

# SeatradeCruise

Co-published with



# Cruise Retail Trends Survey 2026



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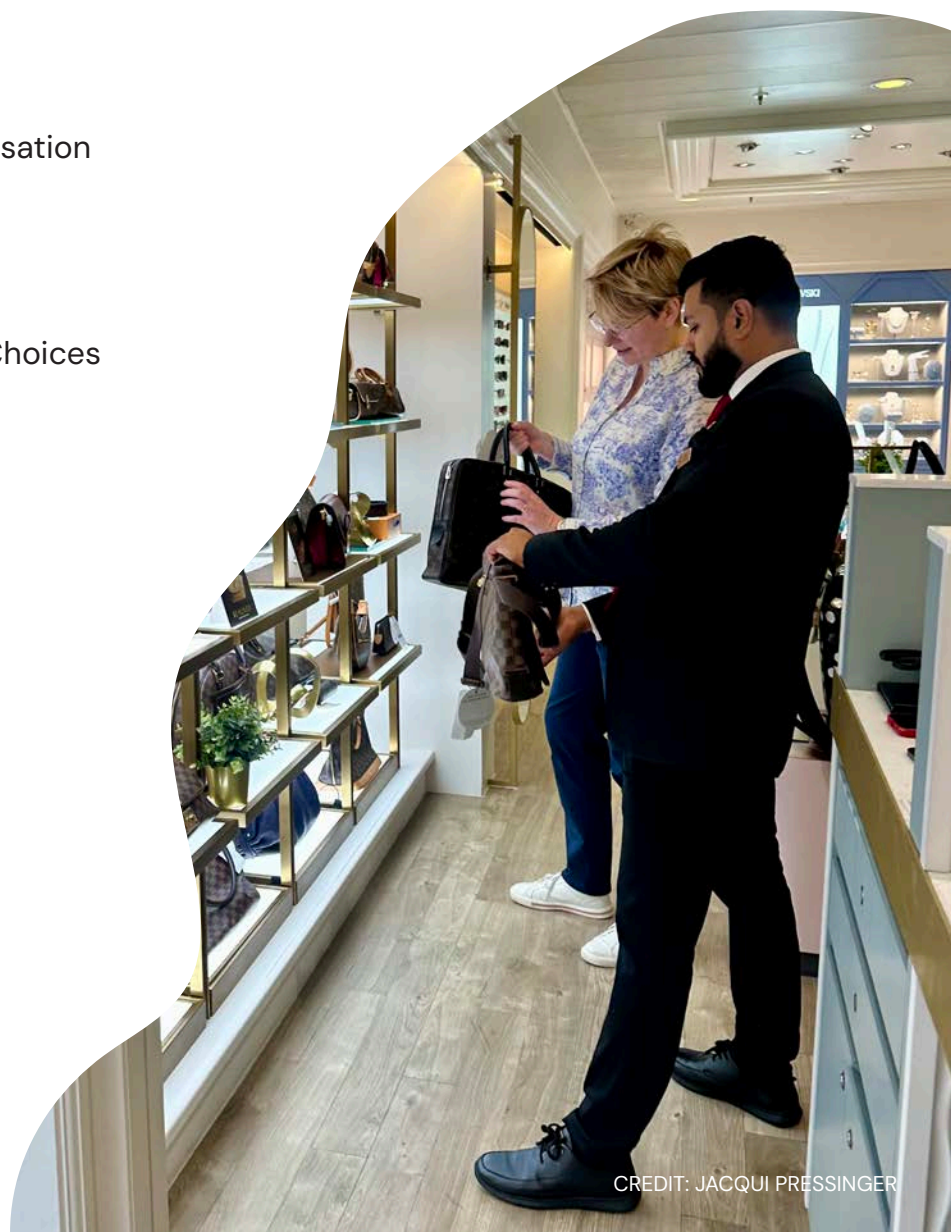
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# Executive Summary



The cruise retail sector is undergoing significant transformation as it adapts to evolving consumer preferences, operational challenges, and technological advancements. This report analyses survey data from industry professionals to identify key trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the future of cruise retail. Key findings include the growing importance of experiential retail, sustainability, and destination-specific merchandise, alongside the need for technological innovations to enhance guest experiences and operational efficiency.



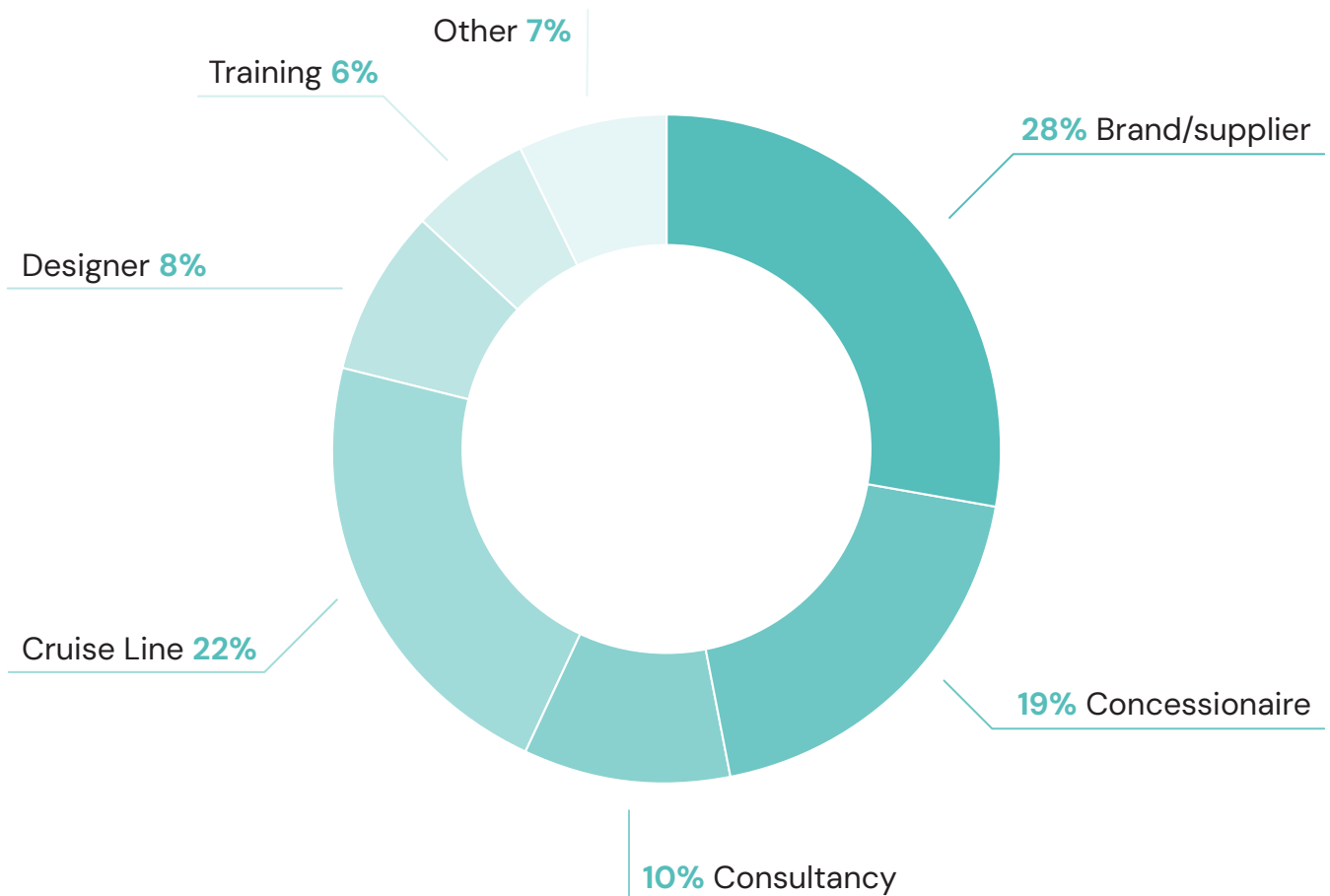
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# Methodology

The data presented in this report is derived from the Cruise Retail Trends Survey jointly conducted by Seatrade Cruise and The Moodie Davitt Report for Seatrade Cruise Global 2026 taking place at the Miami Beach Convention Center April 13–16. The survey collected responses from 87 participants across various roles in the cruise retail sector, including brand suppliers, concessionaires, consultants, cruise lines, designers, and retail trainers. The survey explored challenges, trends, product demand, and technological innovations impacting cruise retail operations.

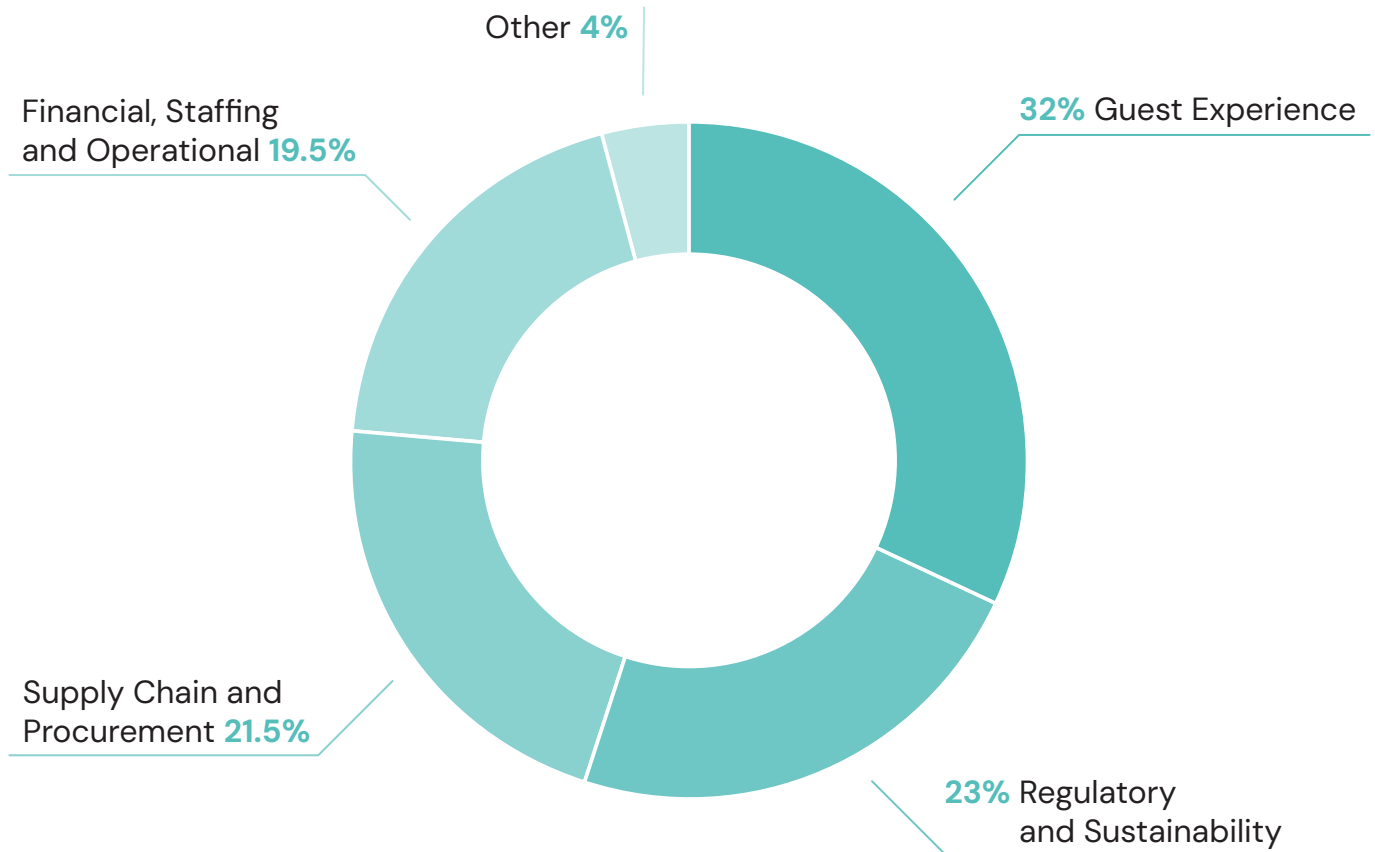
## GRAPH A: Respondee Roles

What best describes your role in the cruise retail sector?



# Main Challenges

**GRAPH B: What is the main challenge you face in managing retail operations on a regular basis?**



The survey reveals key challenges in managing onboard retail operations. Enhancing the guest experience is the top concern, cited by 32%, highlighting the need for exceptional service and customer satisfaction in a competitive industry. Regulatory and sustainability issues, representing 23%, reflect the pressure to comply with evolving regulations and adopt environmentally responsible practices. Supply chain and procurement challenges, reported by 21.5%, emphasise the complexities of sourcing and maintaining inventory in a global market. Lastly, financial, staffing, and operational concerns, cited by 19.5%, underline the importance of efficient resource management and cost control to ensure smooth operations.

# Main Challenges

## Guest Experience

Within guest experience, balancing expectations with operational and space constraints is the biggest challenge in onboard retail, with 50% of respondents identifying it as their primary concern. This underscores the difficulty of meeting diverse demands within the physical and logistical limits of cruise operations. Ensuring retail is integrated into the overall cruise experience, cited by 28.5%, highlights the need to position it as a seamless and valued part of the guest journey. Expanding the product assortment, reported by 21.5%, emphasises the importance of diversifying offerings to cater to varied preferences and create a more engaging shopping experience.



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## Regulatory & Sustainability

Over half of respondents identified meeting sustainability reduction goals in design and as their primary concern within the regulatory and sustainability space. Navigating regulatory requirements is the second most prominent challenge, cited by 30% of participants, reflecting the complexities of adhering to diverse and evolving regulations across different jurisdictions, which require meticulous planning and compliance efforts. Ensuring compliance with ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) standards, reported by 15%, further underscores the importance of aligning retail operations with broader corporate sustainability goals.

# Main Challenges

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## Supply Chain & Procurement

Managing disruptions and delivery uncertainties is the top challenge within the supply chain and procurement field, with a third of respondents highlighting its impact on inventory and efficiency. Building reliable supplier networks and accessing new product insights, cited by 28%, is also a key concern. Sourcing high-quality, compliant products, reported by 22%, underscores the importance of meeting strict quality and regulatory standards. Additionally, sourcing region-specific or locally produced goods, identified by 17%, reflects the growing demand for unique and culturally relevant offerings. These challenges highlight the need for robust supply chain strategies and innovative sourcing solutions in cruise retail operations.

## Financial, Staffing And Operational Concerns

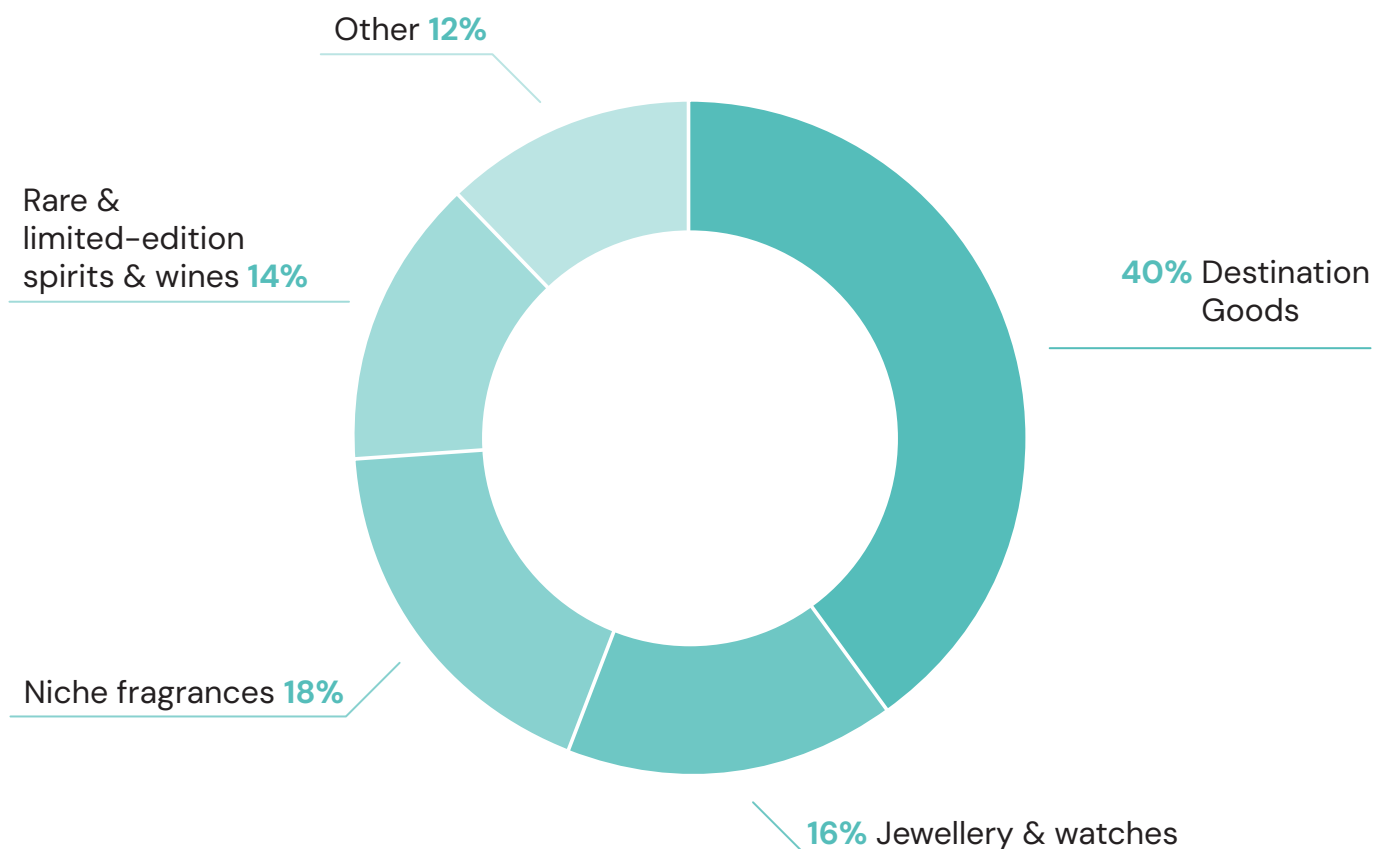
Breaking financial, staffing and operation concerns down further, more than half of respondees (53%) cited staff shortages, training and retention as their biggest significant challenge whilst 29% singled out integrating technology for inventory and supply chain management and 18% selected managing rising costs and budget underscoring the financial pressures faced by operators in balancing profitability with operational demands.

# Main Challenges



## In High Demand

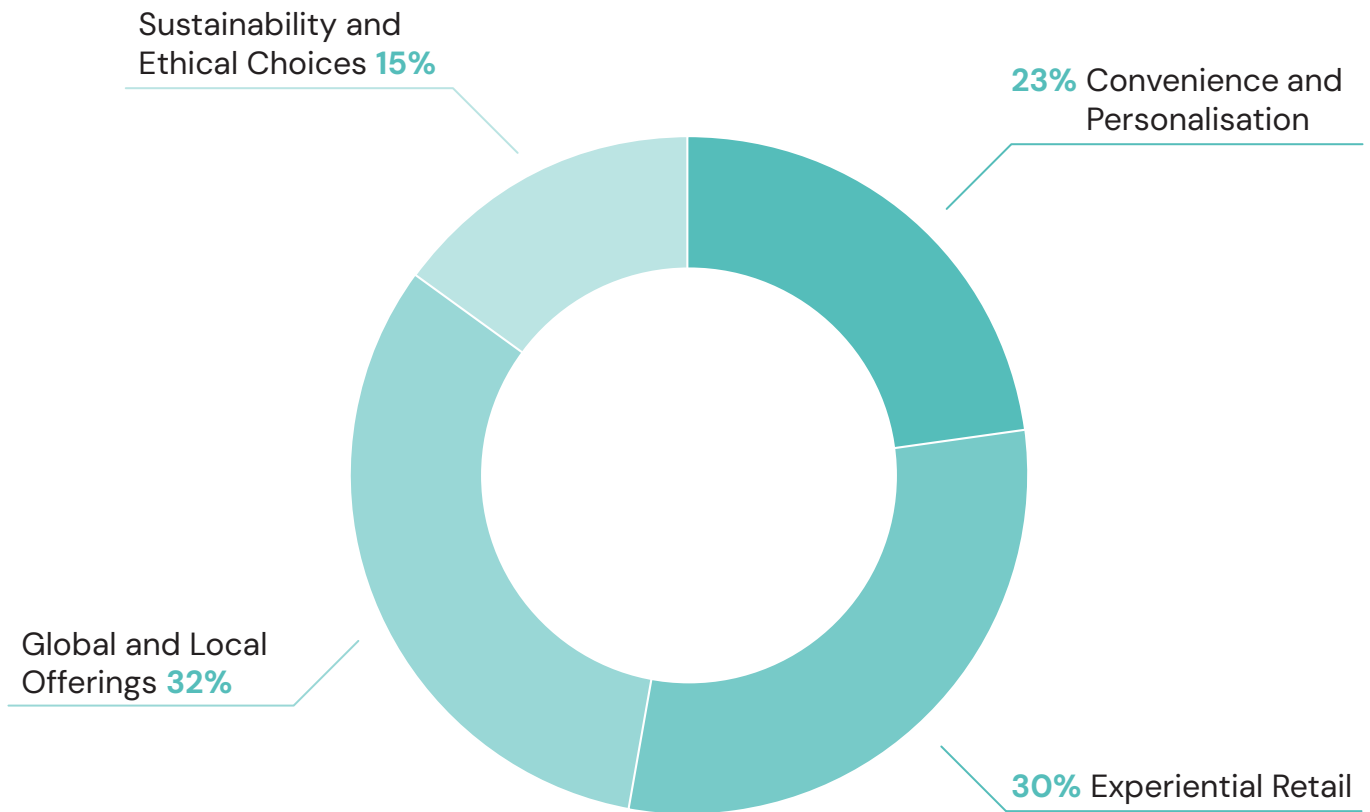
**GRAPH C: What products, suppliers, or solutions are currently in high demand, or difficult to procure?**



Destination goods are the most sought-after category in cruise retail, with 40% of respondents prioritising location-specific items that create a memorable connection to travel experiences. Niche fragrances, cited by 18%, highlight the demand for exclusive scents catering to individual preferences. Jewellery and watches, chosen by 16%, showcase the enduring appeal of luxury accessories. Rare and limited-edition spirits and wines, reported by 14%, reflect interest in premium offerings that elevate the onboard experience. The 'other' category, accounting for 12%, indicates additional niche demands varying across operators. These findings emphasise the importance of unique, high-quality products in cruise retail operations.

# Retail Trends at Sea

**GRAPH D: Which retail trends are most important for cruise line operations and offerings in 2026?**



Global and local offerings are the top priority for 2026, with 32% of respondents highlighting the need for diverse products catering to both international and region-specific preferences. Experiential retail, chosen by 30%, reflects the demand for immersive shopping experiences that boost engagement and satisfaction. Convenience and personalisation, identified by 23%, emphasise tailored solutions that ensure ease of access and meet individual preferences. Sustainability and ethical choices, selected by 15%, underline the growing focus on environmentally responsible and socially conscious practices. These findings showcase the evolving priorities shaping onboard retail to enhance guest experiences and align with modern values.

# Retail Trends at Sea

## Convenience & Personalisation

Availability of products is the most important factor, with 40% of respondents emphasising the need to ensure desired items are readily accessible to guests. This highlights the importance of effective inventory management in enhancing the shopping experience. Deeper digital engagement with travellers, cited by 35%, reflects the growing role of technology in creating personalised and interactive experiences. Improved service consistency on the shop floor, reported by 25%, underscores the need for reliable, high-quality customer service. These findings demonstrate the interconnected priorities of convenience and personalisation in effectively meeting guest expectations and enhancing satisfaction.



## Experiential Retail

Immersive or themed experiences are identified as the top priority around experiential retail within cruise line operations with 54% of respondents emphasising their significance. This underscores the growing demand for unique and engaging retail environments that captivate guests and create memorable shopping experiences.

Blending retail with onboard events, such as live entertainment, follows with 31% of participants, reflecting the value of integrating retail into broader cruise activities to enhance guest engagement and drive sales. Augmented and virtual reality enhancements, cited by 15% of respondents, lean towards the emerging interest in leveraging technology to create innovative and interactive retail experiences.

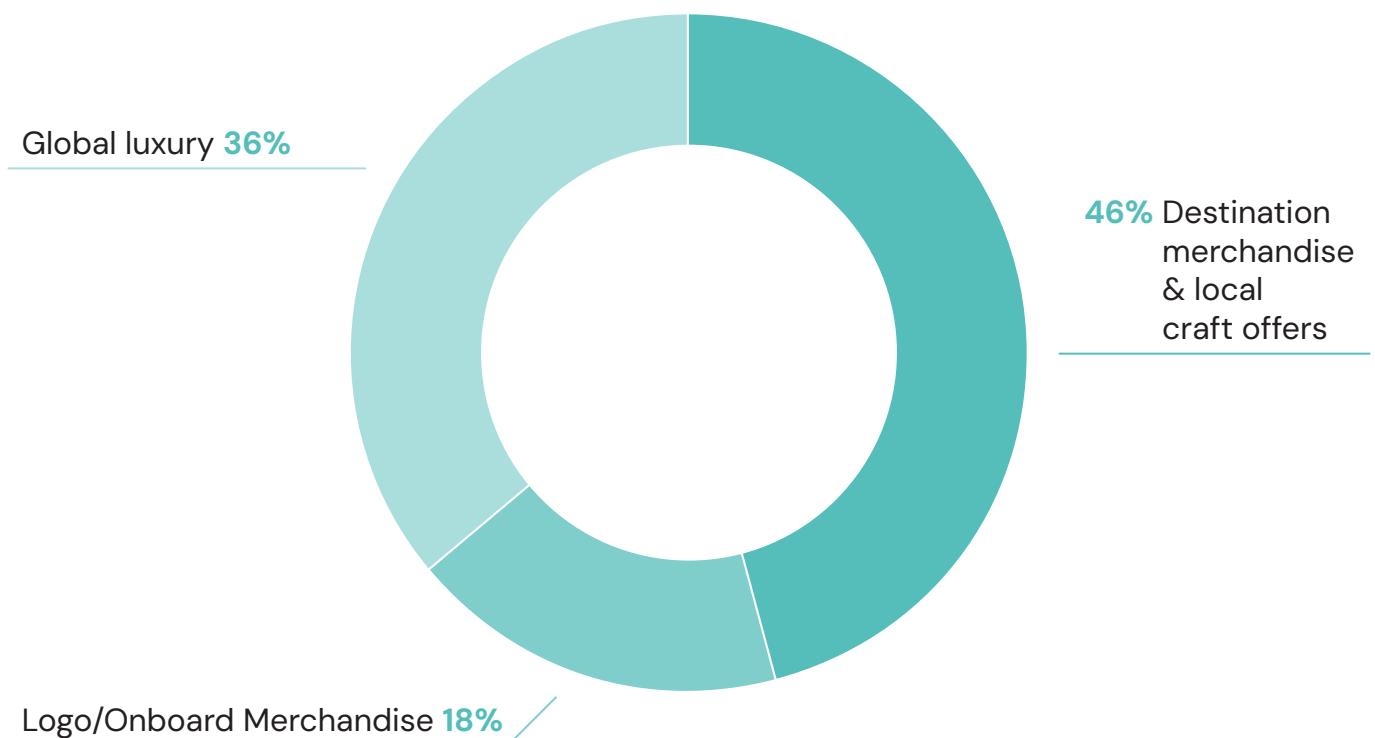


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# Retail Trends at Sea

## Global & Local Offerings

GRAPH E: Within global and local offerings, which is the most important



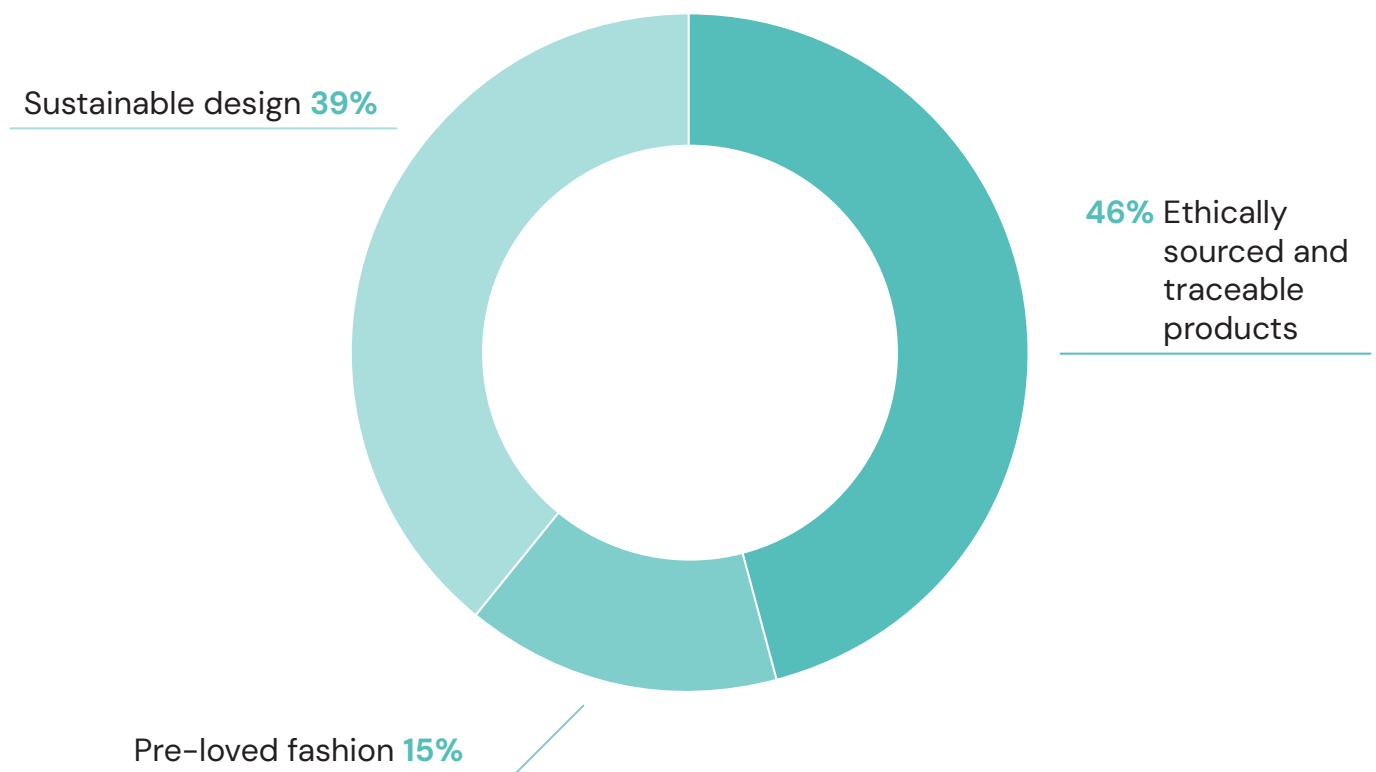
Within global and local offerings for cruise retail operations, destination merchandise and local craft offers are the top priority, with 46% of respondents emphasizing their importance. This highlights the strong demand for unique, location-specific products that provide guests with a tangible connection to the destinations they visit. Global luxury follows, cited by 36% of participants, reflecting the appeal of high-end, internationally recognized brands that cater to the tastes of discerning travellers. Logo/onboard merchandise, identified by 18% of respondents, underscores the value of branded items that enhance the cruise experience and serve as souvenirs.

# Retail Trends at Sea



## Sustainability & Ethical Offerings

GRAPH F: Within Sustainability and Ethical Choices, which is the most important?



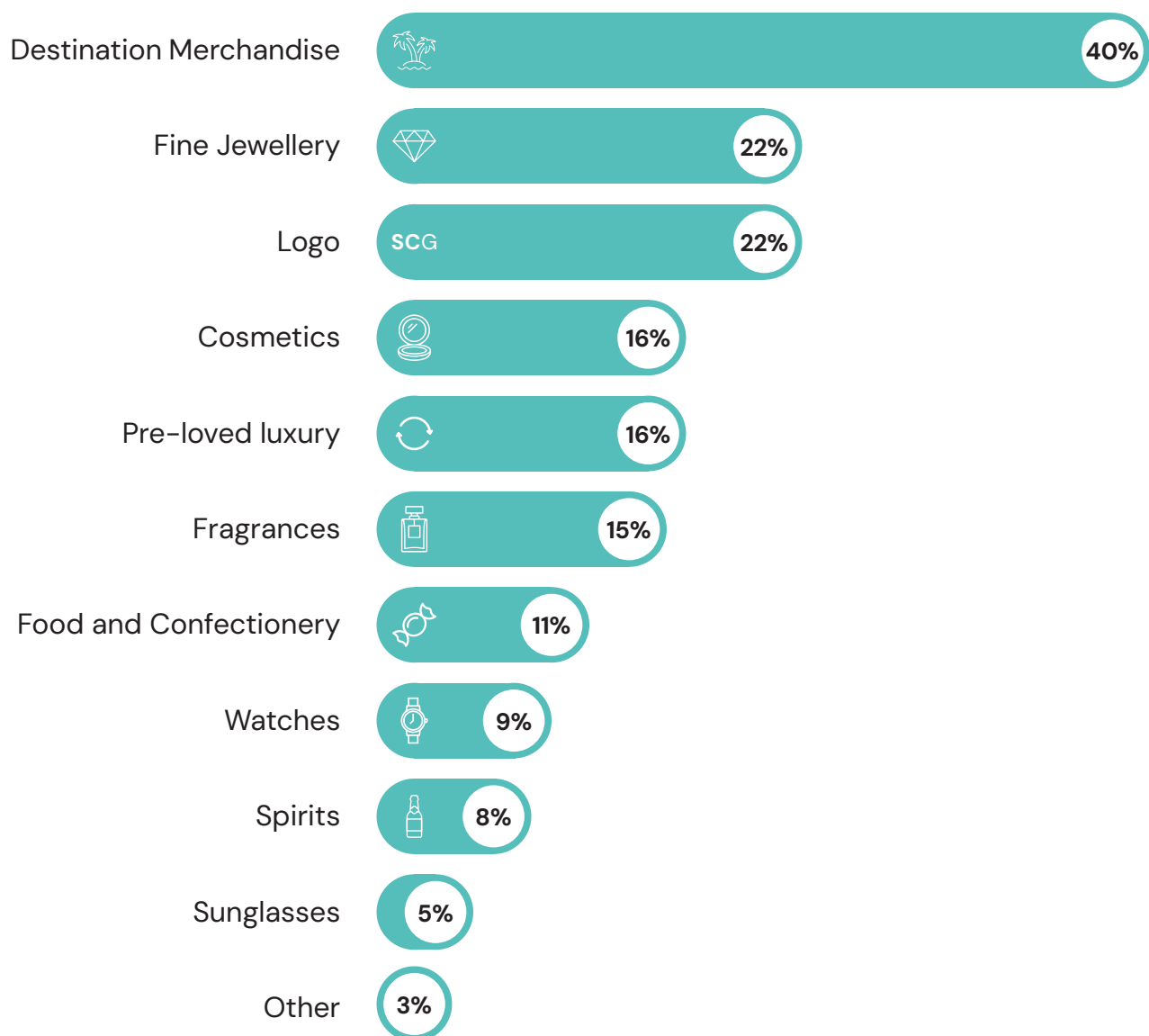
Ethically sourced and traceable products are the top priority, with 46% of respondents emphasizing their significance within sustainability and ethical choices in the cruise retail space. This reflects the growing demand for transparency and responsible sourcing practices that align with consumer values. Sustainable design follows, cited by 39% of participants, showcasing the importance of environmentally friendly product development and packaging. Pre-loved fashion, identified by 15% of respondents, highlights an emerging interest in circular fashion and second-hand items.

# Potential For Cruise Retail Sales in 2026 and Beyond

## GRAPH G: Which categories have the biggest potential for cruise retail sales growth in 2026 and beyond?

Respondees could choose more than one category. Average number of responses: **1.68**

Ranking of importance:



# Potential For Cruise Retail Sales in 2026 and Beyond



Destination merchandise emerges as the category with the greatest potential to grow cruise retail sales. This reflects the strong appeal of location-specific products that offer guests a unique connection to their travel experiences. Fine jewellery and logo merchandise follow closely, each cited by 22% of participants, showcasing the enduring demand for luxury items and branded souvenirs that enhance the cruise experience. Cosmetics and pre-loved luxury, both identified by 16% of respondents, highlight the growing interest in beauty products and sustainable, second-hand luxury goods. Fragrances, reported by 15% of participants, continue to be a popular choice, while food and confectionery (11%) and spirits (8%) demonstrate niche opportunities for growth. Sunglasses, watches and other categories round out the list, indicating smaller but still relevant areas for expansion.



# Concepts for the Evolution of Cruise Retail

On average the survey respondents chose 1.5% of the five choices offered with the most impactful identified as Integrated retail and live showcase spaces (48%), underscoring the growing demand for dynamic retail environments that combine shopping with interactive experiences, enhancing guest engagement and driving sales. New store formats, such as open-plan spaces, and pop-up stores follow closely, each cited by 39% of participants, showcasing the appeal of innovative and flexible retail designs that cater to modern consumer preferences. Pre-order and e-commerce, picked by 29% of respondents, highlight the increasing role of digital solutions in cruise retail, enabling guests to shop conveniently before or during their journey.



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# The Role of Technology



Of the **Technological Innovations** expected to most significantly impact cruise retail experiences in 2026 and beyond, **Guest Experience Technologies** are identified as the most influential, with 45% of respondents emphasizing their importance. **Sustainability Technologies** follow, cited by 31% of participants, reflecting the growing focus on environmentally friendly innovations that align with consumer values and support sustainable practices. **Operational Technologies**, identified by 24% of respondents, underscore the importance of streamlining processes and improving efficiency to optimize retail operations.

Within **Guest Experience Technologies**, personalised retail (tailored to each traveller) was chosen by 54% as the most significant, underscoring the growing demand for customized shopping experiences that cater to individual preferences and enhance guest satisfaction. Immersive retail with AR and VR capabilities follows, cited by 31% of participants, showcasing the appeal of cutting-edge technologies that create engaging and interactive shopping environments. Contactless ordering and purchasing, identified by 15% of respondents, reflects the increasing preference for seamless and convenient transactions. These findings demonstrate the importance of leveraging advanced technologies to create personalized, immersive, and frictionless retail experiences for cruise guests.

Supply chain transparency technologies, valued by 48%, are the most impactful in **Sustainability Technologies**, ensuring ethical and sustainable practices. Sustainability analytics and reporting (37%) highlight the importance of data-driven insights, while sustainable store design (15%) emphasizes eco-friendly retail spaces. These findings stress the need for technologies that enhance transparency, accountability, and measurable sustainability in cruise retail operations.

Within **Operational Technologies**, digital staff training platforms are the most valued by 43% for enhancing skills and service. AI-based ordering systems (28%) streamline operations, whilst predictive inventory management (24%) ensures efficient stock control. Smart delivery systems (5%) hold niche relevance, highlighting the growing role of AI and data-driven tools in optimising business processes.



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# Elevating and Enhancing On-Board Retail Operations

## Top 10 findings

### 1. Integrate digital services for a seamless experience

Leverage digital tools such as mobile apps, virtual try-ons, and augmented reality to create an engaging and convenient retail experience. This integration can boost guest interaction and drive sales.

### 2. Personalise the retail journey

Offer customisable and personalised options tailored to individual guest preferences. This could include personalised souvenirs, curated product recommendations, or exclusive shopping experiences.

### 3. Make retail part of the cruise story

Position retail as an essential element of the cruise experience by aligning it with the ship's theme, destinations, and overall journey. This approach enhances the relevance and emotional appeal of on-board shopping.



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# Elevating and Enhancing On-Board Retail Operations



## 4. Support local designers and artisans

Collaborate with local designers to create exclusive collections that reflect the destinations visited. This not only supports local economies but also provides guests with unique, destination-inspired products.

## 5. Combine retail with entertainment

Integrate retail with on-board entertainment, such as fashion shows, live product demonstrations, or interactive workshops. This approach increases guest engagement and encourages longer visits to retail spaces.

## 6. Promote sustainable and ethical consumption

Focus on offering sustainable, eco-friendly, and health-oriented products. Highlighting these options aligns with growing consumer demand for responsible consumption and enhances the cruise line's reputation.

## 7. Enhance pre-voyage collaboration with local suppliers

Strengthen partnerships with local destination suppliers to ensure a stable supply of high-demand, destination-exclusive goods. Align procurement timelines and compliance standards with specific voyage routes to mitigate supply chain risks.

# Elevating and Enhancing On-Board Retail Operations

## 8. Adopt experiential sales models

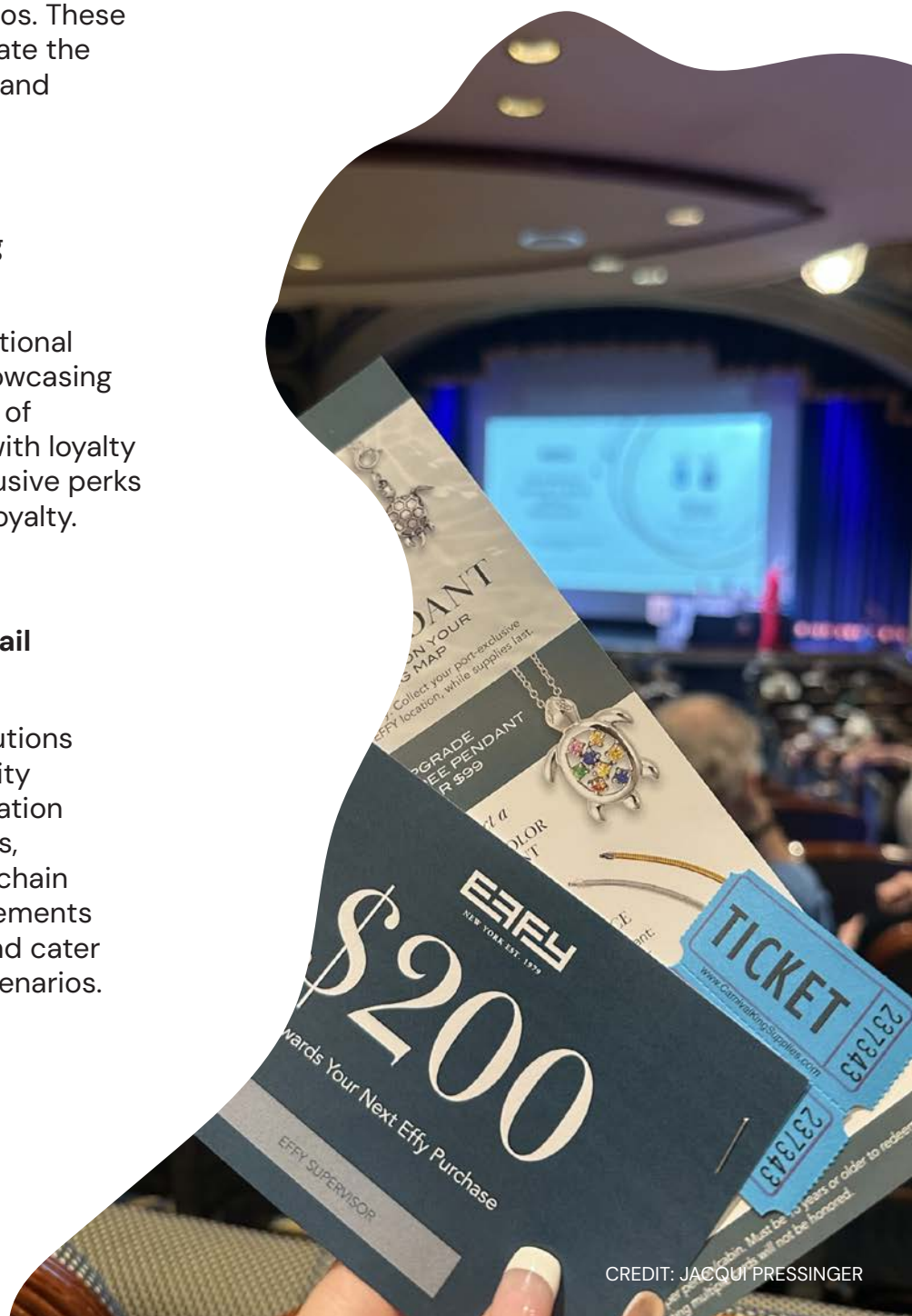
Create immersive shopping experiences for high-end luxury goods, such as interactive jewellery or perfume selection scenarios. These experiential models can elevate the perceived value of products and enhance guest satisfaction.

## 9. Leverage brand storytelling and loyalty programmes

Use storytelling to build emotional connections with guests, showcasing the heritage and uniqueness of brands. Link retail offerings with loyalty programmes to provide exclusive perks and foster long-term guest loyalty.

## 10. Explore future trends in retail technology

Invest in innovative retail solutions such as unmanned commodity supermarkets, direct cooperation platforms with beauty brands, and technologies for supply chain transparency. These advancements can streamline operations and cater to high-end consumption scenarios.



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