

SKROSS stays in charge



Sam Gerber, Co-Owner, WorldConnect AG, discusses the value of staying connected and how this translates to a win for SKROSS

Swiss travel accessory brand SKROSS boasts a core business linked exclusively to travel. It is no surprise that the company has suffered a 90% decrease in business in travel retail as a result of COVID-19.

When speaking to Sam Gerber, Co-Owner, WorldConnect AG, however, we find he feels the worst is behind us now. "We are now entering July, which is better than I thought. From now on, every month should be quite an improvement. We had a very similar situation going back to 2008 when the financial crisis happened and all travel halted in a similar way, especially business travel and corporate travel. We have seen a very similar downturn and it may take around two years until we get some sort of normality," says Gerber.

He continues, "The outlook for July and August is still a little bit blurry, but overall I am positive that every month will set a new record."

Gerber describes the effects of COVID-19 on business as asymmetrical, because there is no linear build up of business for anyone. There is no international standard progression with this crisis, as every country has its own political way of dealing with it. No international synchronization to recovery is possible, as each country is tackling the pandemic with its own plan of action.

SKROSS in motion

UK-based WHSmith recently purchased InMotion, an airport-based electronics retailer in America.

SKROSS' global agreement with WHSmith allowed the brand to extend its relationship with WHSmith International. InMotion will be offering the full range of power solutions from SKROSS, including its travel adapters and a complete range of cables, USB chargers and power banks. The products will be displayed in a dedicated wall space, allowing customers to efficiently find everything to stay connected while on the go.

“America will be an inspirational market — not just because of its size, but any brand that is Swiss associated normally does well there. We tried to enter some retailers and distributors, but we didn't have any leverage for travel products. This is because the US is mainly domestic travel. We needed someone that can really enter travel retail, like InMotion who could target these travelers, especially within inbound tourism,” explains Gerber.

Power of connection

Switzerland was one of the first countries to launch a COVID-19 tracking app called the “SwissCovid.” One of the first apps to take advantage of the Apple and Google Exposure Notification API, it was downloaded by over 1 million people in a population of 8 million.

“In this pandemic, we have learned that information is crucial,” says Gerber. “We received hourly updates and information was very fluid. People have learned that it is crucial to stay charged with these types of battery draining apps. People have also realized the mobility and accessibility of their data is crucial, and for this you need a mobile phone. So charging and being connected is in effect a life saver.”



Mobile phone stores were also considered an essential service in Italy during the crisis. The government quickly realized that smart phones were the most efficient way to reach large populations.

Gerber is a believer that travel technology and accessories will emerge stronger in travel retail post COVID-19, as he believes this pandemic has proven the power of connection.

“Ninety-nine percent of the people traveling have mobile phones, tablets or computers, something that needs to be powered. I believe people are much more conscious about the importance of power while traveling. It has thus become much more important than any other gift when making travel related purchases,” explains Gerber.

Passively active

SKROSS has taken a wait and see approach to its position in duty free. Gerber describes it as being “passively active;” they have continued to “have their feelers out” to stay connected with duty free partners.

SKROSS has also begun to explore the potential of domestic products. Now that a large majority of the world is working from home, SKROSS sees this as an opportunity to bring its trusted branded products into the home offices for many employees.

Says Gerber: “I believe that when you look around in your office or home office, there are hardly any branded products. There is an opportunity for branding more products that look better and have a better brand name with a better retail concept. We are looking at this quite actively now.”

Gerber believes now is the time to focus on how broad and quickly international travel will open up. “We need airlines and airports. We need people traveling, and for that we need people booking. And it doesn’t make sense to open up airports if no one is booking flights. This is a whole ecosystem that needs to get back on track.”

He concludes, “My gut tells me it will be one to two years before we get back to a similar frequency to the one we once were on.”