

# If the brand fits...

Looking to make more of a connection with passengers, airlines are opting to collaborate with more bespoke brands over the usual high-end suspects when developing amenity kits, providing passengers with a more elevated offering

BY MELISSA SILVA

Collaborations between brands and airlines for the development of amenity kits are not by any means, a new practice. Over the years countless brands have teamed up with airlines, from high-end luxury brands, to lesser-known indie counterparts. But not all passengers are that thrilled to receive yet another branded bag, especially those traveling in First and Business Class, where the income bracket means high-end brands are already easily obtained.

What has become more common however, is airlines looking for brands that they better align with; a brand that offers less of a label, name recognition and status, and more of a tailored experience or moment in the form of quality materials and carefully selected personal goods.

## Authentically Australian

Galileo Watermark first approached Australian brand [Country Road](#) at the beginning of 2015 to work on concepts and ideas for amenity kits for Qantas. The following year on January 26, 2016 — [Australia Day](#) — Galileo Watermark launched the first Country Road kit for Premium Economy passengers.

The design of the kit is inspired by [Country Road's iconic black and white gingham print](#). Inside the reusable travel



The design of the Country Road kit for Qantas' Premium Economy passengers is inspired by the brand's iconic black and white gingham print

pouch, passengers will find an eye mask, socks and a dental kit.

"As Country Road put it, they provide their customers with 'effortless style and comfort within all aspects of their everyday life.' This makes the brand a perfect fit for an inflight amenity kit," says Alexander Atkinson, Creative Director of Galileo Watermark. "It goes without saying that, in their own right, Qantas and Country Road are two iconic Australian brands. The coming together of these two instantly recognizable brands further provides Qantas passengers with an 'authentic Australian experience.'"

Constance de Trogoff, Brand Manager for Galileo Watermark, says that feedback from airlines suggest that the majority of the kits given to First and Business Class passengers are left on the seats, as these passengers are already high-end brand consumers that do not necessarily see a branded bag as a gift, but more or less expect to receive it as part of the normal service.

"This can be a real challenge for us," she adds. "However studies and online airline reviews reveal that exclusive partnerships that are conscientiously designed to enhance the journey, do make a huge difference for Premium and Economy Class passengers. Many airlines unfortunately don't allocate their budget to allow for this kind of experience in these cabins, but recently we have seen more airlines addressing this and acknowledging that bringing a sense of delight, added value and surprise to the back of the plane

definitely contributes to the passenger's choice of airline."

For First and Business Class passengers, there appears to be little interest in receiving the same Salvatore Ferragamo or Louis Vuitton bags as a gift every time they fly, when they can afford to purchase the actual retail bags, or already own them, says de Trogoff. "The large logos and loud brand representations are not necessarily relevant anymore. Using a recognizable or iconic print, or implementing the latest fashion week trends is more attractive and elevates a kit in a more subtle and stylish way. Exclusive and unique offerings are definitely the future."

With the Qantas Premium Economy kit, Atkinson says Galileo Watermark noticed a significant rise in the number of kits that were kept by passengers after the flight, following the launch of the Country Road kit. "This is obviously a good reflection on the partnership and the fact that the kits are being collected by passengers and re-used bodes well from a sustainable point of view," he adds.

With the way travelers travel continuing to change, airlines are responding by adjusting their cabins to better meet the needs of today's modern passenger. With regards to the amenity kit space, de Trogoff says offering a unique experience supported by exclusive brand collaborations has been important in order to align with airlines' rebranding strategies and will likely become the new trend.

"We live in a digital world where happiness, curative moments and self-expression



Once flying, the HANRO of Switzerland sleepwear sets developed by Clip will mark the first time the brand has been available on board

are very important for people who are always looking for something for the next photo opportunity, or to tweet about,” she adds.

## The perfect match

Onboard experience specialists [Clip](#) recently joined forces with esteemed lingerie, nightwear, and loungewear brand, [HANRO of Switzerland](#). Founded in 1884, HANRO has been crafting fine garments for more than 130 years, making it an ideal brand choice for Premium Class passengers.

“Many airlines especially in First Class cabins — and in some Business Class cabins — have joined forces with high-end, luxury brands, which serve as a good match with the airline’s DNA,” says Cindy Lam, Director of Clip. “We believe that HANRO is uniquely positioned in terms of brand position, high quality and global presence, and will be a great fit for top international carriers.”

The sleepwear sets Clip has developed with HANRO are not yet available on board, but once on offer from the launch customer, will mark the first time HANRO has been on board an airline.

Following in the current trend of inconspicuous, subtle brand representations instead of large logos and blatant brand recognition,

clip used a small woven logo label placed discreetly on the HANRO sleep shirts. “Understated luxury is what we want to communicate about the product and the brand,” says Lam. “The branding is important but the quality and craftsmanship is what the brand represents. The higher the quality of material and the better the workmanship, the better the response from the passenger. So the brand is important, but the final product has to match the passenger’s expectation.”

While there does still exist some excitement

around receiving a branded pyjamas set, Lam says the brand cannot just be any brand, arbitrarily selected; the brand and the airline must be aligned with one another for better passenger appreciation and a better guest experience.

“I believe that brands will become even more important in the onboard experience,” Lam continues. “There is strong appeal for a brand to partner with the right airline and vice versa. Having the perfect match is important for both parties.”

## A curated connection

In November of last year, JetBlue introduced its new custom-designed amenity kits for men and women from New York

City-based [Hayward and Hopper](#) (to read more on this brand, see “[Art takes flight](#),” page 26), “returning classic Hollywood sophistication to air travel.” JetBlue partnered with clip to create the new kits.

Hayward and Hopper creator and founder Marin Hopper, daughter of Hollywood legends Dennis Hopper and Brooke Hayward, drew upon her personal style and family archives to create chic, comforting and classic amenity kits for JetBlue’s Mint. The Hayward kit, designed for female passengers, is made from signature Hayward denim and includes a delicate brass zipper, designed by her legendary grandfather, Leland Hayward. The Hopper kit, designed for male passengers, is fabricated in a natural cotton canvas.

All personal care products included in the kits are made in the United States and handpicked by Hayward and Hopper. The selection will change slightly every quarter. “Not all items, but there will be some new items and some new iterations of current items, such as screen wipes with new images on them,” says Jamie Perry, Vice President of Marketing at JetBlue.

Each kit also comes with a matching eye mask as well as screen cloths illustrated with photographs taken by Dennis Hopper and provided by the [Hopper Art Trust archives](#).

“We loved the Hayward and Hopper sense of New York sophistication and old Hollywood style — a nod to our launch cities that fell in love with Mint from the start,” adds Perry. “We tell a story with our kits. Customers enjoy a story, a brand and something they can connect to.”

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