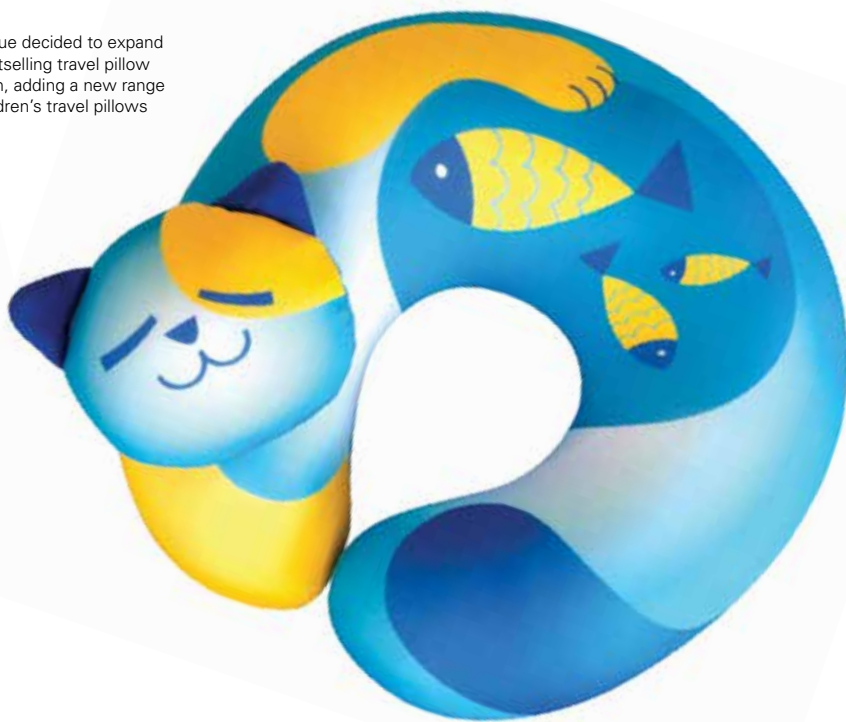


Travel Blue decided to expand its bestselling travel pillow collection, adding a new range of children's travel pillows



TECHNICAL COMFORT

With smartphone sales on the rise and comfort accessories in demand, the electronics category is seizing an opportunity for growth by MELISSA SILVA

The electronics category seems to have been governed by two predominant themes this year—technological convenience and comfort when traveling. With smartphone sales on the rise and traveler numbers steadily increasing, the category is faced with both a challenge and an opportunity: the challenge to meet traveler's technological and comfort needs and the opportunity to increase the number of impulse purchases.

Go Travel has noticed the increasing number of smartphone users and understands that almost every traveler today has a smartphone, tablet and in most cases, both. "Most travelers now carry smartphones or tablets and this has presented a huge spike in sales for associated accessories," says David Lomas, Director, Go Travel. "Consumers want convenience and opt for clever and useful gadgets and accessories that not only appeal visually, but are both affordable and useful, too." With more and more travelers investing in expensive electronic devices, it's only logical that the need for accessories will increase, thus creating a profitable opportunity for the electronic and accessory categories.

But of course, it's not just travelers that have an interest in electronic devices and

accessories—buyers are showing equal interest. "First and foremost, buyers have become more interested in electronics accessories," says Lomas. "In the past, the category was more of a necessary evil than the buoyant category which it has now become. Electronic buyers are more open to the fantastic opportunity it presents to drive quick and often impulse purchase sales."

The proof is in the product

In response to the current demand for smartphone accessories, Go Travel developed its Power Bank range, which will be launched at this year's TFWA World Exhibition in Cannes. The range offers a selection of two devices that allow for charging electronic devices on the go. "[The Power Bank range] is an ideal

lightweight, emergency backup when you don't have access to power," says Lomas.

The first of the Power Bank range's two devices is small, slim and compact, making it ideal for traveling as it doesn't add extra weight. The second is a larger, high-capacity, rechargeable external power source with two 5V USB outputs that are powerful enough to charge two devices simultaneously. Go Travel's Power Bank range is compatible with all USB charging devices, and can charge all smartphones, cameras and tablets.

Because of the significant rise in demand for associated accessories, Go Travel has gone so far as to increase its research and development budget over the last couple of years. "This is predominantly due to the unrelenting penetration of tablets and smartphone devices in the global marketplace," says Lomas. "Most of our innovations in electronics look to provide simple, convenient solutions that allow travelers to use their devices wherever they travel in the world."

Travel accessories brand Travel Blue has also taken note of the current demand for smartphone accessories and has acted accord-



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Developed over the course of 18 months, Travel Blue executed an extensive development program, which resulted in the new range. Designed to meet travelers' charging needs, TECH offers universal charging and offers a product selection that includes adaptors, USB chargers, headphones, speakers and cables.

"There are a good number of electronic and electrical products on the market, but we felt that no brand was offering a complete range of items to cover every 'Connect and Charge' need," says Jonathan Smith, Head of Travel Retail, Travel Blue. "We wanted to come up with a range that was all-encompassing, easy to select and buy, and straightforward, yet at the same time met all the demands and standards of the modern-day traveler."

The quest for comfort

Aside from the rise in smartphone and tablet accessory purchases, other accessories—those geared more towards physical comfort while traveling—are on the rise, such as neck pillows and eye masks. Although staple items for most travelers, neck pillows and eye masks aren't exactly novelties in the industry, but finding the right quality and fit has become a recent demand of more and more travelers.

Although relatively new to travel retail, travel accessory company Cabeau has made creating a comfortable neck pillow its mission. The company spent 18 months conducting survey-based research at airports with over

2,500 travelers around the world to determine what factors were required to create the ideal neck pillow. This research led to Cabeau's highly-successful Evolution Pillow. "We feel like the pillow we've developed—because it has the opinion of 2,500 plus travelers behind it—is the pillow of the people," says David Sternlight, Founder, Cabeau. "The feedback we've received has been nothing short of phenomenal."

In addition to its original memory foam version, Cabeau's Evolution Pillow is also available in a microbead and Lycra pairing at a lower price point, giving travelers more choice. "A lot of travelers don't know exactly what they want," says Lomas. "We're trying to find out what people are going to want in the future, not only what they need right now.

Ultimately, our goal is to have travelers rested by the time they get off the plane."

Noticing the demand for comfortable neck pillows, Travel Blue also decided to expand its bestselling travel pillow collection, adding a new range of children's travel pillows, which will be launched in Cannes. The new pillows are available in several animal designs, including a cat, dog, penguin, elephant and a panda.

Although the travel pillow is Cabeau's primary venture, the company has also expanded into additional comfort accessories for traveling with its new Midnight Magic Sleep Mask, featuring a patented adjustable nose bridge. "Most sleep masks are one-size-fits-all," says Sternlight. "Some masks claim a complete blackout, and although that may be true with someone who has a perfectly shaped button nose, there are thousands of different nose shapes in the world."

With this realization, Cabeau conducted market research and developed a mask with an adjustable nose bridge that moulds and holds around any nose shape. "Unless the mask fits perfectly around your nose, you're going to have light coming in," explains Sternlight. "So we put a padded strip inside the nose bridge, which can mould to the nose perfectly." The Midnight Magic Sleep Mask is the first mask in the world that guarantees a complete blackout on any nose shape.

As today's technological landscape continues to improve with new phones, tablets and other gadgets on the rise, it doesn't seem like the demand for related accessories is going to slow down anytime soon. Likewise, with the number of travelers increasing globally, comfort accessories will also continue to be in demand, which can only mean one thing for brands in the category: room for growth. □



Cabeau's highly successful Evolution Pillow is available in both memory foam and in a microbead and Lycra combination