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Jordanian Duty Free Shops expands domestic retail remit

By **Claire Malcolm** on December, 17 2019 | Retailers

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The Fountain will be home to the relocated Aqaba Gateway shop covering 600 square meters and featuring an exclusive VIP lounge and cigar lounge

Jordanian Duty Free Shops (JDF) is steering a new course into the country's domestic retail market with the planned April 2020 unveiling of The Fountain, a 21,000-square-meter commercial and entertainment destination in Aqaba Special Economic Zone, in the south of the country.

A JDF subsidiary, the state-of-the-art complex will feature a mix of local and international tenants with the aim of attracting Jordanian shoppers as well as tourists from neighboring countries.

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According to Tariq J Taha, Head of Group Business Development, JDF, while the company is unable to disclose a prospective tenant list, JDF will naturally have presence. “We will be relocating our Aqaba Gateway shop and this will be a similarly state-of-the-art store covering 600 square meters and featuring an exclusive VIP lounge and cigar lounge.”

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Tariq J Taha, Head of Group Business Development, Jordanian Duty Free Shops

The Fountain will occupy a prime location close to the upscale Ayla residential development, local hotels and surrounding beaches, with easy access to the city’s other residential communities. Said

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Taha: “It’s a unique project that has been designed to service the growing Aqaba Special Economic Zone and fill the gap for a retail and entertainment destination complex with a mix of well-known international and local brands.”

He hinted that a European outlet offering original luxury fashion brands will be one of the anchor tenants, and a “major attraction” for locals as well as inbound tourists. The holistic complex will also offer five-star dining opportunities, an English pub, food court and specialty supermarket.

As well as showcasing local brands at The Fountain, JDF is also busy with its new private label company, as Taha explained: “The idea and vision is to support local products, so we have created a business model that will allow us to penetrate the domestic market in Jordan as well as export the country’s finest products to international destinations.

“The brand is called Amraland and we have already signed with three local companies to produce our own brand of Dead Sea products, dates and olive oil. This is just a starting point and we will shortly introduce local thyme products as well as holy water from Mount Nebo.”

The company is exploring export opportunities and Taha reported significant interest from Egypt and China as well as other Asian nations and European countries.

In terms of market readiness, he confirmed that the brand identity and packaging are currently being developed and will be aligned with the highest market standards.

Rounding out recent development is the new JDF training diploma for domestic and travel retail players. Launched in partnership with Ammon Applied University College, the fully accredited diploma is a seven-month part-time study program.

“We found that in the domestic market there is often a lack of customer service knowledge and new sales techniques as well as a need to work on emotional intelligence when customer facing,” remarked Taha.

“JDF aims to improve local standards and help retail staff to be the best salespeople by offering a diploma that covers all aspects of the sales experience from English language upskilling and understanding the customer to purchasing techniques, marketing, communication skills and governance” he added.

Starting with the Amman retail scene, Taha said that the program aims to attract retailers from across Jordan and, ultimately, beyond. “The long-term goal is to take this worldwide and develop it to an international level, which is something that our CEO, Mr Haitham Al Majali, and the JDF board is taking very seriously.”

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