

Notions Group using domestic to continue building its travel retail offering

Notions Group, which consists of several trading and manufacturing subsidiaries centred around chocolate products, has a presence in over 15 international airports and is aiming to double that figure to 30 by 2025. TRBusiness finds out how.

Notions Group's biggest brand is Chocodate, a chocolate-covered date with almonds, and a registered trademark for the group.

"The brand is quite simple in terms of concept, and our strength really is in our flavours and our innovation in terms of gifting propositions," said Razan Al-Masri, Chief Business Development Officer, Notions Global.



Notion Groups Chocodate range.

Push into travel retail

Having primarily retailed in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, for the past nine months, Notions Group has been laying the foundations for a big push into global travel retail channels, especially Asia.

"Growth in travel retail for Q1 2024 was approximately 11%," noted Al-Masri, adding: "We forecast regional growth to be around the same level, but our international expansion will drive around 5% to 6%."

Al-Masri estimates roughly 40% of its consumer base was Chinese pre-Covid.

"After Covid it's more of an even split," she said, noting: "30% of our customers are Europeans, the Indian subcontinent remains also quite high at about 30%, and the rest is divided up between various Arab nationalities."

A sense of place

Saudi Arabia is set to become one of the world's biggest producers of dates, which naturally bodes well for Notion Group's supply chain within the region: "The date business in Saudi is so under-developed, and what we're hearing is the Public Investment Fund, an arm of the Saudi government, is putting a ton of investment into becoming the global leader in dates," said Al-Masri.

She also notes that while they have been in contact with the Public Investment Fund (PIF), it is incumbent upon the business not to rest on its laurels and rely on (potential) changes in the regional supply chain.

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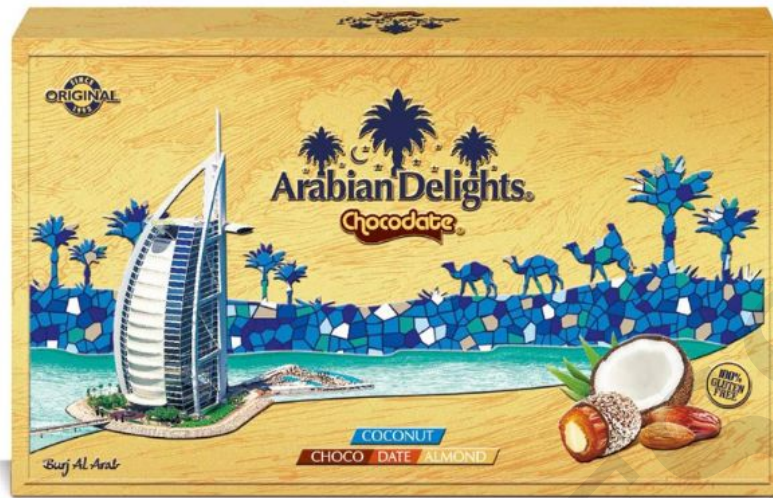


Notions Group is a first-time member of TFWA and recently exhibited at the TFWA Asia Pacific Exhibition & Conference in Singapore.

“We have some dates which we sell, but we buy them from several producers and sell them if we have a need for them, but that’s not the core of our business. I think they [PFI] want to do their own thing, they’re not looking at us so much as the world,” noted Al-Masri.

The majority of Notion Group’s business is still contained to its domestic markets, which by all accounts remains strong as ever.

“We’re number one in UAE by far in the domestic business,” noted Al-Masri, referring specifically to chocolate/date brands, and Notions Group bolsters its domestic output commercially by co-packing and manufacturing for a variety of Mars products too.



Gifting options emphasising 'sense of place' are strong purchase drivers within the confectionery category.

She said: "100% of our co-packing business for Mars is domestic. We make their chocolate covered dates for them, as well as Carrefour, which is one of our customers and now our competitor."

Further product innovation will come in the form of special packs and exclusive packaging designs within travel retail, alongside vegan and gourmet ranges, as well as a new protein range under the name Mojo.

Al-Masri also emphasised 'sense of place' gifting as key in its overall marketing strategy, a trend which has emerged as a strong purchase driver in everything from confectionery to liquor, in travel retail and beyond.

"This is a highly giftable brand and it's ultimately how we build the business; unique packaging, and the MOQ is that they're not prohibitive," commented Al-Masri. "You can easily centre the product around local festivities – everything from Diwali to Chinese New Year."

This feature first appeared in the June/July Issue of TRBusiness, available to view [here](#).

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