

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Improving customer experience, expanding offering can entice HNW travelers

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*Travel expectations are changing for HNWI. Image credit: VistaJet*

By KATIE TAMOLA

Luxury transportation and hospitality brands are being called to collaborate and lend a listening ear to consumers' concerns to better prepare for the post-pandemic traveler.

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According to the "[Future of Private Travel](#)" report from private aviation firm VistaJet, consumers are seeking excellent safety protocol implementation and customer service from luxury travel brands. The report argues that brands have had to revise policies and implement collaborations in order to begin attracting consumers once more.

"We are optimistic about the future," said Matteo Atti, executive vice president of marketing and innovation at [VistaJet](#), London. "Despite the uncertain nature of COVID-19, there will always be people that want to start new ventures and businesses, or people who can't wait to travel and keep experiencing the world.

"By creating partnerships with the leaders in the industry, we can reduce the impact of travel restrictions and ensure clients continue to experience unparalleled end-to-end service, and are able to reach their goals," he said. "This is the time to reach out and support the travel sector."

VistaJet invited over 650 businesses in the high-net-worth arena to join this research. An online survey was conducted at the end of December 2020, followed up by individual interviews with selected contributors.

Where to go from here

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the luxury travel and hospitality landscapes in a monumental fashion. Brands in the sector have had to address and balance mass closures, travel bans, social distancing rules and legitimate fear of contracting or spreading the COVID-19 virus.

The damage was catastrophic for revenue.



*Private travel is a bright spot for the industry during COVID-19. Image credit: VistaJet*

More than three-quarters of businesses, 77.8 percent, have seen net revenue fall by at least 60 percent in 2020. With such a severe impact, about two-thirds of companies anticipate a slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brands are rising to the occasion and exhibiting flexibility in response.

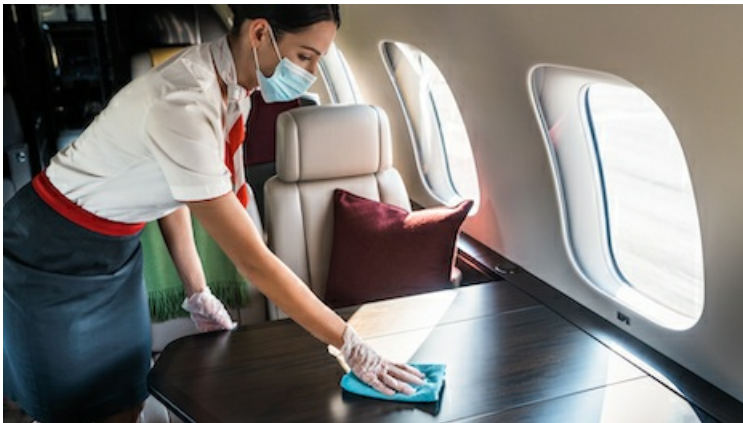
More than three-quarters of businesses have changed cancellation policies. Nearly 85 percent of businesses have created or are considering creating new products and services.

Additionally, 62 percent of travel businesses are also actively targeting higher-end customers.

With a demonstrated commitment to consumer safety and the willingness to embrace partnerships, however, luxury brands have reason to be optimistic.

The report shows that brands have taken the strongest action in improving customer experience and safety, with a respective 96.4 and 94.2 percent of businesses having taken at least "some action" in those two key areas.

More than 86 percent of those surveyed have taken "strong action" in collaborating with other providers in this sector. This has proved beneficial as more than half, 54 percent, of those surveyed considered that collaborations had played a vital role in soothing the negative effects of the pandemic.



*The luxury travel sector is rising to the challenge of ensuring safety for consumers. Image credit: VistaJet*

The industry is also making a push for private aviation. More than half of those surveyed considered that private aviation has been beneficial for business purposes.

Brands that collaborated reported the biggest impact from private aviation travelers.

Almost half, 46 percent, of those surveyed reported partnerships already helping to generate revenue during the pandemic. Partnerships remain an enticing opportunity with nearly eight in 10 businesses, 78.8 percent, reporting that they considered industry partnerships will be more important to them going forward.

What can be achieved together

With the travel industry so severely hit, brands have committed to rising to the challenge in developing innovative ways to comply, expand and collaborate with each other.

Innovation is not limited to long trips either.

Aviation firms **Blade Urban Air Mobility** and **Ross Aviation** have struck up a partnership to offer daily helicopter

flights between the suburban Westchester County airport and heliport terminals in Manhattan. The roll-out of the flights comes at a time when affluents in the New York suburbs are commuting to Manhattan only once or twice weekly, with many relying on expensive Uber car services to do so ([see story](#))

While luxury hospitality brands continue to face an uphill climb during the COVID-19 pandemic, private aviation remains a bright spot in the industry. According to a new survey from online platform [Private Jet Card Comparisons](#), 41 percent of new private aviation clients plan to continue flying privately "regularly" after the pandemic ([see story](#)).

Amid the pandemic, VistaJet introduced a new global program for private travel that provides its members with the benefits of an integrated team ready to support them at any step. VistaJet Private World is will offer its members access to suites, historical estates, private retreats, yachts and slopes through a door-to-door service, no check-in, privacy and a host of personal services ([see story](#)).

"Every day we see examples of what our partnerships can achieve," VistaJet's Mr. Atti said. "Our own partnerships program, leverages our relationships with leading properties and destinations to provide customers with a bespoke, safe travel experience and seamless access; linking trusted, like-minded businesses across different segments of the luxury travel sector, we can really support every client, worldwide."

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