

# A bigger piece of the pie

Currently enjoying unprecedented in-flight success in Europe, smokeless cigarette company Similar sets its sights on the Americas **By Ryan White**

If you've been keeping up lately with duty free and in-flight news across the pond, then you've likely heard of Similar, a smokeless cigarette company based in the UK. As opposed to electronic cigarettes, which emit vapor and are not generally acceptable for in-flight use, Similar produces and sells smokeless cigarettes that emit absolutely nothing into the air. As such, they've found a welcome home on carriers such as Ryanair, bmibaby, easyJet, and Air Baltic. With negotiations currently taking place with a number of domestic and duty free retailers, Head of Business Development at Similar Nick Korpál asserts that this is just the beginning for the company.

According to Korpál, Similar's in-flight success has a lot to do with the fact that nearly everyone is appreciative of their product: "First of all, it's a fact that smokers get antsy on flights when they can't enjoy a cigarette. Our smokeless cigarettes, which contain nicotine but none of the harmful chemicals in traditional cigarettes and absolutely no tobacco, fulfill smokers' needs nicely while on planes.

"However, one thing we didn't expect was the overwhelming response from flight crews and non-smoking passengers as well," continues Korpál. "Allowing smokers to get their fix in a way that isn't disruptive or harmful to others significantly reduces stress levels on the plane, meaning that the trip is more pleasant for everyone aboard."

If the numbers of carriers that are now selling Similar's products is any indication, the above assertion certainly seems to be true. Just five months ago, Similar began selling onboard Ryanair flights. Since that time, the company's wares have been introduced on no fewer than four other carriers. The company has also developed unique advertising in the form of self-adhesive, removable banners that can be attached to trolleys in-flight. The unique signage can currently be found onboard Air Baltic flights, and the company hopes this will catch on with other carriers as well.

Korpál also asserts that Similar has been getting a lot of attention from retailers on the ground: "In Ireland, advertising

or displaying tobacco products has been completely banned. As our product does not fall under the same category as traditional cigarettes or cigars and can therefore be displayed and advertised, we're being approached by a number of domestic retailers in the country. In addition to this, we're now officially available in Belgium Sky Shops' stores."

Similar's US distributor is currently in talks with the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) to have its products approved for retail sale in the US. While Korpál surmises that approval from the FDA is still some months away, the tacit approval from Britain's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to sell the smokeless cigarettes onboard flights may serve as an indication of things to come in the US.

"Making our way into the US market, and indeed into all of the Americas, is something that we take very seriously," says Korpál. "It's just a matter of educating consumers and various organizations about the fact that our smokeless cigarettes are very distinct from electronic cigarettes; our product does not produce any type of smoke or vapor that can harm others. This is a very significant point when it comes to approval from groups such as the FDA."

The price for a pack of Similar smokeless cigarettes is comparable to that of a pack of traditional cigarettes. However, a Similar pack lasts between two and three times longer than a regular pack of cigarettes. Furthermore,

Korpál notes that there's no shortage of flavor options: "Our smokeless cigarettes come in American and Virginia flavors. After listening to user feedback, we've also decided to introduce a menthol flavor later this year, giving our customers even more choices."

The folks at Similar certainly have a lot going for them at the moment. With new duty free and in-flight listings in both Europe and the Americas on the horizon, a growing fan base of consumers, passengers, and even airline crews who appreciate how the company's products help reduce stress in the air, and the great value for money that their smokeless cigarettes provide, Korpál hopes that it won't be long before the vast majority of smokers make the Similar brand the rule as opposed to the exception: "Our eventual hope for Similar smokeless cigarettes is that they'll completely replace traditional forms of smoking with something less harmful. While this may be quite a way off yet, I think we're definitely off to a good start. You can expect to see a lot more of Similar in the coming months as we continue our initiatives in the air, on the ground, and all around the world." □

Unlike electronic or traditional cigarettes, Similar smokeless cigarettes do not emit any harmful vapor or smoke into the air

