

■ Over next five years....

Subway to revamp all 41 locations

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SUBWAY plans to update all 41 of its restaurants in Trinidad and Tobago over the next five years as part of its global rebranding strategy, according to Johann Mendoza, vice-president of Subway under Prestige Holdings Ltd.

The most recent upgrade is visible at the Independence Square location, which has relocated across the street and unveiled a sleek, modernised design.

That transformation, Mendoza said, aligns with the company's Franchisee Agreement, which requires periodic enhancements to uphold global brand standards.

Five additional restaurant upgrades are planned before the end of the year.

Speaking with the *Sunday Express Business*, Mendoza said, 'The decision to remodel Subway Independence Square is part of our Franchisee Agreement, as we are contractually obliged to enhance our stores' image. The relocation across the road was a business strategy to share the new building with two of our Prestige Holdings brands (Starbucks and Subway).'

The total investment in those projects amounted to \$6.6 million.

When asked how Subway will measure the success of this investment, Mendoza said it will be assessed through the internal rate of return and improvements in cash flow.

'These investments are key for our market to align with global brand standards as governed by Subway International. We have a lot of catching up to do, as many of our stores are dated and need to be refreshed. It is important to invest as we reimagine the use of space and offer our guests a better restaurant experience,' he added.

Mendoza shared that the redesign and relocation process was not without challenges.

'Global supply chain issues caused major delays in new equipment sourcing and specific design elements that were all imported. This relocation has been in the plans for two years, with an initial target of September 2023 and then a second target of May 2024 (the same time that Starbucks Independence Square was opened),' he explained.

When asked about the economic impact of these investments, Mendoza noted that approximately 60% to 75% of the total cost for each restaurant remodel 'goes directly to the local economy in TT dollars.'

Kiosks to come

'This means job creation in the construction industry and other related industries. As a result of Subway's improved performance, we have also created more job opportunities for sandwich artists and other internal staff,' he said.

Mendoza shared that the new design enhances the customer experience, adding a sense of excitement and giving guests greater confidence in the brand and the food they consume.

'The digital menu screens are the new standard in the fast-casual dining sector, and allows us to display relevant messaging during different day-parts. We have plans to introduce kiosk ordering in the near future at each of our redesigned restaurants. In the meantime, guests can place orders digitally through our mobile Subway app for pickup at the cashier. This allows you to skip the line while you customise your order to your needs,' he highlighted.

Mendoza shared that the feedback from this new design and layout was based on global research from customers.

'The new Fresh Forward design is a global concept from Subway International, which would have been based on global research from customers. From a local perspective, we have made efforts to ensure that our redesigned restaurants are accessible, as our Independence Square restaurant features a ramp for wheelchair access,' he said.

With at least five more remodels planned before the end of the year, Mendoza said the approach to determine the priority is geographically strategic, while addressing those that are in most need of enhancements.

Asked about the long-term vision of the brand locally, Mendoza said, 'Subway's longterm vision for the local market is to continue to offer 'craveable' food that is good for you, while offering value for money. We aim to update all 41 restaurants in T&T with the new design within the next five years, which is aligned with the brand's global strategy.'