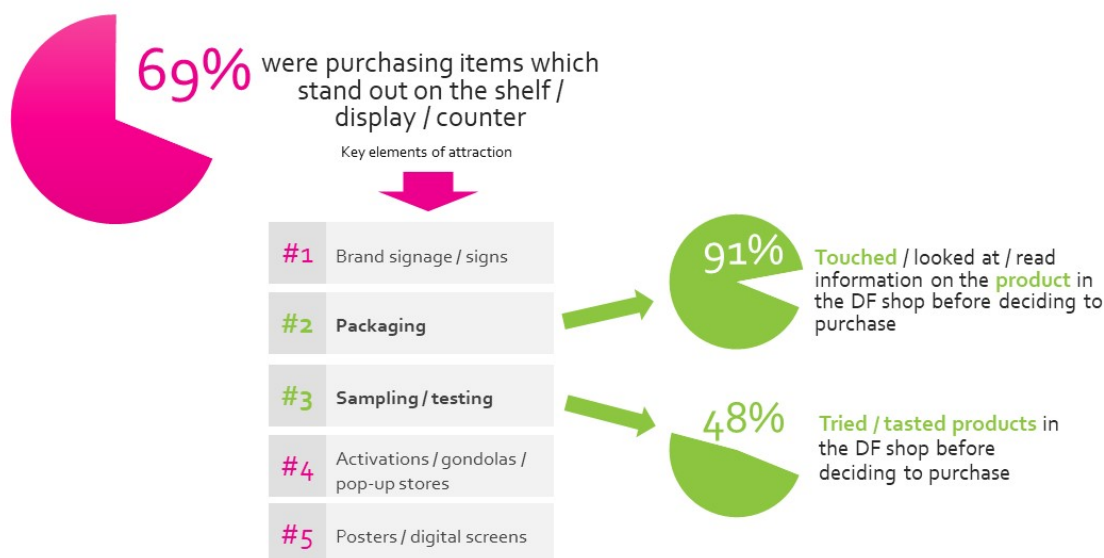


Customers demand new rules of engagement in post-pandemic travel retail, says study

What contributed to provide a pleasant shopping experience



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International passengers will be expecting travel retail industry stakeholders to adapt to the new normal when flights resume, according to the latest consumer insights report by leading industry research agency m1nd-set.

Based on research conducted earlier in May among 1,500 international passengers who have traveled internationally in the past 12 months, the report demonstrates some of the key attributes of experiential retail.

It looks into what consumers find to be the most effective and engaging aspects of the shopping experience and how this will evolve once international travel resumes in the post-COVID-19 travel retail environment.

The report also reflects on changes that will need to be made across the travel retail environment to ensure customers feel safe about entering stores – and, if they do not, how to take the store to the customer.

The report discusses the challenges to retailers and their staff on communicating the new post-COVID-19 shopping process and restrictions, while still trying to engage and sell in-store. With more than 60% of shoppers saying they will refrain from engaging with retail staff when next traveling, m1nd-set believes customer engagement will present unprecedented challenges, for which new training programs will be essential for retailers and brands to prepare sales associates and brand ambassadors.

Anna Marchesini, Project and Business Development Manager at m1nd-set, explained: “Our research

shows that in the pre-pandemic era, more than 90% of shoppers say that touching the products is an important part of the shopping experience and just less than half (48%) say they tried or tasted products before purchasing. Staff will have to be trained on how to sell in these new retail conditions and deal with difficult customers who don't take well to these new rules of engagement."

Shift to digitalization

m1nd-set asked consumers how they see the shopping experience evolving in the post-COVID-19 travel retail environment and the role which digital technology and innovation will play in this transformation.

The shift to digitalization is, in the shopper's mind at least, imperative for the future of retail and travel retail, as m1nd-set's Travel Retail Research Director Clara Susset underlined: "According to the study, Virtual and Augmented Reality applications are likely to take on a more central role in retail generally. 70% of shoppers say they want to see more prevalent use of VR and AR technology, with applications such as virtual mirrors for make-up and cosmetics product testing."

The shift to digital will mean a paradigm shift for duty free retailers in their approach to online retailing, said Susset.

"There will need to be a concerted drive towards a more modern, user-friendly and interactive e-commerce presence for the global travel retail sector as well as further investment in consumer data platforms to create, curate and maintain an ongoing relationship with customers pre- and post-travel," she concluded.

The report will be presented by m1nd-set's Clara Susset during the next TRConnect webinar, organized by travel retail trade publication *TRBusiness* on Tuesday, June 2. (Registration is complimentary; click [here](#) to attend.)