

What Lies Ahead

By **Garrett Lai**

The International Travel Goods Show – what’s displayed, what grabs the eye, what orders are placed – sets the tone for the season to come. Most retailers rely on The Show for its big picture perspective – seeking predictors of what’s to come, at least in the near term.

Toughness Is Back

Light weight is still the number one selling point – so much so it’s often difficult to identify any other significant marketing message. But this year saw the return of toughness to the product conversation, with a prominence that hasn’t been seen since American Tourister ran its famous gorilla vs. suitcase TV ads in the 1970s and 1980s.

Lojel invited Show-goers to step and jump on one of its hardside polycarbonate shells to prove its durability. All of Thule’s messaging mentioned toughness – of the bags themselves, or

of being made for tough adventure. And Crumpler returned to The Show after a years-long absence with a line of rugged hardshells using toughness as the promotional message, to complement the Aussie company’s renowned soft goods.

Soft-luggage Features on Hard Cases

The past few years have seen an increasing number of hardshells incorporating features formerly exclusive to soft luggage. External pockets and multiple compartments with discrete openings to the outside first began appearing on hardshells a few years back, and the trend’s definitely picked up steam. It’s far from dominant, but it’s definitely a more commonplace feature for the 22”-and-under carry-on class.

Another feature once exclusive to the soft-side world, but seeping into the hardside product mix: expansion. Solite’s 26” Upright Trolley was one

example of the breed, a polycarbonate clamshell with hidden expansion zipper.

Lojel’s Cubo might represent a coming trend for hardshells and rigid shell luggage: an opening front panel like the typical flap access you’d find on soft luggage. Cubo dispenses with the usual clamshell design, which requires a larger footprint – twice that of the case – in order to be opened. The simple hinged panel access also does away with center dividers, which the company claims take up space that could otherwise be used for packing.

Another interesting soft luggage feature to appear on a hardside was RONCATO’s Double, a polycarbonate carry-on which featured a detachable laptop case. We’ve seen soft bags with detachable daypacks before – mostly aimed at adventure travelers and the hostel crowd – but this was the first hardside we’ve seen featuring a detachable bag for stand-alone use. The laptop case features a laptop compartment (obviously), as well as dedicated pockets for tablet, smartphone, business cards and batteries, with a



Lojel invited people to put its product to the test, as toughness returns to the selling conversation.

PHOTO: GARRETT LAI

RETAILER IMPRESSIONS

Trade Show Treasure Hunt

BY SARA ECCLESINE

Travel goods retailers descended on The International Travel Goods Show in search of retail booty: clever accessories, eye-catching new luggage collections, and technology with that extra sparkle that makes customers stop and take notice. Did you get bogged down in appointments and miss your chance to explore every corner of The Show? Never fear, we’ve collected some of The Show’s shiniest new treasures in this article, courtesy of our most dedicated retail explorers.



Betsy Borden

Owner

Peninsula Trading, Grand Rapids, MI

I’ve been going to The Show since at least 2000, so I always wonder who’ll be the first person I know that I run into. And I wonder what gadget or company or trend I’ll find that inspires me. This year it was people, more than products, that thrilled me at The Show, specifically Jill Dybdahl, founder of LollyZip and Sunchea Phou, founder of YaY Novelty. Two years ago Jill was in a little open booth, but her enthusiasm about her designs was catching, and I brought them in. Since then she’s at least doubled in size, the booth is beautifully merchandised, and she’s introducing new products. I ordered her cape that folds into a pillow. I want to try it out, her creativity and innovation is inspiring. I got to meet Sunchea Phou from YaY Novelty, and she told me her story in such a straightforward and genuine way, from her childhood in refugee camps as a Cambodian genocide survivor, to her career accomplishments: designing Super Bowl uniforms for the Seattle Seahawks, and a heart-rate monitor vest for NASA. YaY Novelty allows her to raise money for the Year Zero Foundation, building schools in Cambodia.

That’s what stuck with me – Jill and Sunchea – I was so inspired. I look forward to coming back next year to see what they do next.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BETSY BORDEN

cable pass-through for device charging outside the case. The laptop carrier itself is an interesting polypropylene/fabric hybrid, with the rigid half engaging with a matching slot in the spinner, sliding and locking in position to become a single, unified carry-on.

Power Gets Smart

Last year's sudden influx of smart luggage seems to have stabilized, perhaps due to a combination of manufacturers sorting out the supply side, and consumers learning to temper their expectations for the much-talked-about internet of things.

Charging power has matured. The new trend is including provisions for a consumer-supplied power bank with charge cable routing/access, or built-in USB ports. DELSEY's Cruise Lite Softside and Pilot 4.0 Carry-On Exp.

Spinner Trolley are typical examples, as well as Travelpro's Crew 11 Compact Carry-on Smart Duffel with Suiter.

A couple of years ago manufacturers were coming up with their own charging solutions, and while that's not as prevalent as before many manufac-

turers are still including power banks. Royce went this route with its Power Bank Charging Backpack with padded compartment for a 15" laptop and dual-port power bank for charging phones and tablets. Increasingly, manufacturers who include a charger are relying on third-party suppliers like the Joey, which may be a welcome move as that also probably foists warranty responsibility off on someone more versed in dealing with battery issues than a luggage manufacturer.

Power ports and battery compartments are by no means ubiquitous, but they are definitely becoming more commonplace, especially for carry-on bags. To stand out, manufacturers are doubling down to provide more electronic bells and whistles, such as providing higher-amperage USB-C ports in addition to the familiar rectangular USB ports good for 1 or 2 amps. Princess Traveller's Multi-

Tec Collection features a built-in scale and power bank, and it wasn't alone in offering multiple electronic features.

Probably nobody bet as big on technology as Planet Traveler. Its Space Case 1, first shown last year,

is now on the market with a dizzying array of features: global tracker, biometric lock and robotic TSA-accepted lock, self weighing, an on-board battery, speaker phone, anti-theft proximity alert and charging port. The Space Case Lite dispenses with the tracker, biometric lock and speaker phone, while the Space Case 2 adds features that turn this spinner case into a rolling presentation center, with built-in video projector and HD stereo sound.

Licensing Is In

Licensing has always been part of the luggage landscape, but The 2017 Show featured a number of notable new licenses.

bugatti probably landed the biggest licensing coup with its new Celine Dion luggage – the first-ever luggage and accessory collection to come from the famed Canadian songster – featuring multiple distinct looks and pieces. It was an impressively deep collection, with so many pieces it warranted display in its own booth.

LongLat went upscale with its Barrett Collection

Continued on page 34



USB power ports and built-in weighing are gaining popularity in carry-ons. These examples are from Princess Traveller.



The launch of Celine Dion's eponymous collection was just one example of the growing importance of licensed branding.

PHOTOS: (RIGHT) SARAH ECCLESINE; (FAR RIGHT) GARRETT LAI



Sam Hirsh
Owner
Tripquiptment, Falmouth ME

When I come to The Show I look for small things. For me, The Airhook is the trifecta – clever, the right price point and easy to explain. I also appreciated the tiny travel iron from BibeLIB Paris, with a unique clamping mechanism for collars and cuffs. I very much enjoyed meeting Smoots founder Ken Kammal, what a great addition to our industry. Since we're in Maine, I particularly appreciate that the Smoots sole is tough enough to walk out on the deck of a summer cabin. Smoots is going to fit in with the footwear we already carry: Acorn Travel Slippers, Darn Tough Socks, Sockwell and Sigvaris.

It was great to see Outside Inside Games and GSI Outdoors at The Show. Their portable ping-pong set can turn a coffee table into a ping-pong table, with an included net and paddles. We're fans of WALTER + RAY, and were interested to see the new FLY INTransit™ Travel Bag that works with their TAB™ Seatback Organizer. We plan to carry it, and I know it will sell well for us.

As far as luggage, the Eagle Creek® - New Expanse™ Collection was very nice. We're already selling it and doing very well. It's brand new, but we were able to see it before The Show and brought it in

immediately. I thought Thule did a great job with the intro of their new luggage. In Maine, our outdoor community has Thule hardcases on top of their cars, so the brand already has great name recognition and instant credibility. I especially liked the clean, contemporary lines of the carry-on, duffel and soft travel bag in their Subterra Collection. Aleon is a winner again this year. They have a great story; every piece of their product is made by them (except the TSA-accepted locks) down to the rivets. They've changed a few things that made their aluminum cases better, for example, they moved away from plastic corners and went to aluminum corners, and they enhanced the materials they use in the interior of their cases. It's great to be able to offer aluminum at upper-end polycarbonate prices. It's an easy sell to someone who's had one or two pieces of polycarbonate that cracked, making the case unusable, and they want something more bomb-proof.



Leslee Richards
Owner, General Manager
Lieber's Luggage, Albuquerque, NM

Lieber's Luggage is a full-service travel goods store: we offer monthly seminars on packing and travel security, and also do everything from

Continued on page 34

PHOTOS: (RIGHT) EDYTA SOKOLOWSKA/ELITE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP; (FAR RIGHT) COURTESY OF LESLEE RICHARDS

Continued from page 33
by designer Isaac Mizrahi.

And Heritage Travelware, which already held licenses for Aimee Kestenberg and Kenneth Cole, ushered in its new Ben Sherman line.

American Traveler added bebe, described as the go-to label for chic, contemporary fashion, adding to its portfolio that includes Ecco Unltd., Fila, G.H. Bass & Co., Pacific Coast, Penguin by Munsingwear, Perry Ellis and Van Heusen.

Covered with Art...

Luggage covers have always existed on the periphery of the travel goods universe, and while they're not quite mainstream they've definitely been gaining in popularity. But they're also a different type of product than before, having evolved from being purely protective, in utilitarian single-color hues like black or khaki, into something much more stylish and fun, which probably adds to their appeal since it lets consumers spruce up an otherwise plain-but-functional case.

BG BERLIN, Dandy Nomad, LOQI and SUMDEX were among those showing off artistically decorative suitcase covers that not only protect the finish of

the luggage beneath, but provide a visually distinctive appearance that's easy to spot on the baggage carousel.

...Which Leads to Art Bags

Solid-colored luggage continues to give way to art-enhanced designs, and the art just gets better and more intricate, with a number of collaborations between suitcase makers and artists of repute. LongLat exhibited new designs by pop artist Ed Heck. Mia Toro showcased new rollers displaying the wildly colorful and imaginative art of Hamsa and Prado. Visionair continued its collaboration with Charles Fazzino, with a new Big Apple-themed limited-edition trolley case, and its playfully fun hard cases featuring 20th Century comic strip and cartoon icon Felix the Cat.



it luggage crosses two artwork trends: better art on hardsides, and artistically sculpted hardsides.

...Which Leads to Artistically Sculpted Hardsides

Bordering on the artistic were an increasing number of textured molded hardsides. TITAN and Trochi joined the

many manufacturers employing variations of ribs in its hardshells, which are decorative and structurally stiffening, besides. JUMP Paris' geometrically art deco Crossline, resembling overlapping rectangles radiating outward like a cross, was especially captivating.

it luggage blurs the lines with artistically styled hardsides, where the textured surface is the art. It's a design flourish the company has continued to build on, with monochromatic, tattoo-like designs featuring skulls, flowers, sea creatures, city scenes, and other visual themes impressed into its hardshells in bold relief. J World used molded-in raised lettering spelling out the company name to differentiate some of its wares, a strategy previously employed by ROXY. Traveler's Choice featured wavy striations in its Edinburgh polycarbonate spinner hardshell, and Solite offered an almost hypnotically captivating, art deco-like arrangement of concentric circles in its polycarbonate spinners.

Orange and Aqua

The Show continues to be a riot of color, and you can see its effects in any airport concourse or baggage carousel.

Usually, one color dominates, but this year's color trend is the combination
Continued on page 36

PHOTOS: GARRETT LAI

Continued from page 33

repair to monogramming. We have a serious road warrior clientele from Los Alamos labs, Sandia labs, and Kirtland Air Force Base, plus retirees and your average vacation traveler. That means we need to carry bags from the \$69-89 price point all the way up to \$1500. We have customers that come in before every single trip and ask what's new, and 25% of our inventory is travel accessories. The Show is important to us because we don't have a lot of sales reps visit us in New Mexico, and I use every minute of all three days tracking down the inventory variety and newness our customers require.

Accessories that impressed me included Travelon®'s Anti-Theft Lockdown Pouch, as well as their scarf that's big enough to be a blanket and has an RFID pocket. Talus had an interesting assortment this year, in particular, their triple-USB wall charger.

Briggs & Riley is our number one brand, we sell three or four times more of their bags than any other manufacturer. This year I was excited about their special editions, and the new version of their Transcend® Collection. Samsonite and Solo had some great pieces. In particular, Solo's business cases featured fresh designs and fabrics we haven't seen. I know the Kenneth Cole rose gold color is going to do well, it's great to see a fashion statement in a solidly-manufactured style. Ricardo Beverly Hills had so much newness that the entire booth was exciting, with so many patterns and designs, as well their great warranty.



Shirley Matzdorff
Manager
Travel Outfitters, Chandler, AZ

I've been in the travel goods industry for 42 years, and in retail for the last seven years. One of my pleasures working in our luggage store is engaging with the public on a personal level and going through their travel planning with them. When my clients travel I want them to be comfortable, to be at ease in their surroundings, so I think about matching their product needs to our assortment.

My prediction: Antler is going to become a much bigger player in the industry. I was very impressed by the breadth of their product range, price points and features. Among my favorite collections from Antler are Prism, hardsides in attractive colors with interesting surface appeal, and Air, lightweight, attractive softsides in stylish colors.

Samsonite was on target with smart new styling and construction, and Briggs & Riley revamped their Transcend® Collection. They are a great company to work with.

I commend manufacturers who are still doing 2-wheel softsides. Our younger male customers prefer two wheels to 4-wheel spinners. In general, there seems to be more color, which I appreciate. Blues

Continued on page 36

PHOTO: EDVITA SOKOLOVSKA/ELITE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Continued from page 34

tion pairing of aqua and orange.

The aqua can vary from nearly sky blue to turquoise to sea green. And the accompanying orange ran from a salmon-like orange-pink to the reddish orange of cooked shrimp or lobster. It's a striking combo, and it was in evidence on small items like wallets and clutches, to everyday bags and obvious travel luggage.

Standout items included suitcase covers from Dandy Nomad, with matching eye masks and travel pillows; small bags and everyday totes and backpacks by London's Cristina Girl; and a gorgeous depiction of Paris' famed Arc de Triomphe on Heys luggage by artist Riccardo Guasco, which playfully inverted the norm with an orange sky over an aqua landscape.

This is a color combo that seems to cut across all categories. We spotted the aqua-and-orange motif in the booths of fashion-forward brands such as LODIS and GABBIANO, youth-oriented Body Glove, and on Thule's ruggedly outdoorsy duffles and backpacks.



Sea green/aqua in combination with orange is the color trend of the moment.

Airline Seats: the New Accessories Land Grab?

Airline seats were hot real estate on the accessories front. This year saw more new items brought to market designed to attach to, or augment, the typical airline seat, tray table or seatback pocket – perhaps in response to the continuing erosion of airline-provided comfort items.

The Airhook, which launched in June 2015 with a \$15,000 Kickstarter goal (which it reached in just 73 hours, ending with \$72,000 in total pledges), arrived at The International Travel Goods Show in April having delivered more than 12,000 of its foldup plastic tray table attachments. The Airhook attaches to the edge of the tray table in the upright/locked position. It holds a phone or tablet up to 8.5" tall while in landscape mode, provides a place to park a cup or can, and has a small hook for stowing earbuds or headphones.

Originating in Australia, Airpocket is a simple bag with detachable shoulder sling for use as a carry-on personal item. Its internal pockets and parti-

tions can expand and stretch, thanks to its neoprene construction that also provides cushioned, scratch-free protection for items like phones and eyeglasses. It's designed to fit inside seatback pockets, and can handle tablets and devices (or magazines) up to 11".

The A/STAND is a second story for your tray table, with an angle-adjustable top level for laptop, tablet, book or magazine. The level below provides covered parking for snacks, external hard drives and battery packs, with an extended section overhanging the edge of the tray table with a beverage holder.

Flightline Travel Totes are trifold envelopes for personal items. Tuck the front flap into the seatback pocket and the rest of the organizer dangles below in the familiar manner of a hanging toiletry organizer, with pockets to keep personal items within reach in flight.

WALTER + RAY's TAB seatback organizer and personal item-size travel bag launched this startup, and really hit its stride this year (seeming to adhere to an unwritten Show rule, that it's the third exhibition year when you're really embraced by retailers). This smart satchel organizes your in-

Continued on page 38



Flightline Travel Totes are one example of the in-flight organizer trend, keeping necessities within reach.

PHOTOS: SARA ECCLESINE

Continued from page 34

are trending strongly, both in fashion and specifically at The Show.

I was also happy to see a few new products for women. BRIC'S has a beautiful assortment, and LODIS continues to bring freshness to the industry. Another standout is Stephanie Johnson, with cosmetic cases, passport cases, jewelry cases and other useful items for women in on-trend colors.



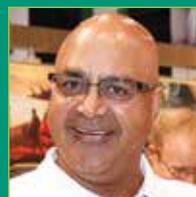
Betti Vieira
Purchasing Manager
Bridge Trading USA, Miami, FL

Bridge Trading USA was established in 2002, but although we have been invited many times by our suppliers, this is our first time at The International Travel Goods Show. It was an enriching experience, an excellent opportunity to meet with different companies, to discover new products and market trends all in one place.

My job is a little different than a normal purchasing manager. I buy for a group of companies, specializing in retail, marketing, importation, and distribution in Latin America and the Caribbean.

There were many exhibitors that stood out, like Swiss Digital with their innovative technology backpacks. Group III International

wowed us with their functional, diverse product range, and we loved HONTUS Milano Group's beautiful new designs and technological innovation.



Satbir Hundal
Owner
San Rafael Luggage Center, San Rafael, CA

At the San Rafael Luggage Center our philosophy is pack light, travel light, so when I go to The Show I look for products that fit that focus.

This year, I was impressed to see lightweight polycarbonate sunglasses by Popticals that fold to a really small size. Their design allows one lens to slide behind the other like a sliding glass door. Travel PAL presented a full assortment of auto-inflating pillows, cushions, and foot rests. Not only do these fold up small, but blowing into your comfort accessories to inflate them is now a thing of the past.

This year, I focused on finding an exhibitor who could provide luggage and backpacks for millennials. My search was over when I found Herschel Supply Company. Their booth was well organized, with a wide assortment of well-designed, high quality bags at the right price point.

Continued on page 38

PHOTOS: EDVITA SOKOLOVSKAYA/ELITE PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

Continued from page 36

flight essentials, carries on board as a shoulder bag and fits neatly into the seatback pocket with everything at the ready, like your own personal flight attendant.

The seat attachment category wouldn't be complete without noting how many travel pillows are now designed to attach to the airplane seat in some fashion.

SoCal startup Cardiff Products brought its Cardiff Wings, which attach to your own seatback to provide a resting place for the side of your head, allowing center and aisle seats to enjoy the same lean-against-the-wall comfort that makes window seats such coveted seating assignments.

FaceCradle's hinged, u-shape travel pillow is a transformer, functioning as a standard u-shape pillow, or deployed to the side between your head and shoulder, for lean-to-the-side support. But it may also be attached to your seatback, opened up so you lean forward against it with your face nested into the opening, like a massage table, or with your head turned to the side, supported in the manner you would be when sleeping on your stomach in bed.



Show newcomer, The Airhook, is one of the many companies vying for space as an attachment for airline seats.

Pillowtie isn't a pillow, per se, but an add-on accessory that enables you to tether a standard u-shape pillow to your seatback for more stability and, presumably, more comfort and restful slumber.

Travel Pillows and More Travel Pillows

The first travel pillow probably popped into existence three minutes after humans boarded the first airliner. This year there were more, and they were everywhere; if you were standing in a distributor's booth, a pillow was almost certainly within sight, if not literally within reach.

Maybe it's because travel pillows are this industry's gateway drug – there's no real tooling cost, and prototyping is as accessible as a sewing machine. Each year's Show brings a new crop of exhibiting startups with a better travel pillow, hoping to make it big (Cabeau being the poster child for having done just that, launching with a travel pillow in 2009 to become an industry staple today). Or maybe it's because we still haven't solved the problem of

in-flight rest and comfort. But this year produced an extraordinary crop of travel head-resters.

This year saw a lot of new pillows designed to attach to the airplane seat, but not to be outdone, Travel Kozy's full-body, self-inflating pillow attaches to the seat to provide pneumatic support from head to thighs.

Lapnap sought to improve the u-shape pillow with its 2-in-1 concept that works as a standard u-shape pillow, or with its body support system, which lets you prop the pillow – and yourself – up against your lap or the seat bottom cushion with a pair of cantilevered u-shape rods. Face forward or to either side with the pillow oriented like the letter U, under your chin and to either side of your head, like a massage table.

Travelon® brought its own improvement on the standard u-shape theme. The Deluxe Wrap N Rest Pillow is a u-shape with interlocking ends that stack to double height in front, said to prevent your head from falling forward, and end chin drop.

Travel Heads brought an ingeniously simple pillow for side-sleepers: The wedge-shape fits between head and shoulder, letting you

Continued on page 40



JetComfy's armrest-attachable travel pillow is one of the many contenders trying to solve in-flight comfort.

PHOTOS: SARA ECCLESINE

Continued from page 36



Barbara Tolliver and Susan Taylor
Co-founders
The Traveler, Bainbridge Island, WA

At The Traveler, we offer a curated collection of travel essentials, from books and maps to electrical and security accessories, a large selection of bags and cases as well as travel clothing. We have a unique store and The Show is where we find innovative items that set us apart, such as the clever products from Tootletries, the new line of security accessories from Lewis N. Clark and the new waterproof silk fabrications in neck wallets, waist wallets and toiletry kits from COCOON

by Design Salt. One of the best things about attending The Show is meeting up with other independent stores on the floor or at the Opening Night Party. We compare notes to make sure we didn't miss a single interesting new product.

We are diehards, attending The Show all three days. Seeing the products and meeting the vendors gives us a competitive edge. We know the best products and what problems they solve for our customers.



Jay Friedman
President
Lazar's Luggage, Sherman Oaks, CA

At The Show I always enjoy meeting friends at the Opening Night Party. But I also enjoy finding new technology stories I can bring home to our customers. I was impressed with

SwissBags and their indestructible, unbreakable shell that's strong enough to stand on. We ordered their product, and we're going to get a half shell here at the store for display and invite customers to step on it. I can't wait to get that "WOW" when they see it bounce back into shape. Speaking of wow, we're going to stock the Heys Ultimate Lightest Luggage line. At 3.7 lbs for a carry-on, it's the lightest-weight luggage I've ever seen. It's going to be very impressive for the customer that comes in and asks for the lightest luggage on the market. I saw a few pieces of smart luggage at The Show but I thought I'd see more. I don't know if the industry is not quite ready to put them in production. Our consumers are not demanding smart luggage. They come in and they want quality and light weight.

I'm glad to see JUMP Paris back, with great colors and materials. I applaud two high-concept companies: the JetKids BedBox®, and SAKOS USA, with their one-for-one donation of a backpack to a child in need.

PHOTOS: GARRETT LAI

Continued from page 38

rest your head to the side. It's secured by a flat elastic strap routed behind your back, that you sit on. It's much more effective than it sounds – tug on the free end of the strap, and the pillow snugs tighter to your shoulder and seatback.

Go Travel's Flexible Memory Foam Pillow is a bend-to-shape construction that can be used as a lumbar support, or curved into a neck pillow with a thin back – to prevent pushing the head and neck forward – and higher sides that sit on your shoulders, enabling you to rest your head to either side.

A few self-inflating pillows were in evidence, too. Travel PAL brought its latest offerings, which included lower lumbar pillows, a u-shape pillow and a seat bottom cushion. Airopedic™, from Toronto, Canada, displayed its Portable Seat, which adapts the pneumatic support cushion from its innovative office chair for travel use. And accessories powerhouse Go Travel debuted its inflatable Supreme Snoozer.



Cardiff Wings crosses two trend categories: travel pillows, and items that attach to airline seats.

Little Travelers, Big Business?

Kids' travel gear has always existed as a peripheral product category, but the children's segment seemed to enjoy more prominence this year, with no less than 45 companies listed in the Show directory as catering to the category.

fūl spotlighted its DC Comics licensed items, including DC's iconic Batman and Superman franchises, along with the scarlet speedster known as the Flash, and everybody's favorite green-haired supervillain, the Joker. fūl's fortunes were further helped by its Star Wars luggage, which will probably see some pop when "The Last Jedi" debuts in December.

Heys went all out with multiple luggage series directed at the juvenile set, including its Travel Tots line, in two sizes of cases resembling an elephant, penguin, owl and panda; its

Emoji series of round 2-wheel trolleys with emoji faces including LOL, Rainbow, Love, Kiss and Sunglasses; the "Paw Patrol" TV show on Nick Jr.; Minions; and a new line of Kids Sports Luggage in soccer, basketball and baseball motifs.

Newcomer GILANCE brought its Kiwiwho line of children's school bags, including shoulder bags and wheeled backpacks.

TrendyKid continued to win retailers over with its Travel Buddies line of character-themed items, including 2-wheelers with matching hardshell-hybrid backpacks, and Travel Snoozy pillow-case + pillow + blanket combos.

JetKids came all the way from Norway to be a first-time exhibitor, and won big – literally – with its BedBox® ride-on suitcase/in-flight bed for infants and toddlers that took top honors in the Product Innovation Awards the second night of The Show.

In the non-luggage category, LollyZip continues to branch out from its 3-1-1 bag roots with soft goods such as its Wrap N' Roll poncho-style cape/travel pillow, including a new child-size version in 100% polyester fleece that was absolutely adorable in red with a black collar.

Social Responsibility as a Marketing Message

Social responsibility is an emergent marketing force, particularly with the millennial market; and it's gaining momentum in the travel goods industry as do-good messaging starts to take a more central role in marketing efforts.

LOQI's feel-good messaging includes accreditation by Intertek, which provides third-party verification of factory compliance with labor laws, employee health, safety and environmental initiatives. The company also has its products certified by Oeko-Tex, which independently tests for harmful substances like formaldehyde, cadmium and lead; and global-ly sustainable use of chemicals.

Zand Amsterdam proudly proclaimed its dedication to fair labor

practices, and Dandy Nomad pledged a 1 Euro loan to a micro entrepreneur for each consumer order.

United by Blue raised awareness of aquatic pollution in name as well as deed – the company is named for the way all of humanity is unified by the world's oceans and waterways. This Philadelphia-based member of B Corp – a group of companies pledged to rigorous standards of social and environmental responsibility, transparency and accountability – uses responsible materials like recycled polyester, organic cotton and wool for its wares. And for each product sold, United by Blue removes a pound of trash from waterways and oceans.

YaY Novelty's philanthropic story is front and center, as entwined with founder Sunchea Phou's history as her company. YaY Novelty was actually established, in part, to generate funds for the Year Zero Foundation – which Phou founded – that helps provide clean water, medicine and education for people in Cambodia. Nearly 40 years since the toppling of the Khmer Rouge



YaY Novelty is on the forefront of the trend toward social responsibility as a marketing message.

regime, Cambodia remains one of the world's most impoverished nations – a grim legacy of the Khmer Rouge's particularly brutal form of peasant communism. Phou herself is a survivor of the Cambodian genocide – she was born during the Khmer Rouge's rule, lost her father and brothers and fled the country at age seven, spending nearly five years in a refugee camp before escaping to Canada. In her adopted United States, Phou's "factory" consists of women she hires to work at home who would have difficulty seeking employment otherwise due to limited English skills or a lack of child care.

And Pacsafe's booth included messaging about the company's Turtle Fund, a grant program created and administered by the company to help fund marine turtle preservation efforts around the world. Which is only fitting, given the company's sea turtle logo. Pacsafe's efforts were recognized by TGA's Awards Committee, which selected the company as this year's Community Service Award winner. ■



New exhibitor GILANCE brought Kiwiwho, one of many brands and products aimed at the child traveler.

PHOTOS: (TOP FAR LEFT) SARA ECCLESINE; (LEFT AND BOTTOM FAR LEFT) GARRETT LAI