

TRBusiness 'TR Talent Pool': Drake Lum, Mars Wrigley International Travel Retail

In the fifth edition of the 'TR Talent Pool Profile' series, TRBusiness speaks to Drake Lum, the outgoing Regional Business Development Manager for APAC with Mars Wrigley International Travel Retail.

Having gained a taste of the duty free and travel industry during the early part of his career with Mondelez and obtained even more experience during his time with Mars, Lum is seeking further opportunities in the channel at home in Malaysia or elsewhere.

*In July 2020, TRBusiness and Bluedog Productions **announced the creation of the 'TR Talent Pool' Initiative**, helping the travel retail industry grow during unprecedented levels of upheaval for its workforce. We continue to support those who have lost their jobs as a result of the global pandemic with this series, shining a spotlight on individuals that this industry simply cannot afford to lose.*

How did you enter travel retail?

This amazing opportunity was shared with me by my head-hunter as the company was for someone to lead the Asia Pacific region and be based in Malaysia. Most of the talents or hubs for this industry are based out in Singapore.

I then had my interview with Christophe Bouyé, Global Sales Director of Mars International Travel Retail and was amazed by the company and inspired by his experience of the industry.

I was fortunate to land this dream job without any experience apart from my knowledge of the confectionery category gained from working with Mondelez.

Drake Lum (pictured right) has described his time in the duty free and travel retail industry as an exponential learning curve.

What makes the duty free and travel retail industry so special and why?

Back in my early days with Mondelez, I was a Revenue Planning Manager for the confectionery category in Malaysia and looking across different channels including duty paid and duty free. I didn't pay any special attention to the latter.

Ultimately, I didn't actually realise what I was missing until I actually joined the DF&TR industry. My regret is not joining earlier.

This is truly an international environment with people around the globe. It's often a misconception that the duty free and travel retail industry is inferior to the local market where the volume or scale is located. After being exposed to both, I have realised it takes even more skill to navigate this complex industry.

How has your career evolved in the channel?

It has been an exponential learning curve for me in this industry. I was born and raised in Malaysia and have pretty much lived, studied and worked there all my life. This role has enabled me to broaden my horizons and focus on the entire Asia Pacific region.



Working with Mars has enabled Lum to focus on the entire Asia Pacific region.

This role has given me the opportunity to develop myself by learning directly from the leaders of the organisation. I was exposed to best-in-class processes worldwide and learnt more about different cultures having been part of a team comprising more than 30 different nationalities. This enabled me to embrace a strong sense of inclusivity and diversity.

As Regional Business Development Manager, I am responsible for profit and loss and have the opportunity to shape the region for future success. I have benefited both personally and professionally.

What have been the high and low points of your duty free and travel retail career and why?

I always like to challenge the status quo, be it in terms of route to market or strategy implementation. I was very proud to revamp the operating model for our customers, which enabled us to have a better grip in terms of managing investment and the evolution of our trade architecture to enhance earnings and cash delivery.

Another high point was the launch of M&M's Salted Caramel in Thailand. It was certainly worthy of a celebration when our team managed to successfully deliver this launch.

Being so far away from the company's headquarters and having limited opportunity to bond with the team was a low point, especially being so new to the industry.

How would you assess the future outlook of the duty free and travel retail industry and why?

The goal is for the industry to emerge from the pandemic stronger than before and understand how consumers shop. This is because their buying behaviour will have changed significantly.

In addition, the opportunity to unlock impulse buying with the right assortment is even more critical as customers spend time less time in shops now.

Not becoming part of the duty free and travel industry earlier in his career is one of Lums (pictured far right) major regrets.

Digital integration will also be crucial. During this pandemic QR codes have been implemented for people to check-in to various locations and we have learnt that this could be the way or tool to communicate with shoppers.

Over the past year I have observed that we as humans hate sitting still and take every opportunity to get out of the house or travel. This means the industry will welcome travellers again on vaccination and that it needs to be on standby to welcome the influx of passengers.

What type of role would be most suited to you and why?

Thankfully, I have made my debut and immersed myself in this wonderful industry, which I would like to remain part of.

It would be great to take on a sales leadership role for the region as I enjoy building winning partnerships with customers. Given the opportunity, I am ready and able to assume a role internationally.

I now have experience of the duty paid and duty free business within Asia Pacific and the traditional trade channel, be it direct or indirect business models. This will benefit me in future strategic senior sales roles.

The French city of Cannes provides the backdrop for this group photo which includes former Mars Wrigley International Travel Retail General Manager Gary Clarke (middle).

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To read the first edition of the **TR Talent Pool** series featuring Jonathan Corbett, [click here](#). The second

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edition of this popular series features **Joanne Willey**, who is now **working for TRBusiness** as a Business Development Consultant.

The third edition profiles **cruise specialist Zachary Sulkes**, who subsequently joined **Norwegian Cruise Holdings** as Beverage Category Manager, while former Bommidala Enterprises Travel Retail Business Development Manager, **Dharmender Parmar** is the star of the fourth instalment.

Interested in getting involved with the TR Talent Pool series?

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