

# The revolution of contactless retail: Avolta sees significant uplift



Brian Quinn, Chief Operating Officer - Retail, North America, Avolta, says, "We see the consumer's personal devices, like mobile phones and tablets, playing an increasingly important role in their shopping experience in travel venues"

Major global travel retailers such as Avolta are revolutionizing the way travelers shop with cutting-edge contactless shopping solutions. By prioritizing the traveler's convenience and integrating personal devices into the retail experience, these retailers ensure a seamless, efficient and personalized shopping journey. This innovative approach, characterized by self-checkout options and digital engagement, is transforming travel retail, making shopping faster, more convenient, and tailored to the needs of the modern traveler.

## **Traveler-led tech**

Through Hudson, self-checkout is available at many of Avolta's North America travel convenience stores, as well as proprietary retail stores like Evolve by Hudson. "We operate contactless, 24/7 automated retail concepts featuring leading brands and exclusive products, and our Hudson Nonstop stores offer a frictionless shopping experience powered by Amazon's Just Walk Out technology," says Brian Quinn, Chief Operating Officer - Retail, North America, Avolta.

Avolta is conscious of the fact that travelers want a seamless, personalized experience that allows

them to set the pace for their journey, especially when they are pressed for time. “The contactless technology we offer in our stores provides travelers with the flexibility they desire, and this is evident in the significant uplift in customer conversion we have seen since we introduced this kind of shopping experience,” says Quinn. “Based on the significant uplift in customer conversion we have seen since implementing contactless shopping, we know that travelers want to go at their own pace throughout their travel journey — especially in an airport environment where there so many things out of their control.”

These contactless options have produced a significant increase in customer conversion, according to Quinn, who says the increased number of total checkout points allows more customers the ability to be in and out as fast as they need to with their purchased items in hand.

Nearly every part of the airport experience can be contactless. “Many passengers already use their mobile phones to book flights, choose seats, check in with their airline, request a rideshare to the airport, pass through security, and even pre-order food or get on a restaurant’s waiting list,” says Quinn. “Contactless shopping is another way we can remove friction in their experience traveling through an airport — and ultimately make travelers happier.”



Contactless shopping creates convenience for customers, bringing predictability and speed to their shopping experience on their day of travel. This positive experience helps to build customer loyalty by meeting their needs, according to Quinn. Avolta’s statement is: “We put the traveler at the center of everything we do”

### **Pre-order**

Avolta’s Reserve & Collect pre-ordering shopping service offers convenience, predictability, and speed to customers, according to Quinn. “With Reserve & Collect, travelers can browse and reserve 2

over 40,000 duty free products online including beauty, accessories, food, liquor and more. They can reserve items online up to 29 days in advance, and collect and pay for them in-store when they arrive at the terminal.”

The Reserve & Collect program has been particularly successful among Red By Dufry loyalty program members. “In 2023, nearly 70% of purchases from the program were from loyalty members. Reserve & Collect shoppers also average 80% higher transaction value than purchases made in-store,” says Quinn.

### **Cashiers become ambassadors**

As is often the case in business, the biggest challenge Avolta faces is the flipside of a substantial opportunity, as contactless technology allows store associates to focus on customer service. “Our biggest challenge has been training thousands of employees to think of themselves as hospitality ambassadors instead of cashiers,” says Quinn. “For those who have spent their career in retail, working in an environment with contactless technology requires a shift in mindset. We do everything we can to provide training, guidance, and continued support to help employees feel comfortable in this role.”

Personal service results in more satisfied customers and higher sales, and contactless shopping allows this. “When they are not tied to a point-of-sale system where they spend their day completing transactions, our employees can serve as hospitality ambassadors, helping passengers find the item they need or the perfect souvenir, answering questions about products, and ensuring shelves are fully stocked,” says Quinn.

These employees become hospitality ambassadors instead of cashiers. Quinn says once they become comfortable with the updated role and responsibilities, employees adapt very well. “We see a gradual increase in contactless transactions by travelers as our employees become advocates for the technology,” he adds.

### **Evolution and innovation**

As part of Avolta’s Destination 2027 strategy, the company is committed to innovating the traveler-centered experience with enhanced digital engagement. Quinn says travelers should expect to see exciting things in the coming months and years.

“We recently opened our largest Evolve by Hudson store at Chicago Midway International Airport (MDW) and plan to continue to develop this concept, along with Hudson Nonstop powered by Amazon’s Just Walk Out technology,” he shares. “Our contactless shopping has been so successful that we have expanded our original scope and development plans. Travelers should expect to see more self-checkout, more Hudson Nonstop, and more automated retail in the coming months and years to help create a frictionless travel experience wherever they go.”

As part of Avolta, Hudson has a unique position in the travel retail market, as the subsidiary can tap into its global partners to see the very best of what’s happening in the sector. “We put the traveler at the center of everything we do, so as their priorities change, so do ours,” says Quinn. “But what remains constant is that we will continue to deliver the travel experience revolution through enhanced digital engagement.”