

One on One with Avolta's Jordi Martin-Consuegra Enhancing the passenger journey with seamless integration of retail, F&B, and travel essentials businesses

Jordi Martin-Consuegra has seen the explosive growth of his company from a regional player to the largest travel retail and food & beverage operator in the world in his two decades with what is now called Avolta. Martin-Consuegra, COO North America at Avolta, speaks with TMI's Michael Pasternak about the recent important concessions wins, especially at JFK in multiple terminals, the immediate success of Club Avolta, and the innovative partnerships that are enhancing Avolta's customer experience throughout the region and the world.



Jordi Martin-Consuegra

Jordi Martin-Consuegra, who is celebrating his 20th anniversary with the company, has seen many changes over his career with Avolta.

"It has been 20 years, but it hasn't been 20 years in the same company or role," says Martin-Consuegra, who has held numerous positions in the Avolta umbrella of companies.

He spent 13 years at what was then called Dufry, before moving to the United States in 2018 to work for Hudson for five years, and then taking on his current role with Avolta's North America region.

"The company has done so many different things, and has moved quickly, pivoting into a global travel retailer. We acquired the Hudson business in the late two-thousands, integrated with Nuance in 2014 and then World Duty Free in 2015. We grew our focus

from travel retail to include travel essentials and convenience, and now also food & beverage, and continue our global growth journey," says Martin-Consuegra.

New openings

In the past year, Avolta has announced a number of concession wins throughout JFK airport for its companies Dufry, HMSHost, and Hudson.

Avolta won multiple Dufry duty free, Hudson retail, and HMSHost food & beverage agreements to develop concessions space at John F. Kennedy International Airport's Terminal 8. The combined contracts span more than 11 years and cover both retail and dining operations.

Avolta says that it will create a travel experience revolution in Terminal 8 through concepts that bring the world-renowned culture and flavor of New York City to the

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heart of the terminal through locally inspired retail, iconic culinary experiences, and hybrid concepts.

In September 2024, Avolta's Dufry and Hudson were selected to open numerous duty free, travel convenience, and specialty retail stores over more than 2,600 square meters of reimagined space in the new, state-of-the-art JFK Terminal 6, set to open in 2026. Terminal 6 will occupy the site of the former Terminal 6 and Terminal 7 when completed.

Earlier in the year, Avolta announced two new contracts at JFK International Airport Terminal 5 through HMSHost and Hudson, including a 10-year deal to revamp the terminal's dining experience.

HMSHost will debut five new restaurants spanning over 725-square-meters, beginning early next year and, in Terminal 4, open nine new restaurants under a 15-year contract.

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In September 2024, JFK Millennium Partners, (JMP) the company selected by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey to build and operate the new \$4.2 billion JFK Terminal 6, in New York, announced that Avolta companies Hudson and Dufry have been selected to open numerous duty free, travel convenience, and specialty retail stores over more than 28,000 square feet of reimagined space in the new, state-of-the-art terminal, set to open in early 2026. Together, JMP, Hudson, and Dufry say they will create an entirely new experience that will "surprise and delight" T6 guests and introduce several first-to-airport initiatives, activations, brands and concepts.

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Simultaneously, Hudson secured a seven-year contract in Terminal 5 to launch a Manhattan-inspired retail store and the terminal's first immersive video gaming lounge.

Martin-Consuegra says the JFK openings are just a few of the important concessions the company is opening.

"Looking at our North America duty free business, specifically, we are now present in 100 wonderful stores in 25 airports. And we have recently or will soon open more in significant airports, including JFK, Toronto, Vancouver, and Boston, which we're very excited about," says Martin-Consuegra.

At all the openings, but particularly at the new spaces at JFK, Avolta is trying to find the correct answer to this question:

"Starting with the customer, we're asking 'how can we help everyone have a more complete experience while generating revenue for all stakeholders?'" says Martin-Consuegra.

"For example, JFK's Terminal 6 has very interesting characteristics, so we are making sure that we play to the advantages of the terminal," he says.

"Our program is highly crafted to the space and audience. We are building a nice array of duty free, travel essentials, and specialty stores. And digital is key. We will have a number of digital solutions

and launch offerings to ease the journey for travelers, like self-checkout and Reserve & Collect, that will allow us to make offerings ever present through both digital and physical."

Connected business

Avolta will be opening a series of experiences throughout the United States that connect across its retail and F&B operations, says Martin-Consuegra.

"The latest we opened in September is particularly significant. We call it Blinded Tiger, a speakeasy experience embedded in a premium duty free environment at JFK Terminal 8. It strategically connects the experience across travel retail and food & beverage," he says. "We are testing the boundaries to see how far customers will go for premiumization."

For example, HMSHost's The Connoisseur's Collection, which was first unveiled in June, is a premium tasting experience designed to immerse travelers in a curated menu of the world's finest spirits. The concept, now available at select bars and restaurants across 20 U.S. airports, is a curated journey inviting passengers to sip, savor, and discover exceptional spirits. This innovative program allows travelers to enjoy a handpicked selection of premium



The Connoisseur Collection, opened this past September in JFK Terminal 8, is home to a first for Avolta: a speakeasy, Blinded Tiger, where travelers can explore our curated collection of top-tier liquor and tobacco products.

and even limited-edition spirits. Select bottles are available for purchase at several U.S. duty free stores.

"We are also combining Hudson and Starbucks, for instance, blending travel essentials and America's favorite coffee brand in the same experience. We are very focused on making the most valuable combination of the great portfolio of brands and experiences we have in order to appeal to the customer."

Loyalty pays off with Club Avolta

Since launching its loyalty program in September 2024, integrating duty free, duty paid, food & beverage, brands, airports, airlines, hotels, and more, Club Avolta has surpassed all expectations, says Martin-Consuegra.

"We are seeing that, on average, customers who are part of the program spend three times more. Club Avolta is a growth engine. It's our flywheel, because it's given us visibility into who our customers are and what the purchasing patterns are. That is very valuable, first to understand their behaviors, then to deliver personalization before, during,

and after the journey, while offering them exclusivity," he says.

"It may be a discount, but it may also be an extra product or a unique experience. This creates value for customers. The possibilities are immense."

Martin-Consuegra points to the Avolta/King Power loyalty partnership announced during the 2025 TFWA World Exhibition in Cannes as another example of the potential of Club Avolta.

The Club Avolta X Power Pass partnership will see members of both programs enjoy seamless reciprocal recognition, extending loyalty privileges beyond traditional boundaries, unlocking benefits and exclusive experiences across both networks.

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Suntory offers first Knob Creek barrel pick with Holland America



Drew Foulk, Senior Manager, Dining & Beverage Operations and Innovation for Holland America Line & Seabourn, traveled to the Beam distillery to pick exclusive barrels for onboard sales and pouring with members of the Suntory Global Spirits team in October.

Suntory Global Spirits has partnered with Holland America Line to launch two special barrels of Knob Creek exclusively with the cruise line, a big step for Suntory's ambitions for its cruise business.

Drew Foulk, Senior Manager, Dining & Beverage Operations and Innovation for Holland America Line & Seabourn, traveled to the James B. Beam Distilling Co. in Kentucky in October, for the first-ever barrel picks (one bourbon, one rye) with members of the Suntory Global Spirits team.

"Not only is this the first barrel selection with the cruise industry, it is the first for Suntory Travel Retail in the Americas," says Nathan Ellingson, Regional Director, Americas, Global Travel Retail, for Suntory Global Spirits.

"We are at the very early stages of our partnership with Holland America, which is what makes this so exciting. Drew's vision is to make his ships the reference for the bourbon drinker, which is why this makes so much sense for Knob Creek. These two barrels will be available exclusively on all Holland America Line ships and with each barrel yielding fewer than 300 bottles each.

"We are expecting these barrels to reach ships in Q1 of next year, so we still have a few details to work through with the Holland team in terms of how to maximize the impact but should have something fun to share."

Ellingson says he is excited about this first step with Holland America.

"While the potential is out there to do more barrel picks, the circumstances would need to be similar to this one. What Drew and the Holland America team are doing on-board to lean into the demands of increasingly sophisticated bourbon drinkers made this opportunity really interesting," he says.

Foulk, along with the experts at the distillery and one travel retail journalist, tried to find the two best barrels for Holland America's passengers.

"Knob Creek is a big brand, so with the volume of barrels that we have aging, it is essential our team does a pre-selection. When completing this, the team is not looking to match the classic Knob Creek flavor profile so much as highlight a variety of different flavors that emerge in the aging process. With that in mind, they selected four barrels each of bourbon and rye coming from different rick houses, floor locations, and proofs that help ensure each selection offers something truly unique," says Ellingson.

Telling a story through taste

"After the barrels were presented to Drew, the selection process became very collaborative," says Ellingson.

"The choice of each barrel became a storytelling session with the five participants sharing their tasting experiences to reach a friendly consensus. The selection brought joy to everyone involved that we hope will be shared with each Holland America passenger who has the opportunity to taste them."

Suntory sees untapped potential in its cruise business and earlier this year hired Steven Mastrodomenico, most recently with Campari, as Senior LATAM and Cruise Lead.

"Our Travel Retail business in the Americas has been a bit of sleeping giant for Suntory. The potential in the region is clear, but until now we did not have the pieces in place to realize that potential. Steven is one of those pieces. We are optimistic that his addition to the team will give us the weight we need to realize our potential in cruise," says Ellingson.

"We are really trying to build our approach around customer centricity so that we are not only getting closer to the end consumer but helping our partners drive category growth. It is that mindset that is driving our hiring in the region as well as the broader investments we need to make to support our business."

Michael Pasternak

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"We're partnered with competitors. It comes from the belief that it makes sense for the customer. If you're a member of the King Power Program and you are in one of our stores, clearly, that's a benefit, and vice versa. So I don't think it will be the last time we will be doing this kind of partnership.

"We need to see if it works, but it expands the potential of the program to completely new boundaries."

Avolta is open to expanding Club Avolta to many different parts of the travel journey, he says.

"We have already struck agreements with some airlines. Another example is, here in North America, there are many small and locally owned businesses that operate their own concessions. The question could be raised why not partner with them? So we are very excited at the potential. And it's only the beginning."

Creating memorable experiences and disrupting the passenger's travel journey are imperative for Avolta, says Martin-Consuegra.

"I'm very excited about something that we have been showing here in Cannes, which is called FLX. We're partnering with brands present to deliver unique experiences connected to their products based on giving access to all five senses, experiences you can smell, see, touch, taste, and feel. It can be anything from a virtual Formula One experience or soccer game to a special, unique Michelin-starred chef designed ice cream. We are planning to deploy them in selected airports. This helps us reach our objective to disrupt the customer journey in a positive way by bringing together our full portfolio of brands and experiences, one that is unparalleled in the industry."

Michael Pasternak