelers, which is something we have been focused on for some time, and will provide our Chinese customers with product knowledge and insights that will enhance their travel experience in Dubai. We look forward to launching a number of future forward initiatives in the coming weeks."

Norman Tam, General Manager, Hong Kong and Taiwan Office, International Business Group, Tencent, said: "We are excited to partner with Dubai Duty Free to strengthen their marketing outreach efforts to consumers in China, with the Middle East being one of the major travel destinations among Chinese tourists.

"Building on the success of our collaboration with Dubai Tourism, we are well-positioned to support Dubai Duty Free in understanding their consuming preferences and better connecting with Chinese travelers, leveraging our Social and Smart Retail Solutions. We look forward to working closely with Dubai Duty Free to enrich the travel and shopping experience of Chinese tourists."

With 1 billion monthly active users, Tencent-owned WeChat offers an integrated platform to raise brand awareness among Chinese travelers. Tencent's Social and Smart Retail Solutions aim to help Dubai Duty Free optimize its return on media investments and reach out to key target audience segments.

Also present at the ceremony were Dubai Duty Free's Mona Al Ali, Vice President - HR Service Delivery, and Sunshine Bian, Assistant Manager - Resourcing and Manpower Planning; together with Tencent International Business Group's Ian Chan, Senior Business Development Director, Rachel Xie, Team Leader of New Markets, and Silvia Zeng, Senior Business Development Manager.