

# Think Tank column: “People will crave travel and physical interaction more than ever”



**INTERNATIONAL.** *Think Tank is a guest column in which we invite alternative, fresh perspectives on the travel retail and aviation sectors. Here, STHLM Retail Staff Managing Director & Project Manager Jonas Kronlund – whose company provides specialised staffing agency services for the beauty industry in the Nordics – says that physical interaction between retail operatives and customers will still have a vital role to play in the post COVID-19 world.*

We are in the wake of the ice-cold tidal wave from the COVID-19 crisis which has swept over the travel, and other, retail industries. Those who have managed to survive this far can begin to look ahead, and contemplate what everyday life will be like after the crisis.



Jonas Kronlund: “The digital shift places higher demands on the in-store experience”

The pandemic hastened the so-called 'death of retail' which, despite everything, we were prepared for. Many of those that were unable to survive in the initial phases of the virus were companies that were already facing tough times.

The crisis has accelerated the shift from physical stores to ecommerce. It has forced through new solutions and services. Some have benefited from developing their ecommerce, but the question remains: what does the situation look like for physical shopping when the restrictions are lifted?

I see great opportunities. More than anything else, social distancing has shown us that humans need human contact and physical interaction. Shortly after the start of the pandemic, the World Health Organization warned of a wave of mental illness in the wake of the pandemic.

When the movement restrictions are finally lifted, people will crave travel and physical interaction more than ever. Maybe a shopping excursion on a cruise ship, or spending some extra hours at an airport before flying; all of this will feel more enticing than shopping online.

***“Unique and time-limited experiences and events is a trend that has grown in recent years and can be crucial in attracting consumers to the stores”***

I think that, at least for a certain period, we will see increased activity in our stores. I also believe it's wise to start thinking about what we will then be able offer the customer. That is to say, the digital shift places higher demands on the in-store experience.

Flexible service and expertly trained staff have become increasingly important in recent years and will be crucial after the crisis. In line with customers' Google practices, which allow them to access extensive information themselves, the demand for sellers' knowledge and the ability to address more initiated issues and create interest in the brand is on the increase.

Here are some points in question. A recently released survey from job website Retail Choice shows that 20% of consumers surveyed experienced frustration that an online service, such as a chatbot, could not answer their question.



Jonas Kronlund says specialist trained staff can provide a strong added value to the retail experience

This indicates that the physical interaction with a store salesperson still has value and it is therefore of the utmost importance that the salesperson is sufficiently competent. Specialist trained staff can provide the customer with strong added value, and ensure that they will return.

With the longing for human interaction and physical experiences, I also believe that “retail entertainment” will play an important role when the coronavirus crisis is over. Unique and time-limited experiences and events is a trend that has grown in recent years and can be crucial in attracting consumers to the stores.

The industry needs to prepare now for the time after the pandemic and the new requirements and expectations that customers will have. If we succeed in this, physical trade can get a boost and become both better and stronger than before.

Looking forward to seeing you on the shop floor soon again soon!

*Wish to comment on this article? Feel free to offer your thoughts via the DISQUS platform below or on our LinkedIn page. Have you got a viewpoint for the Think Tank column on what lies ahead for the travel retail industry? Write to Martin Moodie at [Martin@MoodieDavittReport.com](mailto:Martin@MoodieDavittReport.com)*