

# Victorinox's Marcos Zobel says the future is now

The realities of 2020 did nothing to dampen Swiss multichannel company Victorinox's commitment to travel retail, says Marcos Zobel, Victorinox Sales Director Americas Travel Retail & Cruise Ships. "Our company said: 'We are over 130 years old. We always think long term.' We are committed to the travel retail channel, and this is the perfect time to gain more space."



Marcos Zobel Victorinox Sales Director Travel Retail & Cruise Ships Americas, is excited for the company's launches and expansion in the Americas over the coming months and years

Inevitably, the launches prepared for travel retail 2020 did not end up happening as planned. "As a global brand with distribution in over 120 countries, we were able to carry out some of our planned launches in the local markets, though most of the travel retail launches were postponed until 2021, mainly because of the logistics of travel retail," says Zobel, adding: "We are very focused on innovation and new product development, which never stop."

## Fragrance launches and relaunches



Forget Me Not, launched in January, is “a fresh floral fragrance inspired by the unapologetic, raw and yet fragile beauty of Swiss nature and the forget me not flower itself”

The relaunch of the fragrance lines did take place at the Virtual Expo in October, and there is much more to come in 2021. The new Forget Me Not fragrance launched in January, and there will be another fragrance launching in Q4. “We have increased our supply of 1.5ml glass vials to be handed out to clients interested in smelling our fragrances.”

The company is also working on new mini spray sample sets with a few different samples in attractive packaging as well as travel sizes of 10ml - 20ml in anticipation of the rising consumer demand for sampling and small sizes because of COVID-19 restrictions.



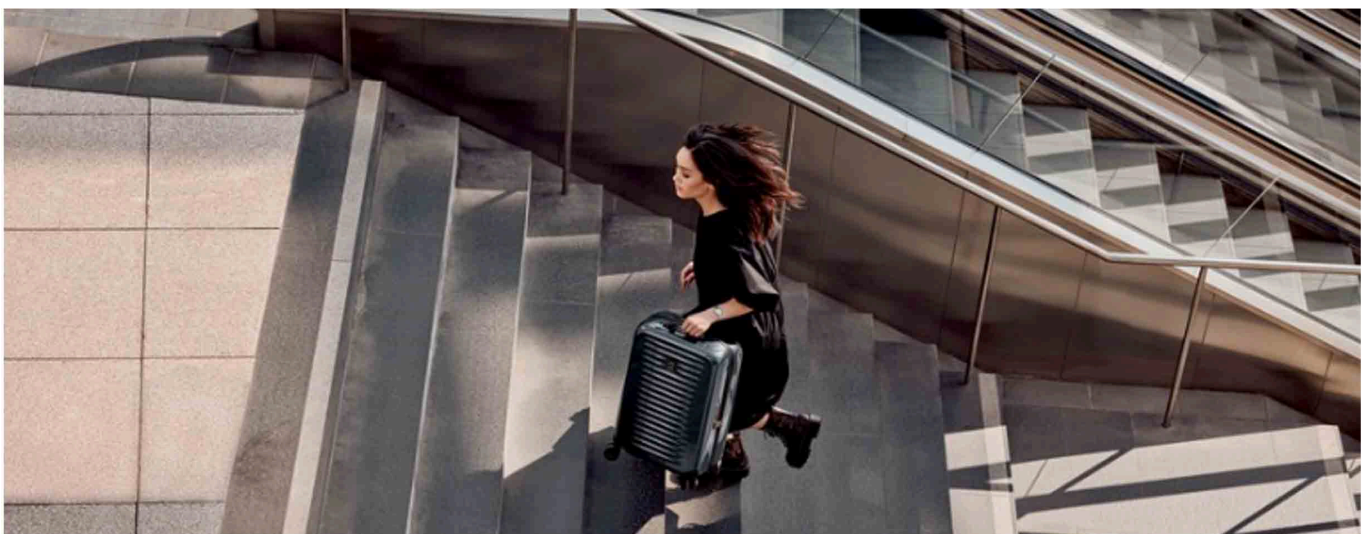
With high expectations for its fragrance line, Victorinox relaunched its entire collection in October at the Virtual Travel Retail Expo, in part to create more sustainable packaging in line with its renewed sustainability focus

### Lifestyle brand

Two luggage collections, three watch collections and a new multitool series will also be joining the company's portfolio over the coming months.

"For the INOX V watch, Victorinox had a strong campaign targeting women," says Zobel. "Because of our pocket-knife people sometimes have the misconception that this is a man's brand, but when women see the functionality and innovation of our women's line, they fall in love."

The other watch launches are expansions on a current line - the FieldForce collection is expanding into GMT and Classic Chrono. In travel gear, which is the company's top-selling category in travel retail, will be the award-winning Airox collection, which won the red dot design award last year.



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"Then we will be launching the backpack collection for the business traveler," says Zobel. "For this we

are focusing on the commuting consumer, offering versatility. Today you're working at home, tomorrow in office, then traveling — this allows you to carry your office in your backpack."

Zobel is excited for the launch of the well-known multitool but in classic colors, with matching pouch. This campaign targets the younger consumer with fun colors and a fun campaign.

"It's exciting because we are elevating the brand and presenting it in the channel as a lifestyle brand," says Zobel. "What we all experienced last year is opening the space to have different conversations with duty free retailers. They are reinventing their business models and shop spaces. We are now discussing how to bring the brand together; instead of having our products scattered around the store in different categories, we can create a brand experience. Sales staff can become more like true brand ambassadors instead of just focusing on the one category."

### **Chocolate knife**

"People might think a Swiss army knife and chocolate combination is unexpected, but it's not new," says Zobel. "Over the years this product has been successfully available in Europe. The new partnership with Felchlin enables us to expand distribution to a global footprint. We believe the chocolate knife has huge potential as a souvenir item, and impulse purchase.

Felchlin is a leading producer of noble Swiss chocolate and semi-finished chocolate, and it is located right next to Victorinox headquarters. On offer will be a five-unit pack and a gift pack in a metal box, but the partnership with Felchlin will allow for product expansion that was not previously possible.

### **Well established in LATAM**

Victorinox is a well-known brand in South America with a solid footprint. "We are in all airports of the region. Victorinox in LATAM has a very strong brand position, and with its Swiss made quality and design is considered a premium brand. This has helped us penetrate and grow. We also have a good and solid footprint in the Caribbean.

The company has experience in border shops, especially in Paraguay and Argentina. The Brazil border shops are new, and the company is in conversations with Dufry. "Orders are flowing in," says Zobel. On the Uruguay side, Zobel says selectivity is imperative. "When you visit these borders with one huge store after another you need to have brand integrity. You have to be with the right partners."

All in all, Zobel sees promising signs in the region. "As soon as a store opens, we see doubling sales from the previous month, over and over. We are rebuilding trust with passengers, with sales staff. The fact that we're seeing this strength is very positive for us."



Victorinox is launching three new watches including two in its “FieldForce” line: the FieldForce GMT and the FieldForce Classic Chrono, along with the INOX V

### **A blank slate**

North America is an area of opportunity for Victorinox. “Right now North America travel retail is underdeveloped. It is made up of different components. We have duty free, duty paid plus as you know the online business has affected many brands. We have been working very hard to find that right moment to present as a lifestyle multicategory brand with correct messaging for all components. We need to complete a lot of logistics and strategic work before jumping in. When you do something you have to do it right, and you only have one chance.”

### **Readying for cruise**

The company had been prepared to launch in the cruise industry in 2020, Zobel says. “We participated in a cruise conference in Miami. We began talks, learning how to interconnect — with cruises it’s not one sale; it’s a seven-day interaction with the consumer. We worked very hard on the foundation. We started conversations with cruise retail operators. And now this year even though cruises are not yet happening, we were called by a cruise retail company to do a program with our brand. We have a quality positioning and a good story, so our brand is attractive to high end luxury cruise ships.”

### **The coming year**

Zobel says he is well aware this year won’t be without difficulties. “Each region and each country have different vaccine rollouts, quarantines, regulations. Many factors will determine how travel retail will recover, but we feel optimistic. It is in people’s nature to travel. They want to get back in the air. And now I see some corporations are allowing execs to start traveling, which means other companies will follow.”

### **Travel retail channel**

Some brands don’t understand the place of travel retail, but Victorinox saw the opportunity four or five years ago, says Zobel. “They brought in a Head of GTR [ex-Mondelez World Travel Retail Head of

Regions, Thomas Bodenmann] with over 16 years of experience; he set up the road map correctly to gain a global footprint. The channel is a very good gateway to be exposed to passengers and for presenting our brand as a brand and more than just products. We can offer a concise brand experience.”

Victorinox products are an ideal choice for travelers with a good quality Swiss engineered product. Zobel says: “We offer a 360-degree approach for the travel journey and we have a loyal and dedicated customer base. We are taking our brand to the next level, unifying our categories. It’s a great opportunity for retailers.”