

Molton Brown focuses on the consumer brand experience

Mark Johnson, President of Molton Brown Global, told *TRBusiness* recently why the brand is focusing so hard on providing travelling consumers with meaningful DF&TR experiences.

Being a frequent traveller himself, Johnson said he appreciates the increased travel retail experiences on offer at many airports today: "When I travel through airports, particularly in Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, I no longer run straight to the lounge to open my laptop," he says. "I now have a plan of where I want to go and shop, to make the most out of my time in duty free."

Travel has always been part of our DNA, and consumers naturally associate the brand with travel, thanks to our presence in many luxury hotels and on cruise ships worldwide, he says.

He also recognises the increasing importance of the DF&TR channel for the brand. Its travel retail and inflight exclusive ranges continue to be successful. However, Johnson also wants to share the brand's pioneering spirit of adventure with travelling customers, not only through new and existing ranges for the channel, but also with experiential offerings.

AUTHENTIC LUXURY AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

"Our hand and arm massage – a popular concept from our stand alone stores – has recently been introduced to travel retail, to offer passengers a more meaningful and relaxing travel experience," says Johnson. "It's the perfect opportunity to immerse consumers into our story and make them aware of the craftsmanship and authenticity behind our brand, while they enjoy a massage."

Molton Brown scours the globe to discover ingredients to create our unique fragrances, he adds. Cypress oil, also known as 'blue gold' – is a key ingredient in its latest Coastal Cyprus & Sea Fennel collection – sourced from Cape York, Australia.



Molton Brown President Mark Johnson with Master Perfumers at Cannes TFWE, last month.

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Molton Brown scours the globe in search of unique ingredients for its fragrances, says President Mark Johnson.

“We want to share the stories behind our ranges and demonstrate how our products – be it a shower gel, scrub, body oil or bath oil – have been developed by some of most influential master perfumers – and have the same craftsmanship as any other fine perfume or fragrance out there,” he adds.

“Several brands place themselves in the luxury market, but actually there are very few that truly embrace and deliver that authentic luxury and craftsmanship, or value their relationships with master perfumers. We’ve worked with some of our master perfumers for over 25 years and are now actually even working with the second generation of the same family.”

MORE EXPERIENTIAL OFFERINGS

The hand and arm massage experience is a much better way to engage travelling consumers, as opposed to the traditional ‘spray of a fragrance’ as they walk past, he says.

In fact, Molton Brown has developed another experiential offering for its consumers. “We have just launched some technology at our flagship store in London with our recent Russian Leather fragrance, where customers can discover the base note, middle note and top note,” explains Johnson. “It’s a very unique and immersive way to discover the complexity of this Siberian forest fragrance. I would love to see that experience replicated in travel retail too.”

He adds that the brand’s recent journey has been very much about exploring how people experience fragrance: “We want to create a true adventure and experience for our consumers – and tell that story.

Growing its experiential offering and refocusing on the brand’s exclusive qualities and heritage has

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certainly helped to turn the company's fortunes around. "About four to five years ago, Molton Brown's growth was in decline, including in the home market," admits Johnson.



AMBITIOUS GROWTH PLANS

Thanks to its latest initiatives that's changing. Molton Brown has been achieving double-digit growth over the last few years, he confirms.

Encouraging first half-year 2017 results – with both new and core offerings performing well – has spurred the company on to accelerate its international expansion plans.

"We are planning to open our first stand alone store in India in the next few months," says Johnson. "Closer to home, we believe much of Continental Europe has the right audience for us, which we have yet to tap into in a holistic way."

The brand has ambitious DF&TR growth plans too. It wants to be in the **top 20 airports by 2020**, and **double its inflight sales**.



FUTURE PROSPECTS

"However, expansion can only happen with the right partnerships," he says.

"For many years, Molton Brown has been treated as a table-top brand. But placing 15 bottles on a counter and hoping that some of the thousands of passengers who walk through duty free each month will pick up a bottle, is neither an authentic or luxurious experience, so we don't want that.

"We need to look at what opportunities we can take advantage of through creating the right partnerships and build on that, so we do eventually get that six-metre wall bay – and ultimately the kind of hub we have at London Heathrow's T4 and T5."

That is a much more exciting proposition, he says, as Molton Brown continuously seeks to try and raise the bar.

Mark Johnson, President, Molton Brown, Global.

"We can't afford to sit back and live off our Black Peppers and

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Orange & Bergamots, which is what we did for a while back then," he admits.

Meanwhile, Johnson says the company is looking forward to an exciting year ahead: "We will release new ranges, as well as relaunch our core ranges and bring back our distinctive Molton Brown silhouette. The pride and passion of Molton Brown is back and here to stay," he concludes.

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