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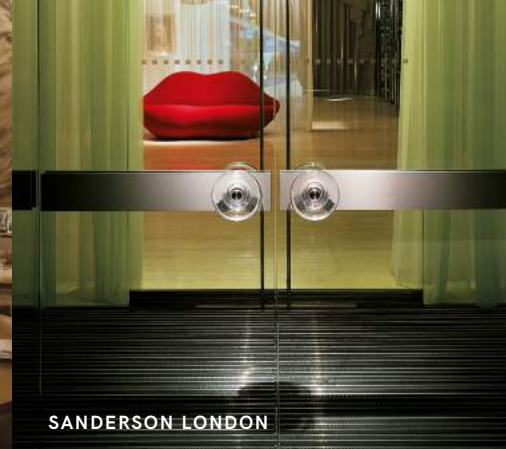
ISSUE 3 • JUNE '18



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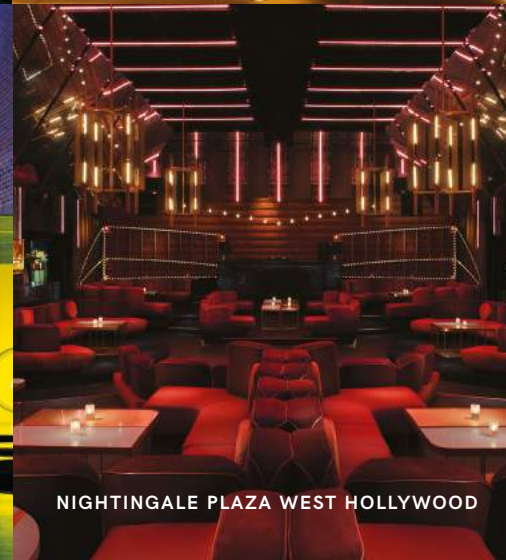
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If hospitality is a language, SIXTY Hotels is decidedly fluent. Founded in 2001, the family-run collection of boutique hotels offers its guests brief but blissful residence in some of the most exciting cities in the world. Be it Miami, Los Angeles, or New York City, each respective SIXTY property has been thoughtfully informed by the energy of its surrounding environment. Every detail is considered, inside and out. From the brand of chocolate in the mini bar to the style of art in the lobby, all is designed to immerse guests in the feel of the city itself. SIXTY aims to offer guests more than simply a place to sleep. Here, design, food, and culture collide with travel for truly inspired stays. To paraphrase The Bumbys: It's time to break up with your other hotels.



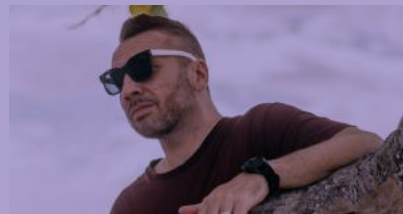
*The Bumbys
on SIXTY Hotels*



Seamlessly moving between technology, fashion and creativity, Ana Andjelic's day job is building modern brands – she is Chief Brand Officer at Rebecca Minkoff and sits on the board of Lean Luxe and TRPTK. She has been recognised as one of the Luxury Women to Watch 2016 and The Guardian's Top Ten Digital Strategists to Watch.



Dan Clay is a philosopher-turned-business consultant and a driving force in Lippincott's growing innovation practice focused on reimagining a better world for consumers. Blending his background in consumer psychology and business innovation, he advises the world's biggest businesses on how the world is changing and grounds their innovations in enduring human truths.



James Davidson is the founder of travel culture platform, We Heart, and is a regular contributor to all Beyond publications, as well as writing for magazines such as SUITCASE and Lagom; his latest venture is an independent print magazine fusing contemporary culture with craft beer.



Trading a career in finance for life as a digital nomad, Lisa Davidson is the editor of international travel and culture website We Heart, and has wanderlust at heart. Based in Barcelona, she is drawn to sun and style. And a good glass of wine.



Kate Hamilton is Content Director and co-founder at Sonder & Tell, a new communications agency that helps story-driven brands find their voice and express themselves. Formerly the Editor-in-Chief of SUITCASE Magazine, she is also a freelance journalist and has written for titles including The Guardian, Wallpaper* and Refinery29.



Beyond Luxury Media's Junior Content Executive and self-confessed serial winer-and-diner, Annie Maddison likes to keep her head in the clouds and feet firmly on the dancefloor. When she's not writing or travelling, expect to find her tearing up London's foodie hotspots, one brunch at a time.



Jen Murphy has spent the last decade writing about adventure travel, conservation and health and wellness. She regularly contributes to Conde Nast Traveler, the Wall Street Journal, Outside Magazine, Departures and Men's Journal. She splits her time between Colorado and Maui.



Editor of Beyond and Editorial & Content Manager for Beyond Luxury Media, Katie Palmer is a homebody with wanderlust, a city girl who loves wide-open spaces, and a philosophy graduate with an irritating affection for paradoxes. Above all else, she is happiest after the first bite of dessert.



Heather Richardson is a freelance, award-winning travel writer, from the UK and based in South Africa. She is interested in responsible luxury, sustainable tourism and emerging destinations. In her current home city, Cape Town, Heather can usually be found outside, hiking, running, SUP-ing, or sampling South African wines. Trips so far this year include Indonesia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.



Chloe Sachdev is a lifestyle and travel writer specialising in trends around the world. A writer for Conde Nast Traveller, Suitcase Magazine, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard and more. Chloe writes about interesting people doing interesting things and where they are doing it.



Annie Saunders is a director and live artist specialising in immersive performance-making; her company, Wilderness, creates experiential and interdisciplinary theatrical events that disrupt the boundaries between observer and observed. She is represented by HeLo, and is a director for Free the Bid, an organisation pledging to give women directors a voice in advertising.



Lucy McRae is a sci-fi artist, film director, TED Fellow and body architect whose work places the human body in complex, futuristic scenarios that confound the boundaries between the natural and artificial, with the intention of exploring and understanding the impact technology has on the human body.



Melissa Twigg is a freelance journalist based between London and Cape Town, writing about travel, art, fashion and conservation. She has bylines in publications including The Sunday Times, The Guardian, CNN, The Independent, Vogue and the BBC. She is still trying to find a cure for her seemingly terminal case of geographical commitment phobia.

BEYOND HUMAN

In an always-on age, when technology is evolving to mimic (and even surpass) our thoughts and behaviour, it seems human connections are rarer than ever. As the world gets smaller, yet more politically fractured, remembering, defending, and celebrating our shared humanity feels, at times, like a challenge. So what does it mean to be human in 2018?

“To be human today means to be actively present: socially, culturally, politically and environmentally”, offers Beyond contributor and Ministry of Ideas speaker Ana Andjelic. “Being human is no longer about individual existence, but about togetherness. Today, more than ever, it is imperative that we can live together with others, with technology and with nature.”

As we embark upon the sixth edition of LE, “togetherness” is at the forefront of our minds. We know our collective values face time, so for the past year our team has been imagining and creating opportunities for chance encounters and off-the-cuff conversations (because more goes on behind the scenes than you might think).

But what of being “actively present”? Existing at the intersection between modern technology and the natural world, travel is a bridge between societies, cultures, politics and environments the world over. As an industry, we have an enormous opportunity to champion humans: communities; individuals – as well as the experiences and resources they rely on to flourish. So how can we do better?

This was a question I asked one of the most actively present women of the year when I interviewed the straight-talking, world-changing Tarana Burke, whose choice of two simple words encouraged 15 million survivors of sexual abuse and harassment to find solace and strength in their shared humanity. But while our post-Me Too world has seen us make significant strides towards equality, on page 10 Burke reminds us that we still have a long way to go – and it’s everyone’s responsibility, including the travel industry’s, to ensure that even the least privileged have a voice.

Indeed, Melissa Twigg’s investigation of the travel industry’s gender pay gap on page 20

is a stark reminder that we can never afford to be complacent when it comes to human equality. And over on page 28, James Davidson discovers that, when it comes to gender, things aren’t always clear-cut: his article is a reminder that as gender becomes less binary, human understanding – in the travel industry and beyond – is more important than ever.

Annie Maddison reports on the emerging black travel movement on page 38, speaking to NOMADNESS Travel Tribe founder Evita Robinson about the challenges black and ‘brown’ travellers face both at home and abroad; as human equality and diversity rightly creep up the agendas of travel brands everywhere, she explains why getting it right starts from the inside out. Kate Hamilton echoes this sentiment on page 48 with her practical guide for brands looking to find their human side, asking: are ethics the new aesthetics?

Over on page 54, Ana Andjelic delves deeper into the psychology of modern luxury consumers, finding that their emerging desire for transformational experiences is rooted in a very human need for purpose. Meanwhile, Dan Clay has some tips (six, to be exact) of his own on page 62, where he explains how technology is changing human behaviour and defining the customer of the future – and how brands must adapt.

Talking of technology, it would be remiss not to mention artificial intelligence – a topic that sparks varying degrees of excitement and fear in even the most high-profile of tech-sperts (Mark and Elon, we’re looking at you); Jen Murphy gets both sides of the story on page 68. The tension between technology and human connection reemerges on page 76, where Lisa Davidson uncovers a loneliness epidemic and proffers a few ways the travel industry can help.

As ‘lobby culture’ approaches buzzword territory, on page 88 Holly Tuppen wonders: aside from a place to park your laptop, what exactly are hotels adding to their local neighbourhoods – and how could they take a more human approach? Heather Richardson is also calling out travel brands prone to lip service on page 94, as she outlines the risks of overlooking human idiosyncrasies in the name of marketing.

Infamous for its revolving-door turnover, Holly Tuppen proves that a more human approach to hotel staffing can make travel industry recruitment a force for good on page 100. Over on page 108, Ana Andjelic is trialling another human-centred method with her introduction to ‘design thinking’: an alternative approach to problem-solving that the travel industry could afford to take note of.

All the world’s a stage on page 114, as Annie Saunders and Lucy McRae offer some theatrical words of advice for creating human experiences with a touch of magic. And finally, on page 124 Chloe Sachdev calls on a sleep psychologist to find out how hotels can maximise our human potential without us ever lifting a finger (or an eyelid, with any luck).

To paraphrase Andjelic: being human is about being together. So here’s to putting our devices down (or on silent, at least...) and embracing five days of real, human connections. As we go about our work (and play, lots of play), let’s make a collective agreement to stay “actively present” – for ourselves, for each other, and for a travel industry that’s altogether more human.

Katie Palmer
Editorial & Content Manager
Beyond Luxury Media



“I want people to know that this is a movement about survivors and about interrupting sexual violence, and that our work in this movement is to make sure the survivors are always the ones who are centred in our thinking”

#MeToo will be forever etched in history as a phrase that encouraged 15 million survivors of sexual harassment to speak out – and many more to feel heard. But amongst the controversy that followed, founder Tarana Burke tells **Katie Palmer** why we must remain focussed on the humans who matter.

You first used the phrase “Me Too” in 2005, as part of your work helping young victims of sexual abuse and assault to craft their healing journey at Just Be Inc. In the days before hashtags and social media, what was its context and purpose?

It was about building empathy. My co-founder from Just Be – who helped me do this work – and I both have different kinds of stories that traumatised us in different ways, and we wanted to use the power of our stories to build empathy with these young people so that they understood that they weren’t alone in this and that, unfortunately, this is a common occurrence; but also that people live full, rich, whole lives after dealing with sexual violence. So, that was the whole point of having that phrase – the quickest and most efficient way to build empathy with someone is to connect with them over some common occurrence.

Actress Alyssa Milano first tweeted #MeToo on 15 October 2017 and the hashtag went on to be used millions of times. What was your initial reaction? Is the viral online campaign aligned with your original intention?

The online campaign was about people standing up and being counted; it was about people saying that this thing happened to them, to show the sheer volume of the issue around the country and around the world. Our work, originally, was not about showing the volume necessarily, but it’s aligned in that it’s the work of lifting and shifting the shame of sexual violence away from the survivors themselves – so that’s the common thread between the viral campaign and the work we started back in 2005.

My initial reaction was panic and confusion, not knowing where it was coming from – I didn’t know that Alyssa was involved – but that was dissipated when I realised there were so many people coming forward and finding power and solace in these words, and I knew it was important for me to give context to the moment – so that’s what I attempted to do.

You’ve said that “Social media is not a safe space” – what do you mean by this?

I think that we are led to believe that we have a safe space, but the internet is still the internet and social media opens you up to a kind of criticism – or trolling, if you will – that you probably wouldn’t encounter in real life. In real life, if you stood up in a room and said, “I was sexually assaulted”, nobody’s going to say to you, “Who would sexually assault you? You’re too ugly”. But social media gives people cover.

So, on the one hand it can be a safe space for people to connect and to create relationships – certainly in the case of #MeToo there was some safety in the sheer volume of people coming out and saying it, so survivors were protected; but ultimately it’s not safe because you don’t control it – you think you’ve cultivated a safe community and it’s not, because there are just too many safety loopholes that social media experts are forever trying to perfect. This is not necessarily a criticism of the social media companies as it is an indictment of the craftiness of the people who are intent on being mean.

It feels really awful to come forward and have somebody discount you, or discredit you, or say negative, mean things to you, when it may have taken so much courage just to get to that place. So I think we have to be really diligent about monitoring our social media spaces. I tell this to people, whether it’s regarding social media or not: I think we have to protect our stories. This is a moment when people are being pushed and encouraged to share, share, share – and it may feel cathartic in the moment to share – but not everybody deserves our stories; so I think we have to be really careful about how we share them.

Now, you're the senior director at Girls for Gender Equity – a non-profit "committed to the physical, psychological, social, and economic development of girls and women". What does your role there involve? How has the increased exposure of the 'Me Too' movement impacted your work?

My role at GGE is perfectly aligned with what #MeToo is all about, because GGE does work around street harassment, around gender-based violence... So it was the most obvious choice for where #MeToo would be housed. I was guiding the programmatic and policy work for the organisation as a senior director, but I've taken a step back from my day-to-day responsibilities to focus on what it looks like to grow this movement to be at capacity for the number of people who are asking for help.

The work we've been doing in the past few months is to shift the narrative nationally and globally about how people talk about the #MeToo movement: right now, people frame it as a movement to take down powerful men who've done bad things – and while we are a movement about dismantling systems, beyond that it's about centring on survivors. We want to get people the resources that they need to craft their healing journey.

That's another part of the work: building an online space for survivors to come and get the resources they need. It equalises things by being on the internet because there's no hierarchy based on race, or class, or gender – it's just information that's open to everybody, and we centre on survivors who are the most marginalised. Our work is online, by building this comprehensive website, and it's also an offline effort to help people get trained for doing this work in their communities.

In 2017 Time Magazine featured you and other 'Silence Breakers' as 'Person of the Year'. As someone who has expressed being uncomfortable with being a figurehead, what did this mean to you?

It was just an amazing honour to be named in that group and to be highlighted as the founder of the movement, so I was delighted by it – and it's done so much to help elevate this platform.

What I meant about being a figurehead is that I have been observant of how people will celebrate me as the founder of the movement, but don't look to me for leadership or vision around how the movement should move forward. For example, we should be in conversation with organisations who are working around gender-based violence; we should be in conversation with people who do work across the spectrum of sexual violence, because #MeToo really provides a framework for how to do the work. It's not necessarily reinventing the wheel – there are tonnes of organisations that exist that work to end gender-based violence, but there aren't a lot of organisations that exist to help people craft a healing journey (not nationally, at least) and help them get active in the social justice space.

I've taken on sexual violence as a social justice issue, so I have thoughts and vision around that and intend to lead my work, at the very least, in that direction; so it would be wonderful to be in collaboration with some of the larger organisations who have a wide constituency that we can get this message to.

"That's one of the ways we start to dismantle those systems, by interrupting those common narratives around who gets to have and who doesn't – and that's an important way to start shifting culture."

Photo by Mihai Surdu

In advance on the Golden Globes, which you attended with actress Michelle Williams, you wrote, "Too much of the recent press attention has been focused on perpetrators and does not adequately address the systematic nature of violence, including the importance of race, ethnicity, and economic status in sexual violence and other forms of violence against women." Can you explain what you mean by this?

Sexual violence knows no race, class or gender, but the response to sexual violence does. I think as a country – certainly in the United States, but I'm sure globally – we are conditioned to respond to the vulnerability of white women. I can think of two major cases that exemplify this: the case of Bill Cosby and the case of R. Kelly – Bill Cosby is going to trial [and, since the time of this interview, has been found guilty and sentenced], but his victims were largely white women; meanwhile, R. Kelly has been publicly preying on black and brown girls for almost 20 years and there has been no public outcry or ostracising of him. The response to these claims has been completely different, but the girls, the accusers, look completely different – I think we have to pay attention to that. One of the big reasons we needed to have a #MeToo in our community was because the things that existed didn't speak to the needs of the girls we were serving.

I talk about marginalised people and that's just sort of a catchall, but I'm very specifically meaning people of colour, queer people, trans people and disabled people who are often just left out of the larger conversation – and there are nuances in our communities that make our interactions with sexual violence different.

I think people have to be conscientious about it; it has to be something that you're proactive about – it's about who's in the meetings and who's making the decisions; making sure there's representation in your leadership that covers those groups; making sure those people who are represented have spaces to freely speak about where the gaps are in our community and what the differences look like. I think it's about vulnerability and transparency – we have to be open to criticism and pushback, and to somebody shining a light on the things that we may just not see.

Most people have some level of privilege, but there are groups that just have way more – so if you recognise that you

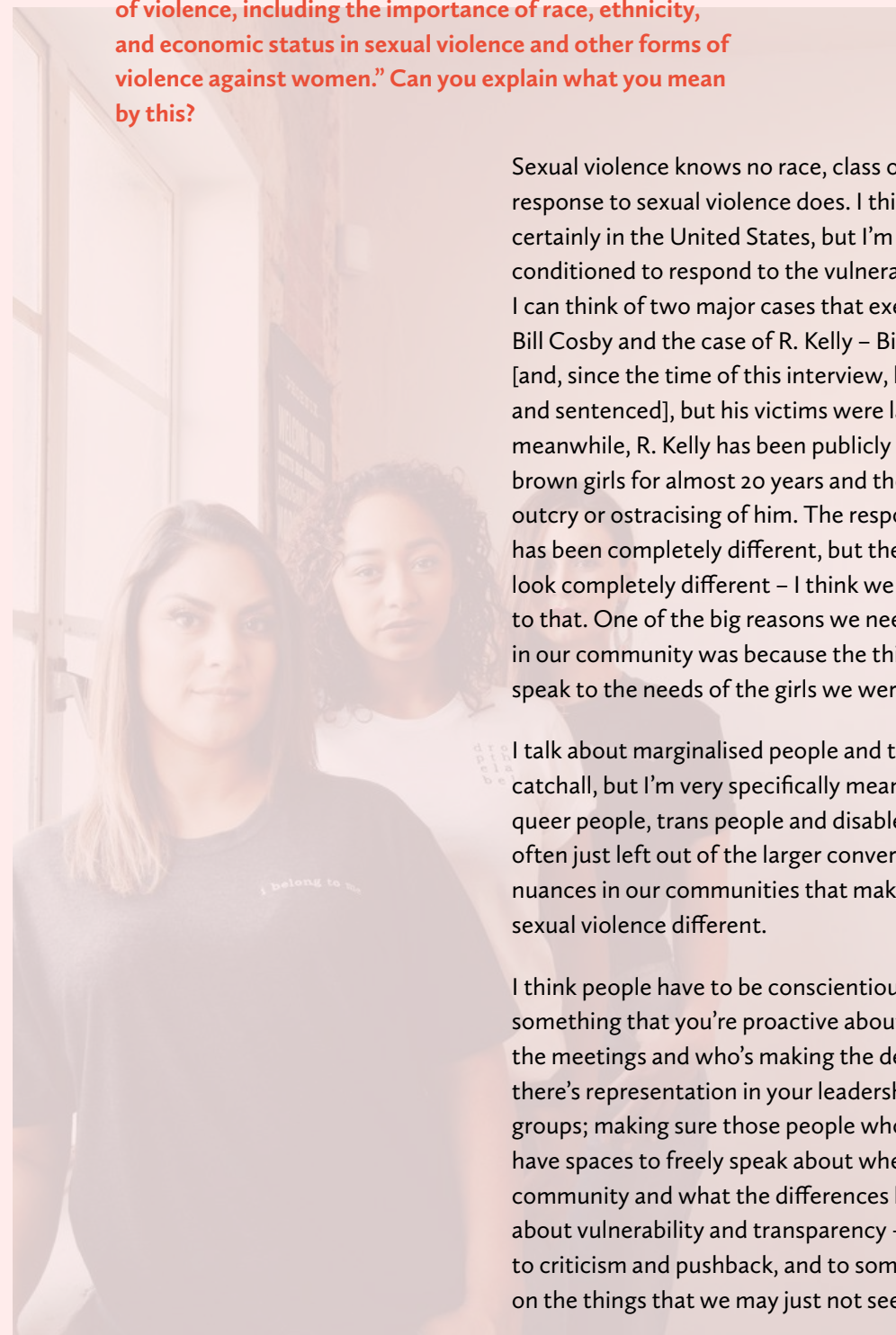


Photo by Drop the Label Movement

"Sexual violence knows no race, class or gender, but the response to sexual violence does."

have privilege and the power that comes with that, it's about being proactive about how you use it. So I think those people who have privilege – whether it is race privilege, or class, or gender, or ability – have to make sure we centre on those who don't have the same kind of privilege.

That's also why we have to talk about dismantling systems and structures and making sure that the leadership in these organisations and companies and non-profits, and wherever the decisions are being made, is truly representative of marginalised communities. That's one of the ways we start to dismantle those systems, by interrupting those common narratives around who gets to have and who doesn't – and that's an important way to start shifting culture. It's all interconnected.

In your view, how can the hospitality industry do more to safeguard against sexual harassment and support equality?

I think representation is a really big part of that. The leadership in those spaces should be representative of not just women (sometimes I think we think that adding more women solves the problem), but women who have a level of conscientiousness about things. There might be women you hire who don't open the door for pay equity for other women, so I think it's about hiring people with a consciousness and a conscientiousness around these issues, who are also representative of the community you're serving – whether it's the immediate community, or the outward-facing community. That's a huge part of it for hotels: to have people in leadership positions, but also to actively examine their policies and look for the gaps that people can slip through and not be helped adequately.

If there were one message you could communicate – one thing you could make people understand or do – what would be your lasting legacy?

I want people to know that this is a movement about survivors and about interrupting sexual violence, and that our work in this movement is to make sure the survivors are always the ones who are centred in our thinking, in our conversations and in our work around sexual violence.

I think of it like this: when the #MeToo movement went viral, within 48 hours almost 15 million people engaged with the hashtag worldwide. If there were a worldwide epidemic that broke out and 15 million people caught this disease within two days, all things would stop around the globe and we would be fully focused on a cure – we would be trying to understand where it came from and what the root causes were so that we could figure out how to put a stop to it. We would be taking the people affected by it and figuring out what they needed in order to be comfortable until we found a cure. These are the ways we would act as a global community to a communicable disease that touched so many lives.

I think about that when I think about the movement, because we had 15 million people in less than 48 hours saying that their lives have been affected in this way, yet our focus is on: 'How do we date now?'; 'How can we hug now?'; 'What are the new rules?'; 'Maybe I won't even deal with women at all...' As opposed to saying, 'What caused this?'; 'These people who are speaking out, what do they need? How can we get them resources? How can we help them?' and, furthermore, 'What do we need to do as a collective global community to put an end to this?' That's the conversation that needs to happen – all this other stuff is just a distraction from that.

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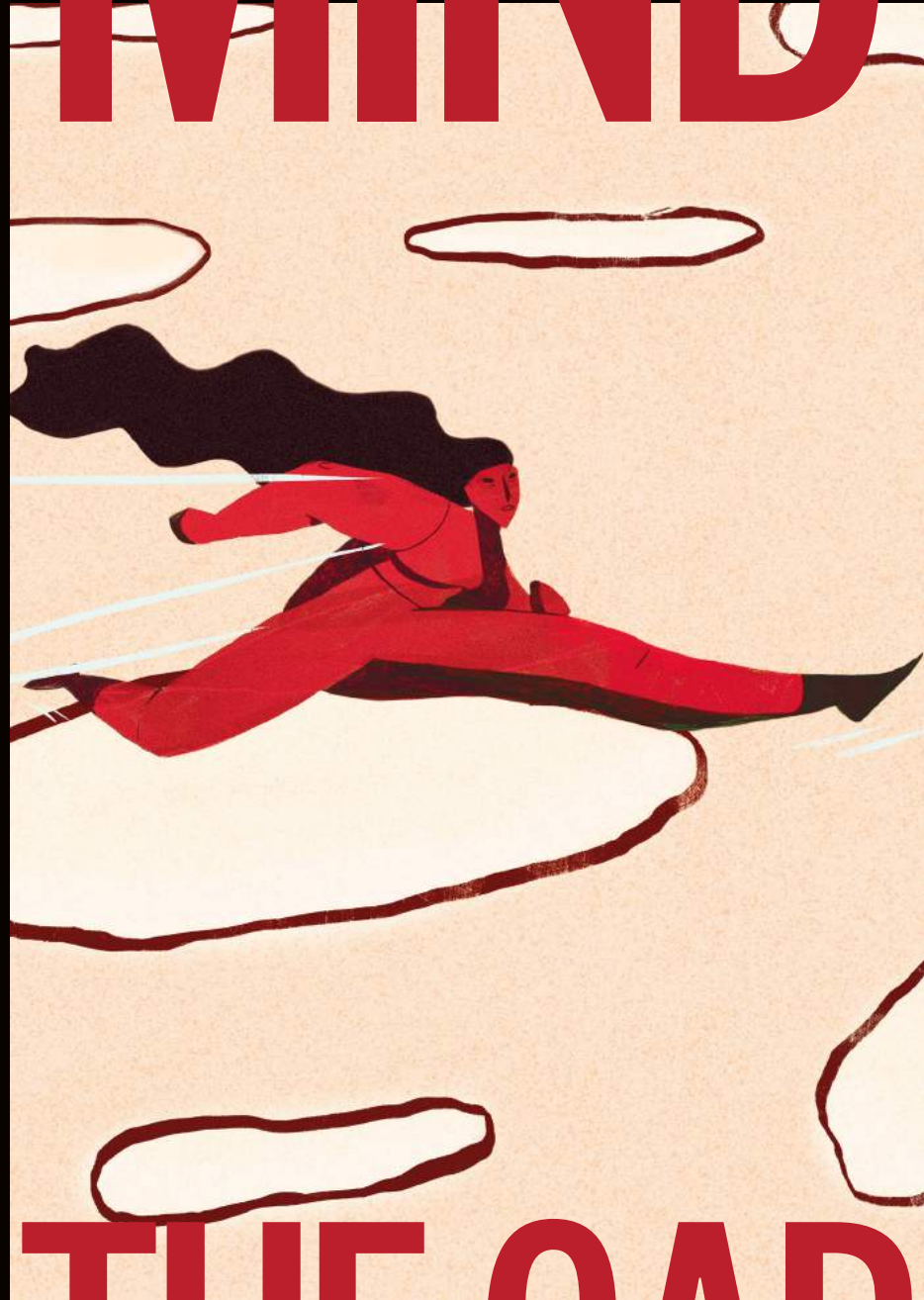
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THE GAP

“Women are clearly the dominant consumers and sellers of travel – and yet their numbers aren't reflected in the highest decision-making positions in the industry.”

Five years after Sheryl Sandberg first told women to Lean In, the gender pay gap is still a gaping chasm and one half of the human race remains noticeably absent from top-tier positions – even in the otherwise female-dominated travel industry. So, asks **Melissa Twigg**, what's to be done?

Women dominate every aspect of the travel industry bar one: the very top. Nearly two-thirds of all travel employees are female, a proportion that gets even higher if the hospitality sector is taken into account. However, once you start peeking into boardrooms at the world's most glittering travel companies, women become an endangered species.

Travel is hardly alone in this. From fashion and beauty to law and publishing, major industries

when women are caught up with child-rearing. With a growing emphasis on paternity leave, this is changing; but until men and woman share the burden of childcare, working mothers will always find it difficult to operate in an industry that revolves around the concept of travel.

And then there are the unfair stereotypes so often foisted upon women: we don't ask for raises; we have less confidence in our abilities than men do. Regardless of whether these

WOMEN MAKE
70%
OF ALL
TRAVEL BUYING
DECISIONS

around the globe allow women to flourish in the low and medium ranks, then whip out the infamous glass ceiling before they hit the upper echelons.

Theories abound as to why this is. One is that, while women continue to shoulder the weight of childcare, a successful career in a demanding international industry is difficult to balance with a family. In travel, most CEOs are appointed between the ages of 35 and 45 – the exact time

are true, studies have shown that men tend to be promoted on potential, while women are promoted based on results they've already delivered – a phenomenon that was covered in depth in Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*.

"There are some men – across all industries, not just specific to the luxury travel industry – who have a natural bias that they are not even aware of themselves", says Alexandra Margull, the managing director of Wilderness Safaris'



Namibia operation. "Luckily, there are others, too, who have given me some great support and guidance throughout my career, encouraging me to grow and embrace the opportunities that have come my way. I have, however, worked really hard to get ahead in this industry, learning the importance of being self-motivated and a self-starter early on, as well as not taking things too personally."

Interestingly, consumer research by Female Factor, a consulting firm that examines the behaviour of women consumers, shows that women make 70 per cent of all travel-buying decisions. Moreover, 72 per cent of travel agents are women. Which means women are clearly the dominant consumers and sellers of travel – and yet their numbers aren't reflected

in the highest decision-making positions in the industry.

Reacting to this disparity, Alessandra Alonso founded the website Women in Travel as a way of helping her gender finally get into the corner office.

"As I progressed in my career and the more senior I became, I noticed there were far fewer women in the room", she says. "This issue is not unique to our industry. But women have an amazing economic potential that is still largely untapped. As a recent McKinsey's piece of research shows, \$12 trillion could be added to the global economy if women fully contributed to wealth creation. What's more, women's economic independence translates



into sustainable livelihoods for communities worldwide. I think these are important enough reasons to be passionate about this topic.”

The travel industry is far from homogenous, and various branches of it need entirely different approaches in order to achieve the goal of equality. In travel PR and media, for example, women are generally fairly represented all the way to the top. However, the number of female hotel GMs and pilots is still staggeringly low the world over.

To help even out the aviation numbers, easyJet launched its Amy Johnson initiative in 2015, with the aim of doubling its new-entrant intake of women from six per cent to 12 per cent. After reaching that target in the first year, it created a new goal of increasing that figure to 20 per cent – or around 50 pilots a year – by 2020. Every year, six of these new recruits will have their loan underwritten by easyJet. British Airways has launched a similar campaign to increase

the visibility of women pilots by visiting girls’ schools and all-women recruitment events – although, despite their efforts, BA still only employs 220 female pilots out of a total of 3,800.

Female general managers, once a rarity, are certainly becoming much more commonplace – but they are still underrepresented around the globe, with women rarely progressing to the very top.

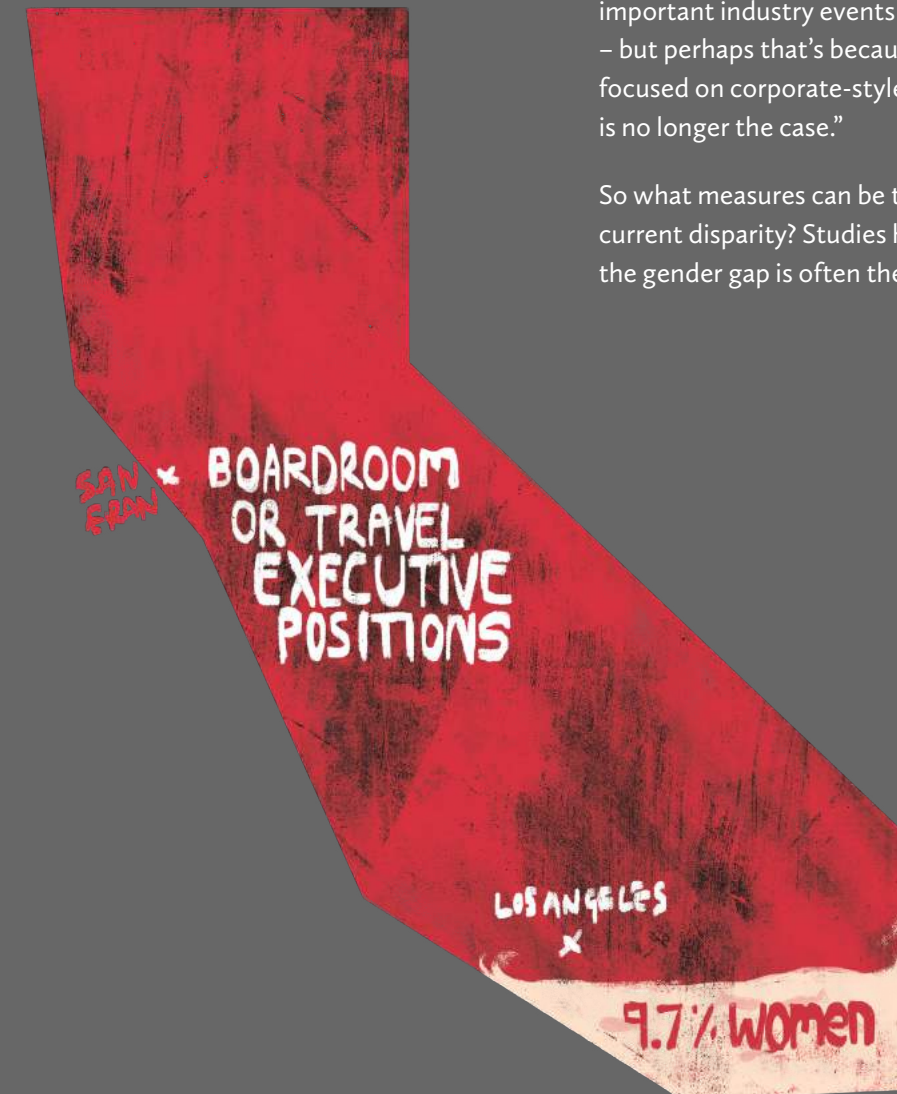
“Good, competent women are often overlooked, as they are either not close enough to the top management or do not have the opportunity to play the political game”, says Margull. “But it has been proven that companies are more successful if women are part of the management team, so I would like to see this being embraced by the industry. It may take some time, as we first need to shatter some stereotypical views and biases on women’s abilities. But I am a firm believer that with the

right coaching and mentorship we can grow and develop powerful women in the industry.”

A shift in attitudes in the wake of #MeToo has reminded us all of the importance of mentoring and listening to women in the workplace; but even before this global movement began, the travel industry was already evolving.

“People who work in travel are generally quite open-minded, so compared to other industries I feel like it’s quite open to women taking on important roles”, says Lucy Jackson, a director at Lightfoot Travel. “In my formative career years I did notice a swathe of men in black suits at important industry events and very few women – but perhaps that’s because they tended to be focused on corporate-style hotel brands, which is no longer the case.”

So what measures can be taken to tackle the current disparity? Studies have shown that the gender gap is often the result of a lack



of proper support for women to advance in the workplace, and that companies need to put policies in place to combat this. Women's ambition can fade in the middle of their careers simply because they don't benefit from the same backing as men to move forward to leadership positions.

To rectify this, employers need to promote women now to create a fairer future, even if it involves the ever-unpopular quotas. Currently, only 9.7 per cent of boardroom seats or top-paying travel executive positions in California are held by women, and 34 per cent of all companies have no women at all on their executive board. There is no global data on gender discrimination in the boardroom – but it is a topic that should be researched, because until more women shatter the glass ceiling, those below them will feel less confident in applying to these roles as they feel it is not their 'place'. Thus the need for quotas.

Onsite childcare, maternity benefits, women's networking groups, mentoring and development are also important to women, as are flexible work hours when they start a family. Finally, transparency about the corporate wage gap can make a profound difference. **The UK government recently forced all companies with over 250 employees to reveal their gender pay gap; the data revealed that almost eight in 10 companies and public-sector bodies pay men more than women, with women paid a median hourly rate on average 9.7 per cent lower than their male colleagues.** The hope is that this transparency will force companies in the UK to address the gap – a move that the worldwide travel industry could certainly benefit from.

"With the evolution of the travel industry and the new curators we see today, it is undoubtedly becoming less male dominated", says Jackson. "At times, I've certainly sensed

people being surprised at my role, but it's never held me back from asking for what I want. Women can do anything, they just need to believe in that – and it is our role as employers to help them get to where they want to be."

The Plymouth

MIAMI BEACH



Hidden in Miami Beach's historic Collins Park, the Plymouth is a revival of a four-story Art Moderne building. The custom designed hotel by Fernando Santangelo features 110 rooms furnished by Restoration Hardware. It offers an experience of design-centric living with a sense of solitude and intimacy. The Plymouth brings Blue Ribbon Sushi Bar & Grill, Blue Ribbon's famous sushi and cooked Japanese cuisine to South Beach.



with love from the plymouth



LET'S TALK



ABOUT SEX

Photo by Steven Peice

“There are a whole world of people beyond straight white males who deserve better representation and respect, parity in economic and social issues, and much, much less bigotry slung in their direction.”

At a time when gender is an increasingly shifting notion, one thing's for sure: we're all human. As inclusiveness reaches new heights, **James Davidson** reminds us why now is not a time for complacency, but for increasing awareness, understanding, and action.

"I think kids should take the hormones of the opposite sex for three months as part of their high school experience; just so they understand each other's operating systems." Anohni, the artist formerly known as Antony Hegarty – who admits she is not a scientist, that this is an idea based on experience as a member of the transgender community – is talking with Dazed about her notion of Future Feminism, a concept that formed a project in collaboration with fellow New York fringe artists Johanna Constantine and Kembra Pfahler.

"The myth is that men and women are mysteriously, unfathomably different from one other", she continues; "but as a transgender person I've realised that it's like two different software systems that make people behave in different ways. When you flush that chemistry through the brain, different kinds of behaviours and tendencies emerge." Anohni asserts that capitalism and religion are patriarchal systems built around testosterone-based, military values, and that today – in a world that has enough nuclear weapons to destroy itself 400 times over – we could use a little more emotional intelligence.

The former lead singer of Antony and the Johnsons is first to admit that not all men are evil (nor women angels), but the realisation that the masculine archetypes our world has been built on are no longer serving us well should be clear for even the most clouded minds to recognise. The artist and her fellow future feminists have envisaged a radical proposal for a humanity beyond equality, proffering that the aggressiveness of male decision-making is a failed structure from which to move forward. "That can't be the climax of feminism", she tells The Guardian, pointing out that economic equality has been demanded, yet depressingly distant since the 1960s. "It's like gay rights, as if gay marriage is the end point, as if we just want to be included in these business-as-usual institutions."

"A depressing realisation is that the tomorrow contemplated by the future feminists is lightyears away."

A depressing realisation is that the tomorrow contemplated by the future feminists is lightyears away: in its 2017 Global Gender Gap report, the World Economic Forum estimates that equality – political, economic, and in health and education – will take a century to achieve. That's 17 years more than it predicted in 2016. And that's just female equality. Had there not been progressive intellectuals such as English sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), or early gender nonconformists like French artist Claude Cahun (1894-1954), society might not yet have moved forward enough for Anohni's own transition to be as accepted as it is today.

Thing is, alongside a stagnating push for female equality across the board, there are a whole world of people beyond straight white males who deserve better representation and respect, parity in economic and social issues, and much, much less bigotry slung in their direction. Australia has, astonishingly, only just voted to legalise gay marriage – and even

this played out against a backdrop of posters decrying homosexuality as a 'curse of death' and urging Australians to 'stop the fags'. Gay men are being detained illegally and tortured in Chechnya as part of the Russian republic's 'gay purge'. Bermuda recently became the first place in the world to repeal same-sex marriage. The Trump administration has universally put progressiveness into reverse.

Paradoxically, this backward-thinking comes at a time when there is a better understanding than ever of the shifting notion of gender – when Caitlyn Jenner has taken trans issues overground, and British department store John Lewis took itself to the frontline of gender politics with a decision to cease the division of children's clothes by gender. At the same time, Stonewall recently revealed that attacks on LGBTQ+ people in Britain have risen by almost 80 per cent in just four years, and that more than a third of all transgender people were victims of a hate crime in 2017. As inclusiveness reaches new heights, the tiny minds threatened by that are hitting out – there has never been a more important time for increasing awareness, understanding, and action.

"We have a long and proud history of promoting inclusion among our people, our customers, and society, including support of indigenous issues, gender parity in business, and marriage equality", wrote Qantas' people and culture group executive, Lesley Grant, as the Australian airline launched an initiative to discourage staff from using gender-inappropriate language. In lengthy internal documents, the airline has urged its staff to drop gender-specific words like 'love' and 'guys', and affirms that terms such as 'mum and dad' and 'husband and wife' would be better substituted for 'parents' or 'partner'. "Language can make groups of people invisible", asserts the documentation. "For example, the use of the term 'chairman' can reinforce the idea that leaders are always men."



Photo by T. Chick McClure



**"We're all interspaced together,
arm-in-arm, eyes bright, lungs
hollering love for the entire
cosmos to hear."**

- Ace Hotel's inclusive pitch



Claude Cahun image courtesy of Queer Cultural Centre

It might feel like diminutive steps taken in a climate where gay sex can still see you imprisoned for life in a handful of popular tourist destinations, but as Robert Louis Stevenson said: "don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant." In readdressing the language we use, those struggling with their own identity might feel less like the world is against them; in eroding notions of gender as binary, children could thrive for who they are, not what they are. Behind John Lewis' decision to bring down the walls of gender stereotype, and in Qantas' push for more inclusive language, a greater picture of neutrality is emerging: where the archaic belief in binary thinking is being dismantled like a decaying edifice ruled unfit for habitation.

"Shuffle the cards. Masculine? Feminine?" wrote Claude Cahun in her autobiography, *Disavowals*. "It depends on the situation. Neutral is the only gender that always suits me." Cahun – born Lucy Schwob in Nantes, France – was a pioneer. Beginning to experiment with self-portraiture in 1911, the artist collaborated throughout her life with her lover and stepsister Marcel Moore (born Suzanne Malherbe) – the two adopting male pseudonyms as their work explored the fluidity of gender; Cahun defying the conventions of those times by regularly sporting a skinhead. Prominent activists during World War II, their photography and writing was no less revolutionary, going on to influence creatives such as Gillian Wearing, David Bowie, Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin. In January, Cahun was name-checked as an inspiration for Christian Dior's latest Pre-Fall collection. In times when we have moved way past 'unisex' (a concept inherently binary) and female androgyny, Claude Cahun is the muse for a society ridding itself of gendered shackles.

Fashion, of course, is frequently at the forefront of shifting ideals – and for those exploring their own identities it has the ability to empower: old-fashioned conventions can be subverted;

"Shuffle the cards. Masculine? Feminine? It depends on the situation. Neutral is the only gender that always suits me."

- Claude Cahun

boundaries can be broken. With Selfridges recently experimenting with the unpartitioned set-up made famous by Rei Kawakubo's lauded Dover Street Market – the store's creative director, Linda Hewson, noting that they are looking to "permanently embed its freedom and ideals into the department store format" – the non-binary paradigm of John Lewis's children's department may find its way to the adult section sooner than you think. As celebrities like Miley Cyrus ("I feel like I'm everything and nothing all at once") and Jaden Smith (the first male to model womenswear for Louis Vuitton) have taken notions of gender neutrality mainstream, there is hope that openness and personal expression can help disarm prejudice.

That said, as Alaskans are the latest state to vote on the 'bathroom bill'; Tory MPs tweet things like, "somebody possessing a penis and pair of testicles is definitely not a woman"; YouTube list Chelsea Manning's political campaign video as inappropriate; and Trump signs off on a new order to ban transgender



David Bowie by Andrew Kent

troops from serving in the army, that disarming can feel painfully distant.

“At the till I’ve regularly been asked if the clothes I’m buying in mainstream retailers are for my mum or my girlfriend”, writes trans artist Shon Faye in a 2016 feature for Dazed. “When I was 19, two staff members laughed at me as I held up blouses in a mirror.” A year later, fellow artist Travis Alabanza spoke up when they (preferred pronoun) were prevented from using the dressing room of their choice in Topshop, Manchester. The result? The Times columnist Janice Turner publishing a repulsive attack on Alabanza, deliberately misgendering them as ‘he’, and dismissing the artist as wearing dresses ‘to astonish and subvert’. “What Travis isn’t”, spat the privileged white heterosexual, “is a woman.”

Diminutive steps they may seem, but the seeds planted by Qantas’ appraisal of language use – should they be adopted by businesses, brands and individuals the world over – could go some way to diluting this sort of discrimination. What if they, or other airlines, adopted a genderless uniform? What if all hotels followed suit with Durham’s 21c Museum Hotel – the art hotel that flew in the face of North Carolina’s House Bill 2 (preventing transgender individuals from using public bathrooms that match their gender identity) by installing ‘we don’t care’ signs on their resolutely gender neutral toilets? What if nightspots made it safer for trans people to get home safer?

“We’re all interspaced together, arm-in-arm, eyes bright, lungs hollering love for the entire cosmos to hear.” Ace Hotel’s inclusive pitch for their Interspace initiative, an umbrella for LGBTQ+ events at all of their hotels, is typically inspiring for a hospitality brand that is hardwired into the cultural zeitgeist; they, The Standard, and other familiar names in the realm of creative class travel are renowned for their progressive values, but it might be worth



Photo by Pablo Padilla

noting that token events and rainbow flags are a long way from the sort of institutional overhaul that is needed in 2018. A quick look through forthcoming events at The Hoxton – a brand hailed for its millennial appeal – reveals a product launch for “guys and girls on the go”. Of course, it’s a far cry from the sort of tone-deaf advertising Pepsi or Dove have recently (and rightly) been scorned for, and a turn of phrase we’re all prone to using, but it too serves as a gentle reminder of the constant scrutiny we should be placing on ourselves in order to foster an inclusive and just society.

Let it be heard that this is not an imploration to tiptoe through life saying nothing for want of not upsetting anyone, but a plea to remain mindful of cultivating inclusivity whenever we can. It doesn’t matter how hard you’re fighting the fight of equality: there’s always more that can be done. Take the continuing rise of feminist values: as great as it sounds, the movement has regularly been accused of clumsy footing – whether that be hypocritical bandwagon-jumping like Twitter’s Oscar adverts (extolling its feminist stance whilst millions are abused through their platform daily), or a failure to recognise that not every feminist is a middle class white woman, it’s vital we remember that flying the flag is nowhere near as significant as taking action.

“Right now, I’m really interested in just destroying everything”, Jen Silverman – whose latest play, *Collective Rage*, is a flagrant celebration of everything it means to be queer, feminist, and intersectional – tells American Theatre. “I think it’s so fucking useful for us as humans to undergo the practice of thinking we know what something is, and then watching that thing be deconstructed in such a way that we no longer can make the assumptions we were making. I think it’s useful for us to do that in theatre, where it’s safe.” Her diverse characters – including a genderqueer, masculine of centre, black lesbian – reject expected

notions of femininity and stereotyping, breaking free of pigeonholes prescribed by society.

Building beliefs and abstractions and then tearing them apart is a useful exercise. Perhaps surprisingly, Anohni is far from convinced about the genderless future you might have conjured over the course of this story. “This whole fantasy of this gender-neutral oasis in the middle between the genders has been incredibly disempowering”, she says. “They’ve exchanged the female creative hub of life with this secular gender-neutral lump that we are all staring at and don’t have a relationship to.” Indeed, we are not far from binary thinking in envisaging a gender-neutral catchall for whoever doesn’t slot neatly into one of the two main categories of sex. From agender to two-spirit person, genderfluid to polygender, how someone chooses to identify is their prerogative; it’s up to everyone else to give them respect, to offer support.

We may be far from a future where non-males need not adopt masculine traits to succeed. We might be farther still from a future where emotion and compassion collapse the toxic patriarchal systems that control us. We are, reportedly, a century away from female equality across the board. We could be an aeon from other genders catching up. What must be remembered, though, is that we are all human. “Shuffle the cards”, wrote Claude Cahun. “Masculine? Feminine?” Whoever we are, we can each learn an awful lot from simply understanding each other better.

TRAVELLING



Photo by Mihai Surdu

IN COLOUR

“While the travel industry can’t escape the moral dubiousness of failing to cater to – or, at worst, actively excluding – entire groups of people, it’s not too late to make amends.”

As an emerging ‘black travel movement’ fights against the racial prejudice plaguing the industry, **Annie Maddison** finds out why inclusion is best achieved from the inside out – and how it could positively impact not only a brand’s bottom line, but humanity as a whole.

“Are you afraid of flying?” It might seem like a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question, but for many, there’s more to fear than take-off or occasional turbulence. In Royal Jordanian Airlines’ powerful, minute-long ad, one Muslim’s unease at the accusing looks he receives from other plane passengers reveals how the public’s anxiety surrounding terrorism – and the stereotypes pinned on certain minority groups – is taking a toll on the world today. “The people around me are afraid of me”, the Muslim passenger realises. Here – in moments like these – is where the problem starts: while travel is, theoretically, an industry that flies the flag for freedom and diversity, in reality it remains tainted by widespread discrimination.

For Muslims have reported being tormented by paranoid stares – and worse – on their travels ever since the events of 9/11. Terrorist attack after terrorist attack later, and the likes of Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and ISIS have given Islam a bad name – so while carrying a Quran and a prayer mat in your hold luggage should not be a cause for concern, too often Muslim travellers are singled out and demonised for simple acts of personal or religious expression. “I am this guy. I fit every cliché: I am the abstract villain of your imagined anxieties”, says Muslim American and CEO of Skift, Rafat Ali, in his article on his experiences as a Muslim traveller.

Ali is not the only Muslim who has felt discriminatory eyes upon him since the threat of terrorism clouded the world’s better judgement. In a 2017 Pew Research Center survey, 75 per cent of Muslim-American adults said there is “a lot” of discrimination against Muslims in the US – an opinion shared by almost seven in 10 adults in the US general public. Combine this with the distressingly regular, worldwide reports of verbal and physical abuse directed at women in headscarves, men with beards, or anyone displaying overt signs that they might be a follower of Islam, and no one should have a

"While travel is, theoretically, an industry that flies the flag for freedom and diversity, in reality it remains tainted by widespread discrimination."



Photo by Rendiansyah Nugroho



Photo by Peter Hershey



Photo by Jerry Kiesewetter

problem understanding what Ali means when he describes his post-9/11 experience as a Muslim traveller as “a sociological condition I carry with me all the time”.

It’s not hard to spot a similar trend in tales of black travellers’ experiences of racial discrimination. Just take a look at online forums like Travellers of Colour Collective, which provides a safe space for travellers of colour to voice stories of their encounters with racial prejudice: among them, founder Kiki Nartey describes an instance where she was told by a stranger on a train that her “different appearance” had triggered his three-year-old son’s crying outburst. With encounters like this an all-too-regular reality, it’s easy to see why travellers of colour might take the view of Eritrean-American writer Rahawa Haile, who confesses in an interview with VICE: “I plan my trips based on how much time I feel comfortable being othered.”

Evita Robinson – founder of NOMADNESS Travel Tribe, a Facebook group turned award-winning lifestyle brand that organises trips for black and ‘brown’ millennial travellers – delves deeper into the consequences of the ‘othering’ of travellers of colour. In her TED Talk, she refers specifically to the “silent burden” every black traveller bears: the responsibility they have to “set the record straight” and diffuse the warped perception of black culture appropriated by the mass media. “There has always been a stereotype that people of colour don’t travel – or if they do, that they’ll go to the Caribbean or Miami”, Robinson observes; “it’s not them – it’s what they’ve seen of us.”

But there’s more to it than that. So societally embedded is this notion of otherness that it has given rise to financial and psychological barriers preventing people of colour from travelling at all – barriers that black travel pioneers such as Robinson are working tirelessly to break down. “What I found”, she explains, “was that the



Photo by Jordan Sanchez



Evita Robinson courtesy of NOMADNESS

mentality that travel was something that ‘black people don’t do’ or that ‘black people can’t afford’ even existed in the black community, so it took some internal unravelling to get people to wake up”.

So while forums like the Travellers of Colour Collective provide a place where minority travellers can voice their struggles, NOMADNESS Travel Tribe – along with others like Travel Noire, Up in the Air Life, Bucketlist Beasts and Tastemakers – have gone a step further, creating communities that allow travellers of colour, often haunted by a long history of discrimination, to counter their own stereotypes and find refuge both at home and abroad. Thanks to her work with NOMADNESS, Robinson has been dubbed ‘the mother of the black travel movement’: a growing band of travel agents, social networks and lifestyle brands catering to a demographic that the wider travel industry has, so far, overlooked.

“Most [travel] narratives are from a white, Western perspective, which essentially nullifies the very purpose of travel”, Nartey points

out. She’s right. From travel marketing full of beaming white faces; to guidebooks and online travel advice written predominantly from white perspectives; to the distinct lack of racial diversity in the travel industry’s workforce, people of colour are not only flying under the travel marketer’s radar as potential customers: they are noticeably underrepresented in ‘mainstream’ travel in most capacities.

While the travel industry can’t escape the moral dubiousness of failing to cater to – or, at worst, actively excluding – entire groups of people, it’s not too late to make amends. Their bottom line would thank them for it, too. A report published in October 2017 by Mastercard and Muslim travel website HalalTrip revealed that young Muslims between the ages of 18 and 36 are expected to spend more than \$100 billion annually on travelling by 2025 – a figure that’s more than doubled since 2016, making them a target market that’s hard to ignore.

Meanwhile, an online panel study from Mandala Research estimates that African-Americans are already spending a whopping \$50 billion on domestic flights annually; the same study revealed that about one in five black travellers are taking at least one international trip each year. It turns out travellers of colour are globetrotters to be reckoned with – and some smart travel brands are starting to reach out to them.

Airbnb was one of the first to try to connect with the black travel movement, reaching out to Robinson’s NOMADNESS Travel Tribe in 2015 – but their name was quickly tarnished after discrimination allegations arose against them. The birth of the hashtag #Airbnbwhileblack in 2016 caused shockwaves as stories of Airbnb





Image courtesy of NOMADNESS

hosts favouring white profiles over African-American profiles filtered on to social feeds everywhere. Airbnb reacted in March 2016 by hiring their first ever Head of Diversity and Belonging, David King III – a former Peace Corps and State Department official with 15 years’ experience in the field of diversity and inclusion.

“We will take the strongest actions we can against such abhorrent conduct, including banning people for life from our platform and assisting law enforcement with their investigation and potential prosecution. Nobody should ever be treated like this and it will not be tolerated”, he said in an official statement responding to the scandal. This was the moment when real, positive changes were implemented at Airbnb to deal with discrimination on the platform: from insisting that its hosts agree to a “community commitment” and a non-discrimination policy, to hiring a full-time anti-discrimination squad of data scientists, engineers and researchers whose primary aim is to discern patterns in host behaviour, the brand is making efforts to ensure that its core value of “belonging” applies to all its customers, whatever the colour of their skin.

Also hot on enforcing diversity in travel is Hyatt. Originally airing at the 2017 Oscars, the brand’s advert, “For a World of Understanding”, depicts people from different ethnic backgrounds experiencing subtle

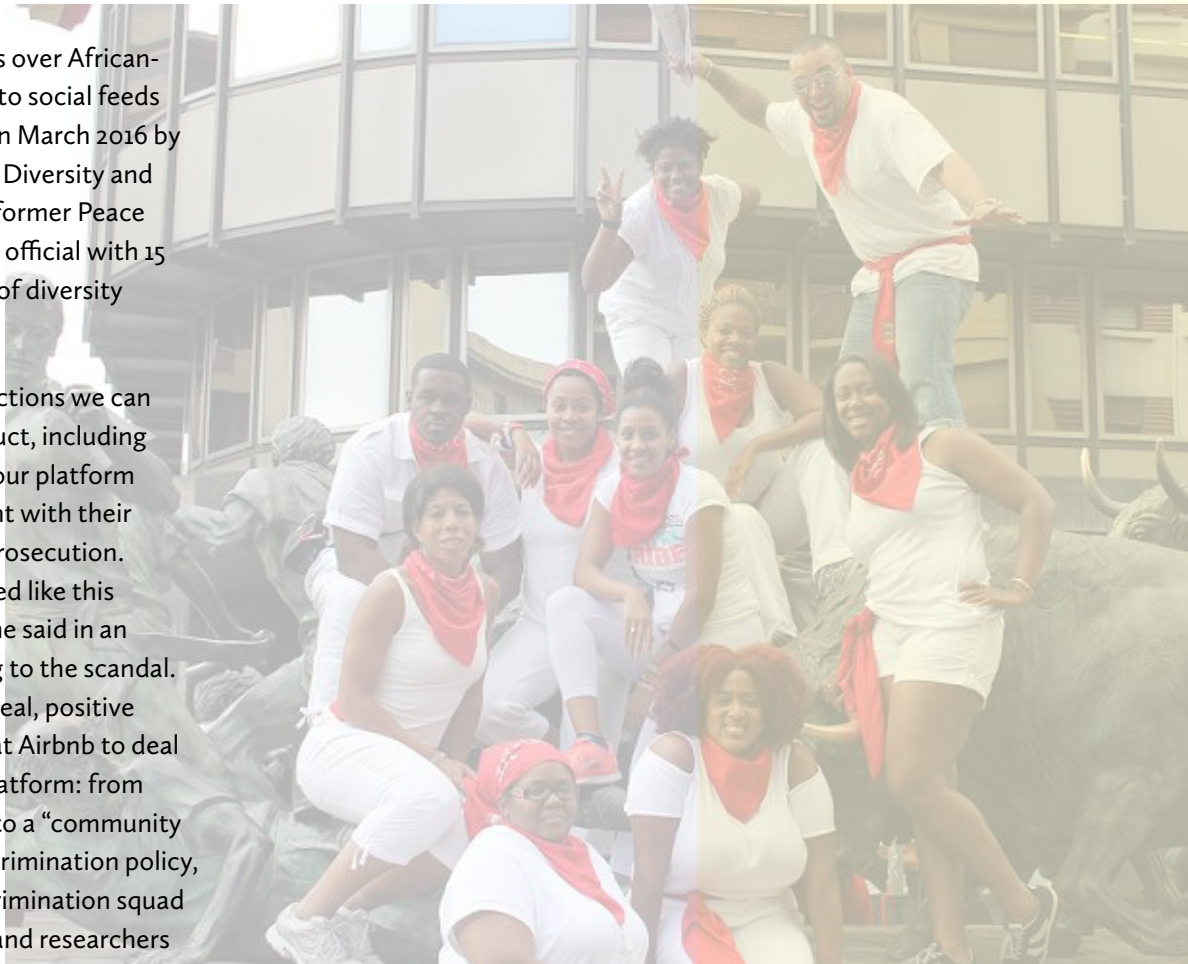


Image courtesy of NOMADNESS

moments of understanding, taking a political stand against racial prejudice and celebrating cultural differences as part of a global campaign reaching out to markets in countries such as the US, India and China. It also hammers home one of Hyatt’s fundamental values: “We have an incredibly diverse employee base and are in all these markets, so the whole idea of elevating understanding is really essential to our business”, says Hyatt CEO Mark Hoplamazian.

But, argues Robinson, in order to enforce these outward-facing gestures of diversity with conviction, brands should seek the guidance of minority traveller travel experts. “Linking with relevant influencers who are already trusted [is more effective than] trying to create something from scratch”, she says. “The black demographic is not going to use your services if they don’t believe you. The organisations that have done it right have taken a backseat, allowing people who are already dominating the black travel space to drive the car, which allows us to teach them the best way to go about engaging our community”.

"Most [travel] narratives are from a white, Western perspective, which essentially nullifies the very purpose of travel."

Collaborating with her NOMADNESS Travel Tribe and the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), Airbnb recently hosted “The Evolution of Black Travel” – a panel discussion at MoAD intended to build the company’s understanding of the history and impact of black travel, with participants including high-ranking Airbnb officials, alongside the National President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Robinson herself.

And the conversation hasn’t stopped there: Airbnb has announced that, alongside NOMADNESS and MoAD, in a matter of months they will be launching “a series of new Experiences [that] will shine light on black communities and become a source of economic empowerment for [Airbnb] hosts and their local communities around the world.” Due to take place in London and some of North America’s most densely populated metropolitan areas, one such programme at MoAD will see visitors make art under the guidance of local San Francisco artists representing the African diaspora. As well as being one of a few rare itineraries created with travellers of colour in mind, the hope is that these Experiences will also foster understanding and respect among non-minority travellers.



Image courtesy of NOMADNESS



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"Like so many other things, effectively combatting racial prejudice in the travel sphere must start from the inside out."

Like so many other things, effectively combatting racial prejudice in the travel sphere must start from the inside out. Taking action internally to encourage workplace inclusivity and diversity is vital in creating an equally inclusive and diverse product. "Is [diversity] something that's embedded in your business DNA? Is there somebody in HR who brings people of colour in, who can check and double-check the content of your marketing campaigns?" asks Robinson.

So determined are they to right previous wrongs, Airbnb has followed in the footsteps of Google, Facebook and Apple by publishing annual diversity reports on their website – there they are transparent about an existing imbalance, yet express an apparently earnest desire to turn things around. At the CU Boulder Diversity Summit, King acknowledged that the shift towards diversity isn't easy; but Airbnb initiatives such as Airfinity – their employee-led resource groups that "celebrate the individual experiences that make our community great" – are helping to create more awareness and advocacy around important human issues, as well as helping to guide the company's diversity initiatives in recruitment, leadership, product development, and community outreach.

Similarly, Hyatt's Diversity Business Resource Groups (DBRGs) bring together colleagues who share a cultural heritage, gender, race, age or interest to create inclusive spaces and support systems within their existing community. Offering benefits like mentorship, internal career opportunities, health and wellbeing support, and an overall sense of camaraderie for new and existing employees, Hyatt is smart enough to know that the positive effects of employee diversity and inclusion will inevitably be felt by guests.

But this is only the beginning. The travel industry – and the world – must acknowledge the wider issue at hand: racial prejudice in travel is affecting ethnic minority travellers everywhere, both at home and abroad. They encounter it and feel the weight of the problem everywhere they go. So while no one single entity can put an end to the racist stigma underpinning the industry, taking action to promote and welcome diversity, as Airbnb and Hyatt have done, can only be a good thing – not just for a more inclusive (and profitable) travel industry, but ultimately for a world liberated from the clutches of discrimination.



Image courtesy of NOMADNESS

ARE ETHICS



THE NEW AESTHETICS?

Photo by Alex Harvey

“Travel is entering a new age of scrutiny, in which ethics will become the new aesthetics. It’s through a strong brand story, a personality and culture that brands can build loyalty. There’s no characteristic more human than that.”

Today’s successful brands are more than a logo and colour palette: they’re a personality unto themselves, known and understood by consumers as if they were a friend. Kate Hamilton maps out the formula for brands looking to find their human side.

Picture going on holiday with Patagonia. I don't mean packing a suitcase full of duffle coats, gore-tex and fleece. I mean, envisage exploring the mountains with the kind of person you imagine Patagonia to be: practical, intuitive, conscious of the world around them – and probably really kind.

Many of the world's most influential brands have such fully formed personalities that we can imagine them existing as human beings. Airbnb? That laid-back friend who has clued-up contacts in every metropolitan city around the world. Adidas? The person with their finger firmly on the cultural pulse. Redbull? They're the crazy one.

The idea of brands taking on human characteristics is not new (think of Aunt Jemima's pancakes or Uncle Ben's rice). But with the rise of social media, companies are increasingly able to demonstrate their humanity in a direct way. They crack jokes, they speak out, and they tell stories that go way beyond the product they're selling.

As brands continue to show their human side, consumers are demanding more. Babba Riviera, founder of New York-based marketing agency By Babba, says: "Having a human aspect and a purpose are key drivers for the millennial consumer, and even more so for Gen Z. Millennials are not only drawn by the quality of a product: they want to connect with brands on a deeper level – specifically those that show a strong story and mission."

Ironically, then, in order to appeal to a world of screen-checkers, brands need to tap into fundamentally human truths. We've consulted a panel of experts – from marketing directors to hotel owners to travel editors – for tips on how you can start to do just that.



Babba Riviera by David Lou

STORY

In basic terms, building a story means drawing out a narrative around your brand – a compelling tale that touches on why you exist, where you came from, and what you believe.

Juliet Kinsman, writer and founder of the travel-based social enterprise Boutecco, points out that when it comes to storytelling, travel brands often forget to apply the art of 'tell don't sell'. Hotels in particular can become so preoccupied with getting heads on beds that they neglect to create an emotional connection with consumers, who are likely to care more about the backstory of the local artist who designed your menu than they do about the thread-count of your sheets. However, as marketing consultant Naomi Oluleye points out, the industry is waking up: "I think in recent years they've noticed they can't rely on a pretty picture and printed words to sell an experience."

A brand story should be woven into every consumer touchpoint... But where to start? It might help to construct a brand narrative, by breaking things down into the components you'd find in a work of fiction: protagonist (your founder); characters (the people who are at the heart of the brand); backstory (your origin); plot (what you actually do); conflict (what problem you're trying to solve); and solution (how you're fixing it). How do they all come together in a way that makes sense? Sharing a narrative with your team will align your company with its mission, while sharing it with your audience will encourage them to emotionally invest in your brand – and spread the word.

What's the biggest mistake brands run into when crafting their narrative? "Spin", says London-based brand consultant Robert Bean (who has worked with the likes of Dishoom and Rolls Royce). If you tell the story you think people want to hear rather than what's

"Don't be afraid to stand out – having a strong sense of personality often means carving out a niche."

authentic, chances are consumers will see right through it. "When it's a new thing, people are fascinated to know why and how you got here. Just tell a story."

PERSONALITY

Would you sign up for dinner with someone who has zero personality? Probably not. So why would any brand expect to succeed without having something interesting to say for themselves? The argument for creating a human personality for your brand is especially compelling if you buy into the logic that people trust people (and, by extension, that people buy from people).

One of the simplest ways to draw out a brand's personality is to imagine them as a human being. Try putting some distance between yourself and your company and thinking about how you could describe them as a person. What



Juliet Kinsman

adjectives spring to mind? Narrow it down to four words, and don't worry if they seem to be polarising. A friend who is vibrant, smart, honest and friendly is more compelling than one who is friendly, kind, nice and sweet.

Don't be afraid to stand out – having a strong sense of personality often means carving out a niche. The B&B brand Urban Cowboy, for example, radiates a youthful, tongue-in-cheek feel, which is obvious from a quick scroll through their Instagram feed (think dressed-down models in bathtubs; live music; whiskey). Founder Lyon Porter says, “We don't take ourselves too seriously and those who do need not apply. We are not for everyone, and we celebrate that.”

That's not to say you have to go out there and be overly provocative to make a splash. As



Naomi Oluleye

"Just like we demand transparency in the clothes we buy and the food we eat, we will start to demand transparency from the travel industry."

Juliet Kinsman remarks, “Personality should be distinct and appealing, but not too contrived and loud.” The point is to set yourself apart – as consumers increasingly ally themselves with brands that reflect their own sense of identity, you risk appealing to no one if you try to appeal to everyone.

CULTURE

Brand culture is all about defining why a company exists, and what its purpose is beyond providing a product. “A strong ‘why’ will direct your brand’s evolution over time and should direct any initiatives you choose to take from the very beginning”, explains Riviera. Do you exist to provide a home from home for global nomads? Are you all about sustainable living? Or is it more about just having fun?

By defining the ‘why’ of a brand, companies set the tone for a strong sense of internal and



Lyon Porter

“Just like we demand transparency in the clothes we buy and the food we eat, we will start to demand transparency from the travel industry”, says Riviera. “Where does my money go, and how does my visit help build these countries and their local communities?”

What is clear is that the world of travel is entering a new age of scrutiny, in which ethics will become the new aesthetics. It's through a strong brand story, a personality and culture that brands can build loyalty. There's no characteristic more human than that.

external culture. Historically, companies have placed impetus on outward perceptions, with less focus on what goes on behind closed doors; but that point of view is out of date. According to Bean, “companies should be as engaged in selling themselves to their people as they are to their customers.” That means more than just filling your meeting rooms with bean-bags and ping-pong tables, mind. Good internal brand culture is critical in service-based industries like travel, in which employees are the first point of consumer contact. If you're all about investing in local culture, but your employees can't tell a guest the first thing about the area, then you've got a problem.

Culture is often underpinned by a set of ethics and values. It's not news that millennials prefer to engage with brands with social messages, and the next generation will continue to value human characteristics such as accountability.

FINDING

YOUR IKIGAI

“We should come back from our travels not only energised and rested, but different. Ideally, we would return a better, more responsible, open-minded, empathetic and fulfilled version of ourselves.”

Born in Japan, the concept of ikigai is spreading much further afield as transformational experiences become luxury’s new mantra. **Ana Andjelic** considers why humans need purpose – and what the travel industry should be doing about it.

Photo by Killian Pham

The people of Japan believe that everyone has an ikigai: a reason to jump out of bed each morning. If the average lifespan of the Japanese is any indicator, the believers in ikigai are doing something right. The idea of ikigai is now spreading outside Japan, with an increasing number of Westerners looking for a reason for being.

Ikigai fits well within the wider shift happening in the luxury category. Transformational experiences are emerging as luxury's new mantra, with an increasing number of products and services being geared towards luxury consumers' quest for purpose in life.

Transformational experiences are defined as experiences that fundamentally challenge a person's assumptions, values and beliefs, affecting how they understand themselves, others, and the world. At their core, all transformational experiences are about learning, discovery, personal development and growth. They take people out of their established routines and immerse them in something novel and different.

Recently, transformational experiences became a coveted cultural currency. Once firmly anchored in the domain of hippies, yogis, adventurers and new-age aficionados, the quest for ikigai is now dominating the cultural mainstream – providing a status symbol for some, and aspiration for others. In particular, younger consumers embrace ikigai as a way of making sense of uncertain times.

Many find transformational experiences through travel. In 2013, the market for wellness tourism was valued at \$494 million and has grown exponentially since, according to the Global Wellness Institute; it's no surprise that the Global Wellness Summit recently named transformative wellness travel as the trend in 2018. Meanwhile, Transformational Travel Collaborative (TTC) is an organisation launched



Photo by Tom Holmes

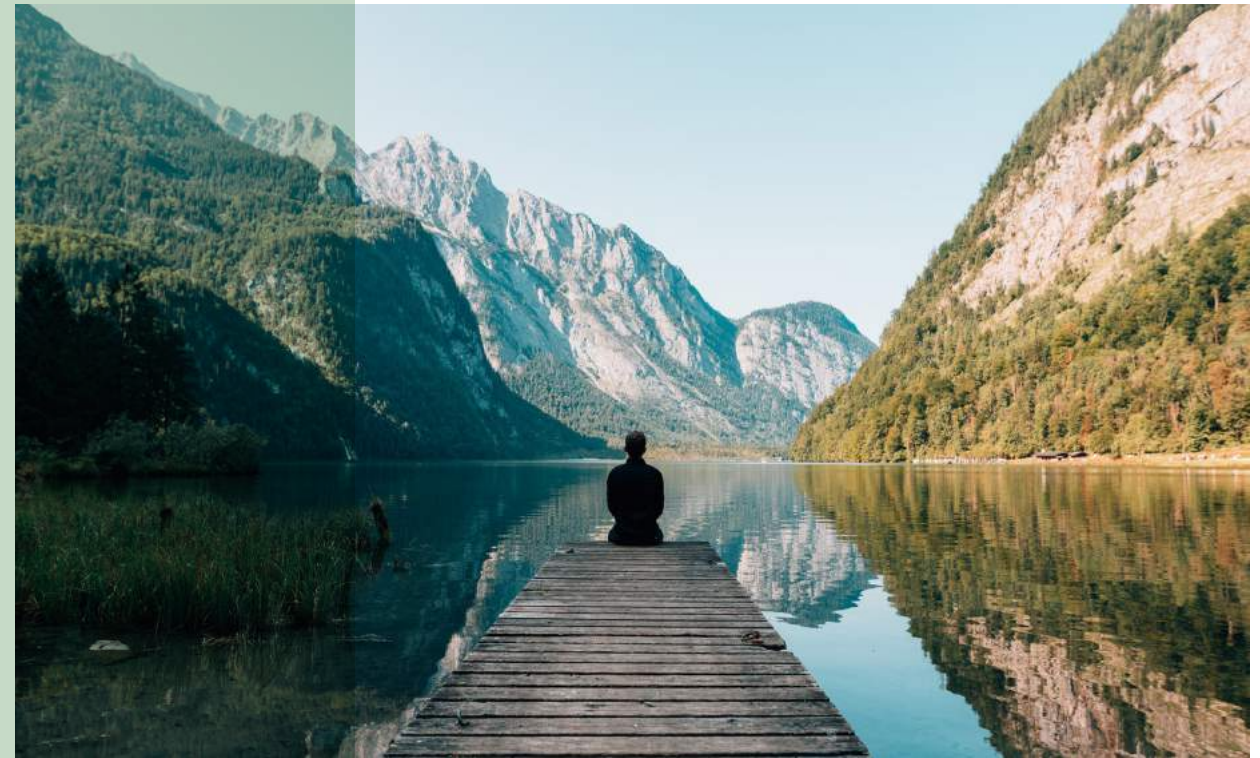


Photo by Simon Migaj

"Transformational experiences are defined as experiences that fundamentally challenge a person's assumptions, values and beliefs."

with the express purpose of providing both travellers and travel services with the tools to encourage personal and professional growth – a clear signal of the increasing importance of transformational experiences.

Only a couple of years ago, a guest's experience during a trip was considered the critical phase in

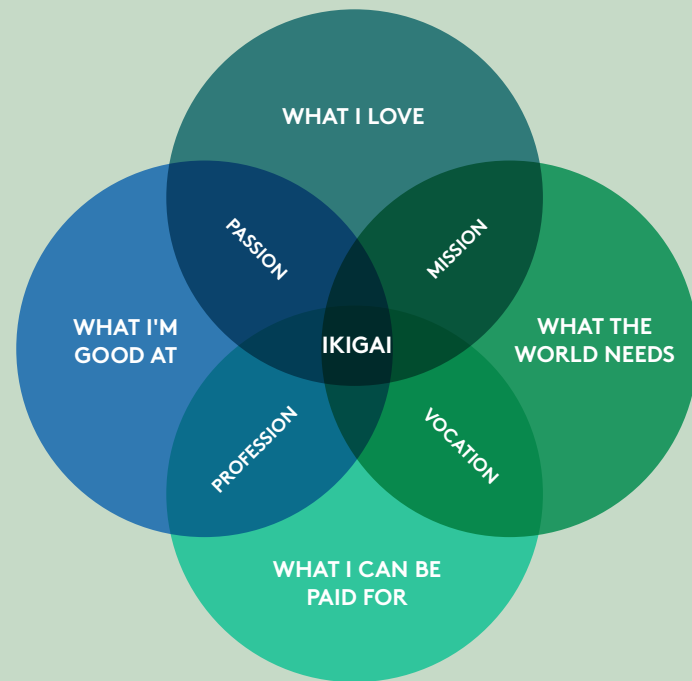
their customer-decision journey. Now it's a step beyond: our post-trip emotions and action bear more weight – the idea being that we should come back from our travels not only energised and rested, but different. Ideally, we would return a better, more responsible, open-minded, empathetic and fulfilled version of ourselves.

To appeal to their audience's quest for ikigai, Marriott launched high-end transformational activities as part of their loyalty programme at selected locations. Conscientious and curious Marriott guests can now use their reward points to book, say, a cooking class with famous chef Eric Ripert, or a golf lesson with retired professional Annika Sörenstam.

But the ikigai approach goes beyond hotels rethinking their growth strategies: it forces hospitality brands to recognise that our inner journeys are just as important as the external ones. "Consumers are looking to become better people", notes B. Joseph Pine, author of the much-quoted *The Experience Economy*. Pine charts a multi-stage progression



Photo by Luo Lei



of economic value – from commodities, to goods, to services, to experiences, to personal transformation; according to this approach, the ultimate product is a better you.

The lesson for the established hospitality brands is clear: incorporate ikigai into your service offering, or watch consumers find it elsewhere. And with key players in industries ranging from media to fitness to food and apparel now trading in the ikigai currency, the competition is steep.

Lifestyle media brand Mindbodygreen built its business around inspiring people to live their best life – mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and environmentally. “We believe that wellness is our shared journey and we help you cultivate a life of greater meaning, connection, fulfilment and purpose”, claim its founders.

Similarly, an increasing number of modern brands take an ikigai approach in their brand purpose: apparel startup Everlane is all about transparency. Skincare brand Aesop is about

finding balance in life. Weight Watchers rebranded themselves as a wellness club, accessible to all. Consuming a GOOP product or attending one of their conferences is rife with transformational narrative – and that is exactly the point.

For other brands, ikigai offers a smart expansion strategy. Emboldened by Equinox Group’s meteoric growth, its Executive Chairman and Managing Partner, Harvey Spevak, is in the process of entering the hospitality arena. Fittingly, Equinox Hotels will be founded on the same mission of helping people to “maximize the potential within themselves” as Equinox Fitness Clubs.

“Health is the new wealth”, Spevak says. Indeed, the modern luxury era introduces the inverse relationship between conspicuous consumption and wealth. These days, according to The Economist, less affluent individuals aim to acquire products that make them more socially visible and devote a higher share of their total spending to conspicuous consumption than the rich, who prefer to spend more stealthily.

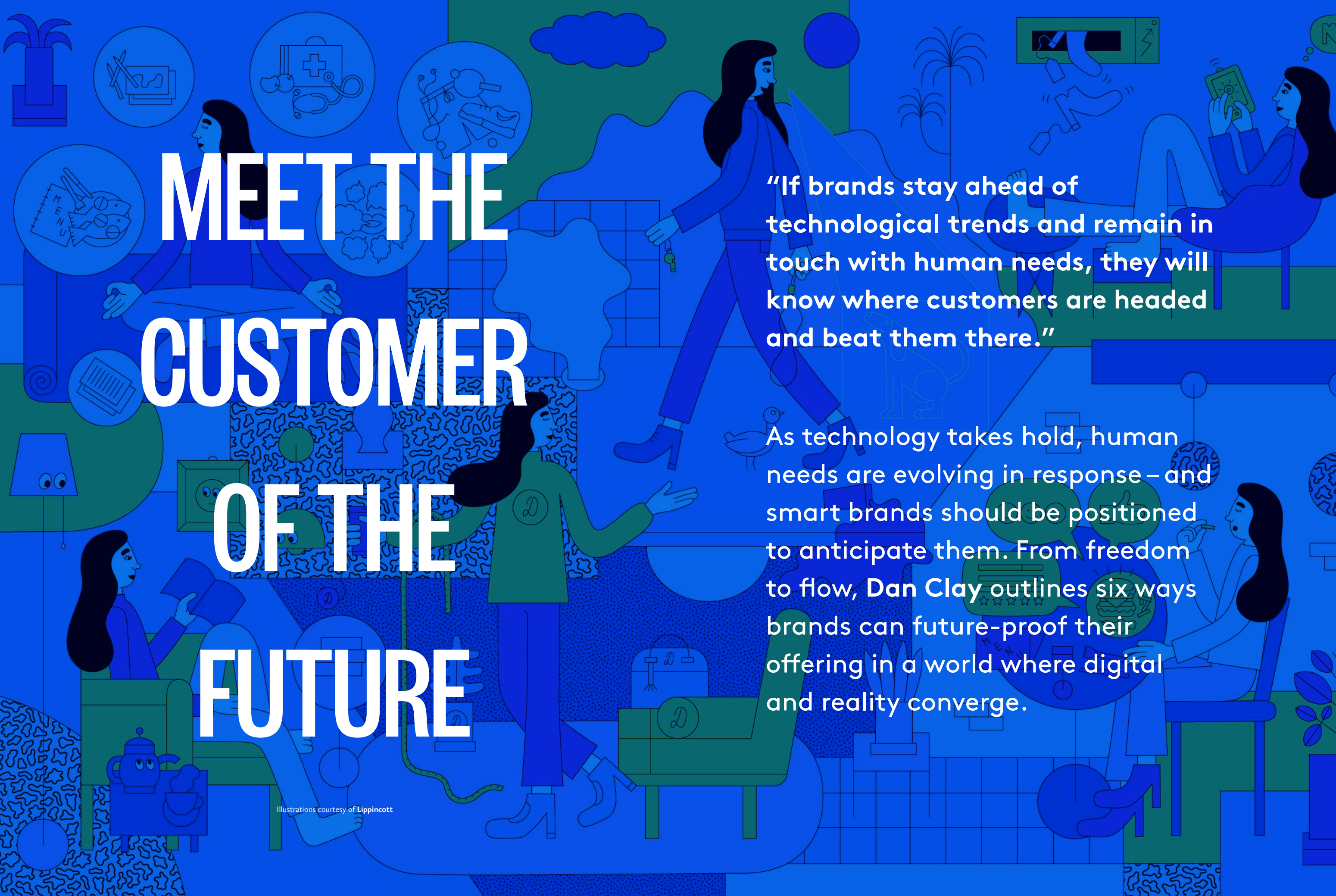
This change in spending among the affluent forces luxury brands to reconsider their own articulation of value and the way they communicate it. For generations who grew up before Instagram, fashion was a reflection of social standing: wearing the right brand made you cool. For the post-Instagram generation, social currency is built on ikigai.

It would therefore be wrong to regard silent retreats, wellness festivals, transformation apps and happiness camps as simply a pushback against our overly digital and hyper-connected lives. Rather than a simple reaction, our spiritual metamorphosis is a corollary of a digital world in which meditating, working out, healthy eating and being environmentally aware have become a ubiquitous feature of our social media lives. Our feeds are full of inspirational quotes, food shots and photos of meditation corners – and perhaps this is the biggest irony of our quest for self-reflection: that our inner journeys are actually quite public.

Herein lies the opportunity for the hospitality industry. If modern luxury consumers require both the ikigai and a wide audience to evidence it, then hospitality’s role is to give them inspiration and ammunition to live their best lives. This could be in the form of sustainable lodging; locally harvested food narratives; a transformational festival; inspiring classes; or feeling at one with nature. Combine this ikigai-designed offering with numerous opportunities to share (and go on sharing) it, and you’ve got a winning combination. The first step for hospitality brands implementing it is to understand that a trip doesn’t end for a guest when they leave – it only just begins.



Photo by Luo Lei



MEET THE CUSTOMER OF THE FUTURE

“If brands stay ahead of technological trends and remain in touch with human needs, they will know where customers are headed and beat them there.”

As technology takes hold, human needs are evolving in response – and smart brands should be positioned to anticipate them. From freedom to flow, Dan Clay outlines six ways brands can future-proof their offering in a world where digital and reality converge.

We're in the midst of remarkable change

not seen since the industrial revolution. Technological advancements are ushering in new mindsets for consumers and marketers alike; increasing expectations for flexibility, on-demand everything and data-driven intelligence have changed the rules of consumer behaviour.

In a survey of 2,000 US consumers who report a high level of alignment of tech-driven trends, nearly 70 per cent have seen a rise in their personal demands for instant access and customisation. Fifty-two per cent said they always choose products or services that don't make them wait. And, contrary to conventional marketing philosophy, consumers are increasingly willing to buy and embrace an unfamiliar brand on Amazon if it comes with a five-star rating.

Just a few years from now, how we shop, connect with and think about brands will be very different. So, how can brands shape their marketing strategy today to ensure they stay relevant tomorrow? Here are six fundamental ways brands can prepare for the customer of the future.

Never interrupt customer 'flow'

The customer of the future will gain freedom through mobility. As technology allows us to untie many binds, fixed acquisitions that once anchored us such as jobs and contracts

will soon flow with us. Our survey found that consumers were six times more likely to prefer the flexibility of renting over the stability of ownership.

Brands that meet their customers where they are and flow smoothly with their de-located, independent lives will win in the future.

Never make a customer feel tied down; make convenience and flexibility a selling point.

We've seen the beginnings of this shift already: the need to hail a cab, visit the grocery store, or stop at the bank is diminishing by the day. Even the most minor interruptions will stand out once the world is dramatically streamlined by technology.

Ground trust in transparency, not authority

We'll increasingly be tracked and track ourselves, but we'll also reap greater benefits of social connection and personalised recommendations. Our wearables will know if we need more calcium, our refrigerator will know if we need more milk, and our car will know the cheapest place to pick it up. Social



experiences will dominate, sharing on social platforms will be easier than ever, and benefits like lower premiums and product discounts will flow to those who are willing to share their data.

This seemingly unlimited amount of consumer data is ripe with opportunity for brands and innovators. But tread lightly: when all can be tracked, consumers will demand transparency. This heightened visibility will lead to a rise of reliance on ratings, and every brand considered will have a score. To win, it'll be ever more important that a brand be transparent and open up the customer experience to full accountability.

Give consumers freedom

In the future, technology will provide new opportunities to wield power in line with personal preferences. Modularity, mixing and customisation will become the expectation. Customers will have high expectations – they know they're being tracked, so they'll expect their products and services to understand and even anticipate them.

Give your customers the power to unbundle, customise, make, modulate and mix. Standard is simply the starting point; successful brands will have to give more and grant customers the power to control their own unique experiences.

Don't make them wait

The appetite for the instantaneous knows no bounds. Everything from entertainment to groceries will be available in an instant and repetitive tasks will be automated, freeing up more of our precious time. With 85 per cent of consumers feeling more efficient thanks to today's technologically driven world, the growing desire for on-demand everything has opened up doors for disrupters everywhere.

"We found that 62 per cent of consumers would rather make decisions based on intelligent apps and crowdsourced information than on the advice of friends and family."

Eliminate customers' three nonstarters: waiting, boredom and unnecessary effort. Make everything instant, fun and easy. Keep up with their ever-increasing expectations for immediacy and efficiency.

Feed the appetite for knowledge

In the future, not knowing will be nearly impossible. With artificial intelligence and constant access to the world's knowledge base, we'll know more than ever. We'll see a dramatic shift of expertise toward the wisdom of the crowd; we'll trust diverse opinions over the individual expert.

We found that 62 per cent of consumers would rather make decisions based on intelligent apps and crowdsourced information than on the advice of friends and family. Equip customers with as much information as possible, from as many sources as possible. Open your traditional expertise to the wisdom of the crowd and artificial intelligence.

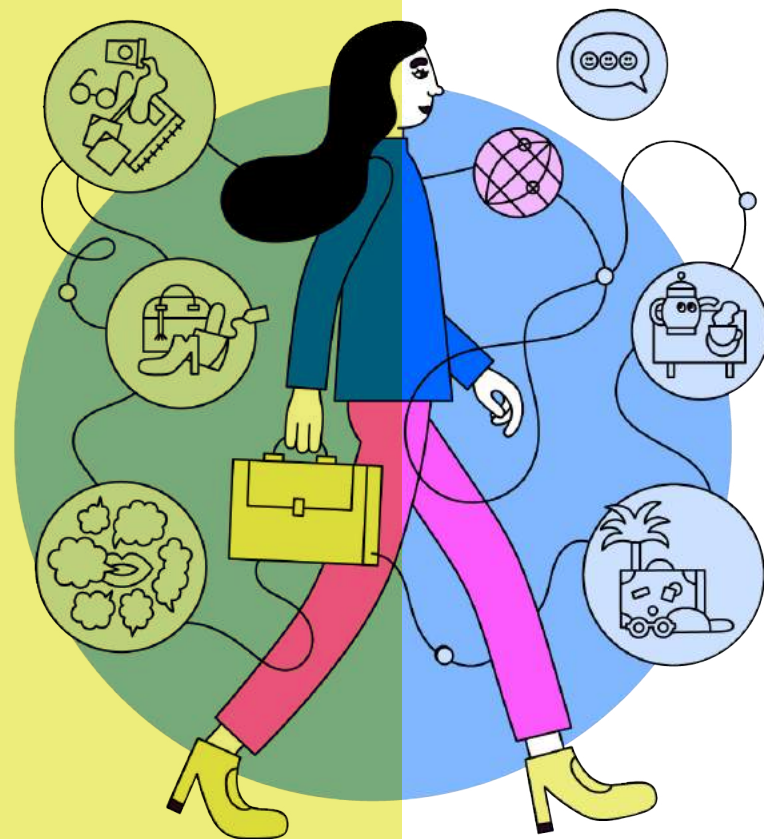
Merge digital and human worlds

Today, we speak of two worlds: digital versus real; but this distinction will disintegrate with the expansion of augmented reality, virtual reality and digital identities. We'll live in immersive environments that drive collaboration, connection and empathy. And our identity will grant us access to new possibilities. As any teenager with a Snapchat Story already knows, we'll carefully craft personal brands as one of our few remaining owned assets.

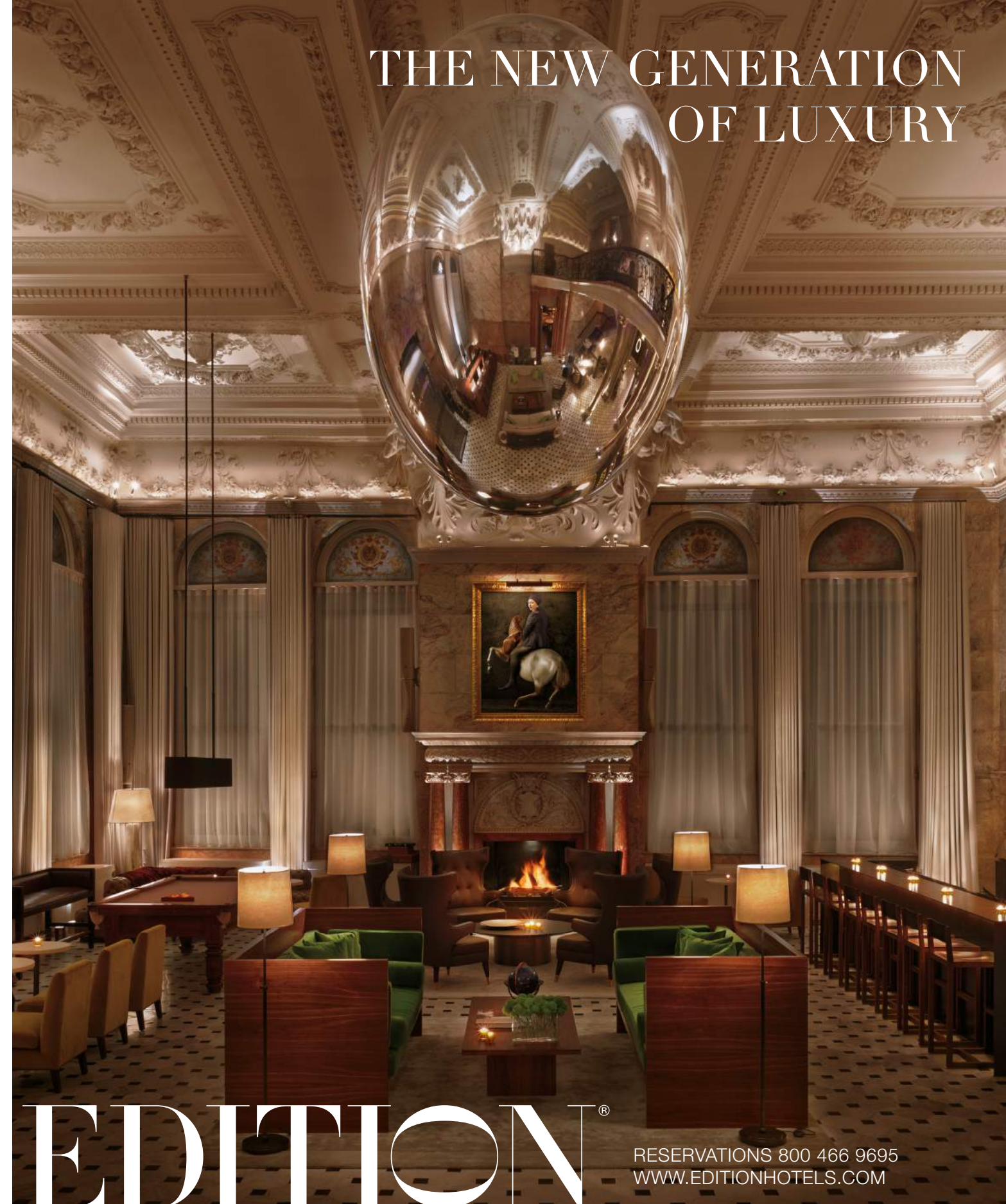
With 80 per cent of the consumers surveyed feeling the need to be constantly connected, brands need to help customers do more and be more by integrating digital and real. Capitalise on all the new possibilities in gamification, beautification, information and communication.

If brands stay ahead of technological trends and remain in touch with human needs, they will know where customers are headed and beat them there. They'll fly through daunting change into a world of unprecedented opportunity.

This article was originally published in Campaign US.



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AI VERSUS



Photo by Franck Veschi

THE HUMAN TOUCH

“While AI can collect data about likes and dislikes, and algorithms can make helpful recommendations based on those data points, travel is still fundamentally about human experience and connection with the world.”

The jury’s out on artificial intelligence, with as many travel brands battling against it as they are incorporating it. Like it or not, AI is reshaping the way we travel – but it doesn’t (and shouldn’t) replace the human touch, writes Jen Murphy.

The travel industry has long relied on human touch, and human interaction has always been at the heart of travel. But as artificial intelligence (AI) infiltrates the travel space, some experts predict that real travel agents, concierges and even bartenders may become obsolete. Nearly 85 per cent of travel and hospitality professionals are using AI within their businesses, according to a recent survey by India-based Tata Consultancy Services. So far, the use is largely limited to their information-technology departments, with 46 per cent of companies saying they use it for functions such as processing bookings and credit-card transactions. But within four years, 60 per cent of companies surveyed said that AI would expand to their marketing efforts – persuading you to book their products.

According to analyst firm Gartner, the use of chatbots – computer programmes designed to emulate human conversation and chat with people online – will triple through 2019 as enterprises seek to increase customer satisfaction and reduce operating costs. Skyscanner uses a bot to help consumers find flights in Facebook Messenger; users can also use it to request travel recommendations and random suggestions. Aeromexico's new AI-based customer-service bot, billed as a "smart brain", launched earlier this year on Facebook and learns as it goes by scanning and analysing previous customer service transcripts. Its developers said Aerobot can answer simple questions, such as "What is your pet fee?" and "I have to change a flight", but is still learning more complicated requests.

Leah Smith, president and CEO of Denver, Colorado-based Tafari Travel believes AI is a threat to the physical act of booking hotels, flights, cars and other travel services. However, she cautions, bookings aren't straightforward in the luxury space. "Typically, agents have numerous requests to fulfil", she says. "The

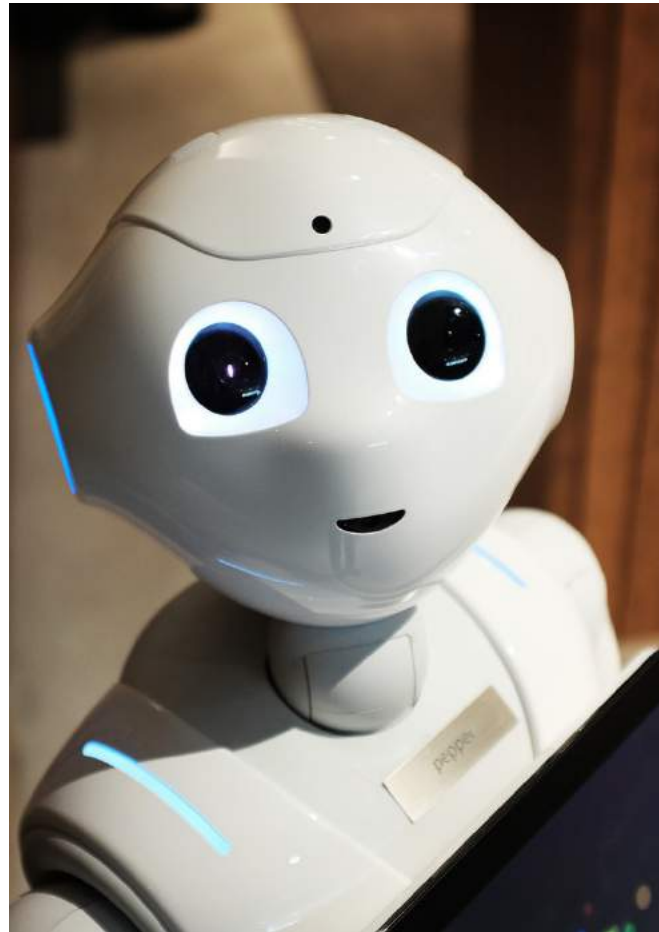


Photo by Alex Knight

client needs a connecting room; a specific dietary requirement; hypoallergenic bedding. While AI technology can likely learn how to fulfil these requests, many times it is up to the advisor to determine the specific requests that the clients often forget or are not even aware of. It takes years of working with individual clients to learn their needs and typically our best clients are not just clients – we know them personally, or at least beyond just a client/advisor working relationship. In every interaction we are picking up on cues as to what this client needs."

Smith also emphasises that it takes a lot of charm and relationship building to obtain VIP perks for clients. "When our favorite clients travel, we always request upgrades or special surprises in the room", she says. "In almost all cases, we are granted these perks entirely due to our relationships with suppliers. I



Photo by Andy Kelly

"Nearly 85 per cent of travel and hospitality professionals are using AI within their businesses."

can't imagine a robot being able to pull that off." Jaclyn India of Sienna Charles is among the country's most elite travel advisors; she says AI just isn't a fit for her clientele. "As travel becomes automated, agents are more important than ever to the luxury market", she says. "My clients are very busy. They don't have time for bots. They want someone they can trust and rely on."

Last year, Hilton teamed up with IBM's Watson to create Connie, a robot that provides help and information to hotel guests during their stay. Smith says the benefit of having an AI concierge is 24/7 availability – "I cannot tell you how many times I have tried to speak to the concierge and they are not available", she says. "They are some of the busiest hotel staff, so they are hard to get a hold of for last minute requests, such as, 'Where should I go to dinner tonight?'" The drawback, Smith cautions, is that



Henn na Hotel Reception, image courtesy of Henn na hotel

the concierge is a frequent touchpoint between hotel staff and guest. “The concierge provides an opportunity to build guest loyalty”, she says. “By implementing AI concierges, hotels are eliminating that human touch that often makes guests feel welcome and keeps them coming back.”

In Japan, where tourist numbers are surging and labour is in short supply, Henn na Hotel is using robots as front-desk staff, porters and cleaners. Guests are greeted in Japanese, Chinese, Korean or English by androids at the front desk, based on their passports, before checking in and being given room key cards at nearby kiosks. Royal Caribbean Cruises has also incorporated chatbots and even has concepts for its Quantum of the Seas ship, including robotic bartenders and virtual balconies.

Robotic bartenders may seem like something out of the Jetsons, but Smith believes there is an audience for this technology. “The queues for

"By implementing AI concierges, hotels are eliminating that human touch that often makes guests feel welcome and keeps them coming back."



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the bar on these larger ships can get quite long; therefore, I think guests will always appreciate ways to speed up this process so they can get back to their vacation", she says. "The luxury cruise lines, however, cater to a much older demographic who probably require the human touch more than any other market; thus, I don't see a market for this on the luxury lines. We have luxury clients who return to specific cruise ships for the sole purpose of catching up with the staff they met on previous cruises; the staff is also a reason guests choose one cruise line over another."

"Travel is about seeking out recommendations from the people who know us best."

Smith worries that as automation replaces human touch in the service sector, great, friendly service will be replaced by quick, efficient, heartless service. "I think life will get depressing if so much of our time is spent having soulless interactions with robots", she says.

While AI can collect data about likes and dislikes, and algorithms can make helpful recommendations based on those data points, travel is still fundamentally about human experience and connection with the world. "Word-of-mouth from someone you trust is still the number one resource people utilise when travel-planning", says Smith.

Marcela Sapone, co-founder and CEO of Hello Alfred, a tech and hospitality platform that combines real people with automation to manage people's homes, agrees. "Travel is about seeking out recommendations from the people who know us best – who know we love to discover amazing, authentic places to eat; or that we can't fully relax without a morning yoga class", she says. "It's that empathy and nuance that you can't build into an algorithm."

Sapone says she has yet to have an AI experience at a hotel or in the booking process that rivaled, if not surpassed, a human experience. That said, she does believe AI can work to make our lives easier. Hello Alfred is currently focused on the home, but Sapone says the platform could translate to a hotel concierge to provide a personalised, "at-home" experience for travellers. "We could make sure the minibar is stocked with snacks for your gluten-free diet, or put your favourite toiletries in the bathroom. We could make sure the bed is made with the same hypoallergenic sheets you use at home, or put an anniversary bottle of Prosecco on ice courtesy of one of our brand partners. Our platform and data could essentially power hotel hospitality the way it does for residential buildings", she says.

AI was never meant to replace the human touch, insists Sapone. "AI should be seen as an enhancement that makes travel more accessible", she says. "I think we conflate high-tech with luxury, but people and empathetic service are the true luxuries."

ARE YOU



Automat (1927), Edward Hopper

LONESOME TONIGHT?

“This is not a case of co-living or co-working as a trend; nor is it an extension of the desire to experience destinations as locals would: this is a case of humanity redressing its disconnect, an important reversal of the decline of genuine sharing in the age of over-sharing.”

In a hyper-connected world where people are reportedly lonelier than ever, Lisa Davidson looks to technology, AI and the rise of the co-living and co-working movements for inspiration on how the travel industry can tap into the basic human need for relationships.

Edward Hopper died 40 years before the iPhone debuted in 2007, yet you sense the American realist would have beautifully captured the paradoxical loneliness of the connected age. Whether it be the lady gazing into her cup of coffee alone in 1927's *Automat*, or the protagonist reading in *Chair Car* (1965), so many of the painter's most famous works would be relatively unchanged by the addition of a smartphone – its haunting glow illuminating the faces of his melancholic subjects.

Hopper captured an America in transition, electricity changing the city environment in a way that can barely be imagined as we await annual updates on the space-age technology at our fingertips. We have instant access to more people than ever before; we can publish our innermost thoughts to thousands instantly; we are the generation of the 'shareconomy'... Yet, as in the artist's most famous work, 1942's *Nighthawks*, we are on the outside looking in through illuminated glass. Like Hopper's diners, who sit in quiet solitude, no amount of online connection can replace human interaction. "Unconsciously", the New York painter once noted (he had long denied an intent to portray human isolation), "probably I was painting the loneliness of a large city." In the 'social age', we are all inhabiting Hopper's city.

Studies show that we are less likely than ever to know the names of our neighbours, to share our journeys into work, even to converse when we get there. In one extensive piece of research undertaken by scholars from the United States' Brigham Young University based on 3.4 million participants, it was shown that social isolation, living alone, and loneliness are linked with a higher risk of early death (around about 30 per cent more likely) – indicating that being lonely can be as dangerous to your health as obesity or smoking.

Conversely, a Harvard study that began tracking the health of 268 Harvard sophomores



Chair Car (1965), Edward Hopper

in 1938 (following the surviving men for almost 80 years) proved the physical and emotional benefits of forging and maintaining real-world relationships. "The surprising finding is that our relationships and how happy we are in our relationships has a powerful influence on our health", admits Robert Waldinger, director of the study. "Taking care of your body is important, but tending to your relationships is a form of self-care, too. That, I think, is the revelation."

But how can we be lonely when hundreds of strangers like your latest selfie? "The number of friends you have is irrelevant", says Dr Roger Patulny, a sociologist who specialises in social connections and emotions. "What matters is the quality rather than the quantity." Loneliness is misunderstood as the reclusive pensioner with no friends or family, but increasingly it could be you: hungry for Instagram appreciation and missing out on the quality relationships



Work Lab image courtesy of WeWork

lauded by Dr Patulny. With US teens reported to be spending upwards of nine hours online every day and youth mental health issues on the rise, it is high time that authentic human connection was prioritised – human caring over digital sharing.

In 2014, Dutch design student Zilla van den Born used Photoshop to create a fake five-week trip to Southeast Asia. Inspired by the age of online over-sharing, van den Born demonstrated the thin veil of reality that can exist on social media. Now ironically showing off her actual travels as a digital nomad, the designer reminds us how the concepts of lifestyle and travel have changed since the advent of the smartphone; whether it's

'bleisure', restless entrepreneurs or co-livers, as we spend more and more of our time in different places, it is vital we remember the importance of quality relationships – especially in a world where many travel brands are actively seeking to limit human interaction.

Since opening in 2015, Japan's infamous 'robot hotel', Henn na Hotel, has been a big hit so much so that its owner has six openings in Tokyo and three in Osaka Prefecture in the pipeline; it has also been mooted that they could open up to 100 hotels around the world. Naturally, there's a novelty factor involved with an animatronic dinosaur serving at the front desk; but much of the technology behind Henn na Hotel – being keyless; using facial

“Taking care of your body is important, but tending to your relationships is a form of self-care too. That, I think, is the revelation.”

- Robert Waldinger



Living Space image courtesy of Zoku



Weihai Lu image courtesy of WeWork



Barcelona Community image courtesy of NORN

"From \$500 per week – footloose freelancers can live and work in inspiring spaces around the world."



Membership image courtesy of Norn

recognition for check-in; robotic porters – is already growing in prevalence the world over. With such advanced technology frequently commonplace, why aren't we using it to improve human interaction rather than strip it away?

Outside of the travel industry, the impact apps such as Tinder and Grindr have made on dating and casual hookups is cascading into culture at large, with a host of kindred applications catering for all from lonely backpackers to party animals. Whilst Backpackr and PartyWith cater to obvious niches, many millennials and Gen Zers are using the premium Tinder Passport feature to make forthcoming travels less lonesome – even if the 'dates' are purely platonic. On that note, apps like Patook, Skout,

and female-only Hey! VINA have been designed as social networks you can take into the real world; with such a clear and present demand for human connection, it's vital that travel brands are aware of, and find ways to integrate with, such platforms.

The startup culture behind apps like these is one of the key instigators in the rise of a new location-independent workforce – one that has already changed our perceptions of business, with co-working spaces now ubiquitous in major cities around the world. It's been said that New York-based WeWork now has a value of some \$20 billion and the likes of Roam have ushered in its logical progression, digital nomads now sharing living quarters as well as hot-desking together. With homes in Bali, Tokyo, London and Miami, Roam's is a similar proposal to NORN, and – from \$500 per week – footloose freelancers can live and work in inspiring spaces around the world. That these propositions exist gives hope for a digital-savvy generation, as the inherent necessity of human togetherness is understood and meaningful relationships are valued.

In a lesson to many hotels, where the bringing together of guests can feel forced at best, WeWork launched their separate-but-related co-living venture in 2016: WeLive currently holds apartment blocks in New York and DC, where studios can start from \$1,500 per month. With the ability to use the concept as a hotel or rent for months at a time, WeLive provides genuine competition to the hotel industry – especially at a time when a restless, location-independent workforce are increasingly wanting to call different cities home for a few months at a time.

Reviews of WeLive New York show that the accommodation that anchors this co-living concept is basic at best, but the emphasis is (naturally) upon communal spaces. With a laundry room that doubles up as a lively games



Living Room image courtesy of Zoku



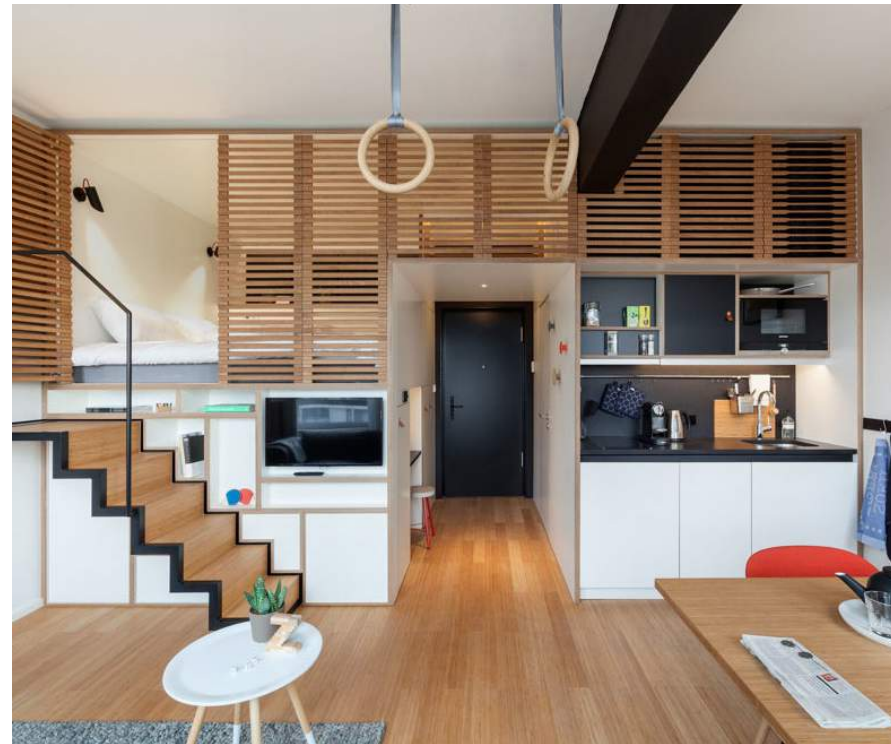
Meeting Spaces image courtesy of Zoku

room (including free vintage arcade games); communal dinner halls; free-flowing artisan coffee; kitchens; music-listening corners; and a roof deck with hot-tub, residents say that they've gained valuable business connections – and, most importantly for our wellbeing, friendships, too. Even boasting a basement lounge that hosts weekly events, its facilities are giving hotels and hip hostels a run for their money. Whatever stamp your business needs to put on it, co-living is a trend that is impossible to ignore.

“Hotels converting to co-living use can become a trend”, says Alvin Leung, a director at the Hong Kong arm of global real estate firm JLL. When co-living spaces can begin from as little as HKD 2,800 per month in a city where rents can range upward of HKD 18,000, it's clear to see why the demand is there. Mojo Nomad Aberdeen Harbour is one such hotel to have gone that way, Ovolo Hotels Group converting it into a co-living concept clearly targeted at culturally aware young professionals. With Hong Kong's housing affordability putting strain on its residents, JLL also see the future of co-living as a solution for housing needs; it's easy to see why hotel developers – often experiencing low occupancy in less popular neighbourhoods – might be attracted to the transition.

The logical step forward is for the co-living phenomenon to coalesce with the traditional hotel experience. After all, the benefit of having creative locals living side-by-side with guests is one of the key reasons why Airbnb has rocketed from a blow-up bed to a \$31 billion company in less than a decade. Hotel brands have spent years trying to create communal experiences, bringing locals into lobbies, and pushing co-working capabilities – to create that community naturally whilst having guaranteed occupancy seems like a no-brainer.

Located at Los Angeles's Columbia Square – the major media village development that has been



Living Space image courtesy of Zoku

"Just as so many workers have experienced the freedom of location-independence, so must the (travel) industry experience the freedom in evolution."



Working Space image courtesy of WeWork

built on the grounds of the old CBS lots – and available for stays of seven days to a year or more, the Hollywood Proper Residences are resplendent in Cali-glamour and offer evidence of locals and travellers living side by side, an unfurnished option a sign that travellers might become long-time residents of the new neighbourhood. With its own rooftop bar and lounge in addition to Columbia Square's fine lifestyle options and the NeueHouse members' only working community on hand, there's a sense this concept is co-living for the discerning digital nomad.

Perhaps bridging the gap between Proper's plush take on combating loneliness and WeLive's student-dorm approach, Amsterdam's Zoku has received much (and deserved) hype for its assault on hotel room conventions; their Zoku Loft is a modular living/working hybrid concept that makes intelligent use of space, offering all the comforts necessary for a stay extending into the months. "Amazing things happen when people come together", the ambitious brand says – their expansive series of communal spaces showing it's a mantra they

fully believe in. Residents (long- and short-term), creative location-independent locals and 'Zoku Sidekicks' come together across working spaces (stocked with everything from a 3D printer to punch bag), bars, a 'living kitchen', green spaces and more.

Launching this spring, NORN is a concept billed as a 'place for artists, entrepreneurs, and curious minds to live': a series of homes located in Berlin, Barcelona, San Francisco, and London (with more planned) that expands on the co-living/co-working concepts of brands like Roam by instigating interaction with creative locals. Creating connections and fostering meaningful, deeper relationships shouldn't be a new concept, but as many travel brands are using technology to strip away human interaction, it's time for the industry to take a pause and look around – travel is an experience to be shared and, as Robert Waldinger emphatically states, "loneliness kills."

When Airbnb ushered in the live-like-a-local generation, it was frequently billed as a death knell for the hotel industry. Yet in going up



Working Space image courtesy of WeWork

against a giant that has transformed the travel industry, it's vital that those within it see this monumental pivot as simply the end of the hotel industry as it once was. Just as so many workers have experienced the freedom of location-independence, so must the industry experience the freedom in evolution. What does a hotel look like in 2020? How could the profusion of social search apps inspired by Tinder be integrated into the guest experience? How could the robotised technologies of Henn na Hotel be used to improve, rather than minimize human connection? Fusing the co-working and co-living revolution with the unifying aspect of a NORN; heightening experience through technology... Only an apathetic reluctance to evolve for the better could prevent the hotel of tomorrow looking very exciting indeed.

As the cultural shift progresses – innovative enterprises like Coworkations (a platform for co-workers to enjoy trips to places like Sierra Leone and Australia) continuing to recognise

our inherent need for togetherness – it's important to remember this is not a case of co-living or co-working as a trend; nor is it an extension of the desire to experience destinations as locals would: this is a case of humanity redressing its disconnect, an important reversal of the decline of genuine sharing in the age of over-sharing. The current epoch has brought with it an unexpected paradox. It is not too late to reverse it.



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BEYOND

“Hotels sell themselves short by not recognising the power they have... But with power comes responsibility, and that should by no means loiter half-heartedly in the lobby.”

Is ‘lobby culture’ being used as a quick win for hoteliers hoping to offer something to (and, more cynically, cash in on) their neighbourhood? **Holly Tuppen** explores how hotels can help their whole business buzz with meaningful, human community connections.

THE LOBBY

Photo by Joe Roberts



The Hoxton London Lobby image courtesy of The Hoxton

The phrase 'lobby culture' has become synonymous with hipster hotels. The premise is simple: why waste a perfectly good communal space when it could be used by locals and guests alike? After all, generating a sense of community and vibrancy is an increasingly important selling point for hotels, especially in the battle against the likes of Airbnb. What used to be at best an inspiring interlude, and at worst an anxious waiting room, a hotel's entrance is now a hive of activity – facilitating collaborations, innovation and creativity.

Sounds too good to be true? There are two problems. The first is that collaborations, innovation and creativity these days tend to involve a row of MacBooks – the attached humans barely visible above their screens,

hunched over the limited supply of power sockets like their life depends on it (myself included). As a hotel guest on holiday, trying to embark on any leisure time in such conditions can be frustrating. The second is that while welcoming the neighbourhood into your lobby is a heart-warming thing, generating a true sense of community requires more. Creating a warm sense of belonging demands integrity; consumers are quick to recognise a shallow fix.

Beyond the lobby, there are plenty of ways a hotel can jump in bed with its neighbours; seeking local suppliers, hosting events, becoming a principal employer, regenerating public areas and improving air quality, to name a few. Ace Hotel kickstarted lobby culture as early as 1999, when the late Alex Calderwood declared that "everyone's welcome", but soon realised it had to take community seriously. When launching in Chicago, Ace donated money from bookings to a cultural arts centre and youth literacy group in the city. Ace Hotel & Swim Club in Palm Springs doesn't only transform 22 tons of food waste into fertiliser each year, but gives it to local farms. Ace have also improved pay and conditions for musicians and have added a voluntary community levy on room rates.

Following closely in Ace's footsteps is the fast-expanding Hoxton group – their 'inspiring cultural discovery in key neighbourhoods' concept growing organically since the opening of The Hoxton Shoreditch in 2012. A 'good and great' of the neighbourhood events programme in London, Amsterdam and Paris give hyper-local talent an audience and a digital platform. Partnership and Insight Director of holding company Ennismore, Jules Pearson, emphasises the importance of this commitment: "we won't ever fly over DJs from South America or jump on the next big bandwagon; this is about local people showcasing local talents, whether it's a

"Ace Hotel & Swim Club in Palm Springs doesn't only transform 22 tons of food waste into fertiliser each year, but gives it to local farms."

90-year-old baker down the road or the area's leading tech entrepreneur".

The best starting point is always talking – what are the local community's needs and how is the hotel best positioned to help? An uplifting example of this is Park Inn by Radisson's Adding Colour to Lives Project, which last year won the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's Innovation Award. The project connected at-risk young people with the street artist Joel Bergner, members of the community and Park Inn employees, who got their overalls on to create bold and beautiful murals in Park Inn destinations across the globe. From Krakow to Johannesburg, by collaborating with on-the-ground charities in each location, the hotels built meaningful relationships and tailored the project to local needs.

Take all this one step further and you've got placemaking: the act of inspiring people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Seen

by agencies like The Communication Group and Future City as a vital part of reimagining destinations, placemaking is a regular component of large-scale redevelopment schemes. Future City uses public art and creative agents to bring destinations to life – they're responsible for the epic 70-metre-long



Photo by Daniel Fazio

Slipstream sculpture at Heathrow Terminal 2. One of their most ambitious projects was "A Showground of Real Living" that invited artists to live in an otherwise run-of-the-mill show home in Cambridgeshire and generate collaborative conversations, events and activities for the community.



Chiltern Firehouse image courtesy of Chiltern Firehouse



A CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET

EXCLUSIVE, HIP, AND BRIMMING WITH SOCIAL CACHET

According to The Communications Group's Placemaking Report, now more than ever destinations need to lure people in with "intangible assets which help to create a unique and memorable experience; a sense of belonging, of being special and a feeling of greater wellbeing." Hotels are perfectly positioned to deliver exactly that – they should play a key role in improving the immediate area for residents, businesses and the environment. This can be as simple as Montreal's Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth setting up a local artisan food market or Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman in the UAE hosting an urban farm in their car park.

Converted historic buildings or new-builds with standout design creds can be reason alone for people to stray into a previously overlooked neighbourhood. In Johannesburg, the Hallmark Hotel has been pivotal to the redevelopment of the Madoneng Precinct. What was once an abandoned area overrun by violent crime is now home to one of the city's hippest hotels,

drawing an international crowd to complement a vibrant creative scene burgeoning out of converted warehouses on Arts on Main. Back in London, Chiltern Firehouse's supremely chic clientele have inspired the owners of the surrounding Portman Estate to be active stewards of the real estate, inviting independent shopkeepers to help create unique streets.

Whether reimagining a brutalist office block, restoring a cultural icon or becoming part of a sprawling redevelopment scheme, hotels sell themselves short by not recognising the power they have – the power to make things better for residents, businesses, employees and guests. But with power comes responsibility, and that should by no means loiter half-heartedly in the lobby.

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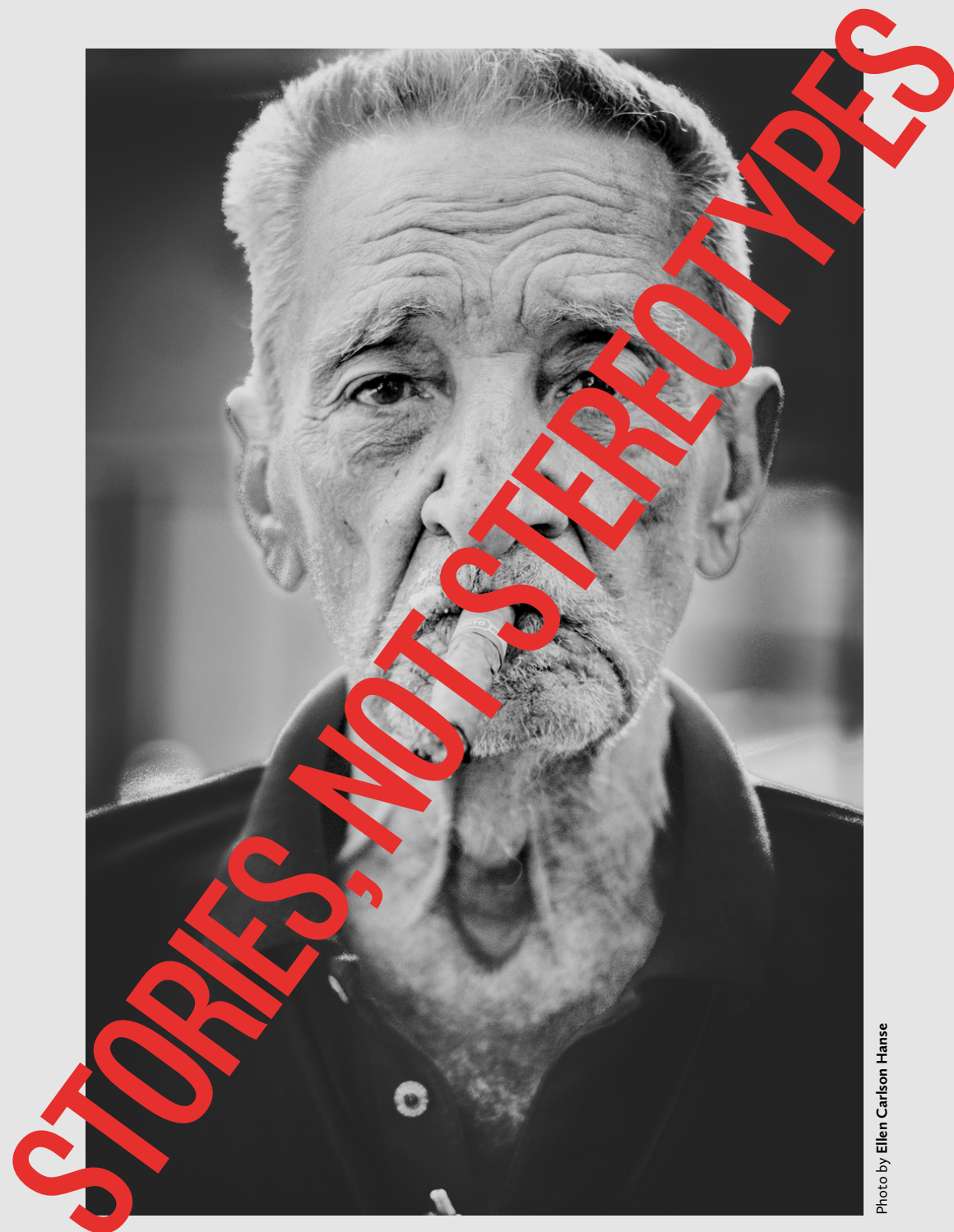


Photo by Ellen Carlson Hanse

"Humankind is made up of individuals with qualities and flaws, and this needs to be better reflected in the way we show, write and talk about communities."

Getting acquainted with locals is making its way up travellers' wishlists; but are their preconceptions, bolstered by overgeneralised marketing, journalism and social media, overriding the individuality of the humans they meet? **Heather Richardson** investigates.

As we say goodbye, my

Sumbanese guide, Jelin, has one request of me: "Please don't write about how nice everyone here is", she says, seriously. "Everyone always writes about how friendly the locals are. Then when tourists meet someone who might not be so nice to them, they get angry."

Sumba is an Indonesian island about an hour's flight from Bali, but with a fraction of the tourists. Recently, it has become more well-known as the location of the much-publicised luxury resort, Nihiwatu. People visit the island for its lack of tourists, beautiful beaches, surf breaks, ancient culture, spear-throwing festivals – and, yes, the smiling locals who appear in most descriptions and photographs of Sumba.

to Sumba in the hopes of finding an untouched paradise full of happy, welcoming people. As a result, she's witnessed their disappointment if, for example, a villager seems sour when they don't buy the offered wooden carvings or ikat textiles.

When we travel somewhere having been promised ever-smiling locals, are we then disproportionately frustrated when this isn't the case? These are unrealistic, romanticised expectations for any place to fulfil. Whilst many cultures around the world might have a natural tendency to warmth and hospitality, the gushing way this is communicated means visitors arrive in a foreign country expecting – perhaps feeling entitled to – a certain type of treatment.

Generalising and pushing stereotypes is a problem in various strands of marketing and travel writing. The answer, I think, is a greater focus on individuals.

"Generalising and pushing stereotypes is a problem in various strands of marketing and travel writing. The answer, I think, is a greater focus on individuals."

Whilst they might be based on some truth, Jelin tells me that the overly positive portrayals of local people can have negative repercussions. As a tourism teacher and guide, she has met many visitors who have come

Telling tales

It's important to distinguish between marketing and journalism, whilst also noting that both professions have a responsibility to portray people in an honest way that won't have a negative backlash in reality. In this sense, there are some things marketers can learn from journalists.

Creating fantasy illusions that speak of local people as though they are a faceless community will never be a problem in genuinely good journalism, says travel journalist Sophy Roberts. "This is the difference between marketing and journalism", she says, conceding that there is an increasingly blurred line between the two. Of how she writes about people and cultures as a reporter, Roberts tells me: "I try to find people with stories that tell a tale far larger than themselves."

The best marketers adopt a similar approach, revealing glimpses of the real lives of people who make up a community. For example, in 2013 Visit Philadelphia ran an Instagram campaign to showcase the city's neighbourhoods. For a few days at a time, they handed their account over to residents, who posted snippets of daily life in their neighbourhood. Followers were able to see these areas through individuals' eyes, rather than from the point of view of the tourism board.

Not "all the same"

Dr Rebecca Ogden, in her paper entitled "Lonely planet: affect and authenticity in guidebooks of Cuba", claims that English-language guidebooks suggest Cubans will always treat guests as friends, glossing over the fact that many people open their homes out of financial necessity.

Publicising Cuba as a welcoming tourist destination is, of course, economically beneficial for Cubans; but Dr Ogden's point is that guidebooks offer "a guarantee of finding an emotionally involving, intimate experience at any Cuban guesthouse". She cites a passage from one major guide that describes casa particulars as being "all the same".

Avoiding overgeneralised descriptions that lump all locals together encourages travellers to explore and get to know communities for themselves. Crucially, in the absence of preconceived notions, they're also likely to be more open-minded about the people they meet.

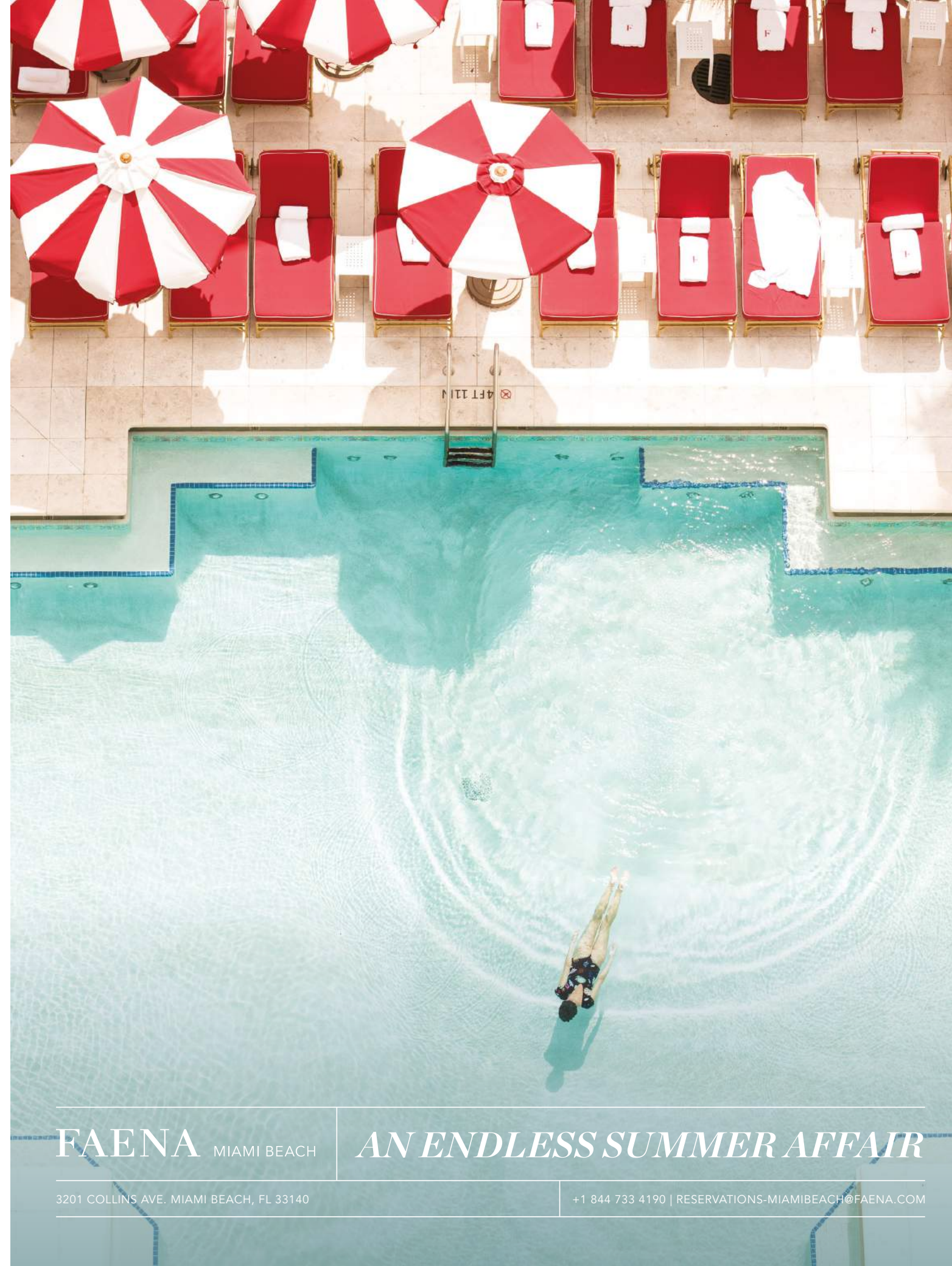
Campaigns about real people

As the success of Humans of New York, a photoblog and book of street portraits and interviews collected on the streets of New York City, has proven, society has a thirst for authentic, personal stories. The Swedish Tourist Association (STA) capitalised on this with their fun, people-focused 2016 campaign, 'Phone a Random Swede', which celebrated the 250-year anniversary of the abolishment of censorship. "Call today and get connected to a random Swede, anywhere in Sweden, and talk about anything you want", said the website. The campaign resulted in 197,678 phone calls lasting an average of two minutes 40 seconds from 190 countries, including the USA, China and Australia – not bad exposure for Sweden as a desirable travel destination.

The Radisson Red hotel brand, which targets millennials, profiles individual artists, DJs and other creatives on its blog, showcasing various niche scenes in the cities where their hotels are based. Generally, though, hotels are not as adept at weaving local characters into their campaigns as tourism boards – a huge oversight, considering that interacting with and understanding local people is, increasingly, a big factor in inspiring people to travel.

Travel marketers who take a sensitive, considered and perhaps more journalistic approach to portraying their local community will stand out of the pack at a time when tourists are increasingly

curious about getting under the skin of a destination. After all, humankind is made up of individuals with qualities and flaws, and this needs to be better reflected in the way we show, write and talk about communities. Honest and authentic communication will, in the end, result in a more agreeable travel experience for everyone involved.



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MAKING PEOPLE



YCI trainees at Soneva Kiri, Thailand by Youth Career Initiative

STICK

“Along with efforts such as implementing ethical supply chains and a zero-waste ethos, socially driven recruitment can be a means to curate the right crowd – attracting more dynamic, socially minded employees and guests alike.”

In an industry where staff shortages are a constant source of concern and a world where economic opportunities for young people are at an all-time low, hotels have a phenomenal opportunity to positively impact the lives of real people who need it most. Holly Tuppen uncovers the recruitment pioneers making hospitality an economic and social force for good.

Standing proud, suited and booted, wearing a Marriott name tag and holding a microphone at the ready, Gregory looks out over hundreds of people at the Global Youth Economic Opportunities Summit, finding it hard to believe how far he has come. Growing up in a slum on the outskirts of San Jose in Costa Rica, Gregory's life has never been carefree – after his abusive father left home, he had to pick up odd jobs to support his mother and three siblings, sometimes sleeping on the streets just so that he could sell newspapers.

“I've experienced some tough situations, like losing friends to gunfights and getting caught

up in drugs... I kept myself busy to stay out of trouble”, Gregory recalls. Then one day he heard about the employability charity, Youth Career Initiative (YCI), and jumped at the opportunity – “I needed some training to make real money for my family.”

“For several weeks, I was rotating through different departments at the Marriott Costa Rica San Jose. It's a free training course, so I didn't get paid. My family turned their backs on me and asked me to leave to get a serious job. At the bottom of my heart I felt I was doing the right thing, so I ignored them – although I must admit that several times I wanted to quit.”

After battling through the six-week YCI placement, Gregory was offered a permanent job in the hotel spa. He hasn't looked back once. “It was the best news I've ever received... YCI gave me the opportunity to meet good people, with good hearts and education – something I had never seen before. I strive to be better every day and learn from people. I know Marriott will give me a career and I have no words to describe what this means to me.”

This year YCI, which helps disadvantaged young people receive training in hotels all over the world, will celebrate the graduation of 5,000 students from its programme. Of these 18-to-25-year-olds, 75 per cent have secured employment in hospitality and 10 per cent have gone on to complete further education. Considering the ripple effect of one family member securing long-term income (which tends to have a direct impact on five other people), this means that the lives of 37,500 people have been improved.

Employability schemes like YCI aren't just about doing the right thing: they make good business sense, too. Having been given the opportunity of a lifetime and trained in a real working environment, employees like Gregory tend to be more loyal. Mariana Aldrigui, who was a judge



GHAntigua mama classes image courtesy of Good Hotel



YCI trainees at The W, Punta Mira by Youth Career Initiative

“I've experienced some tough situations, like losing friends to gunfights and getting caught up in drugs... I kept myself busy to stay out of trouble”

- Gregory

on the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards when YCI won in 2015, has shadowed YCI students throughout Brazil. What struck her most was that “there is this emotional attachment to the brand, the project and the team that I can't say that I have seen with my university students.”

Hoteliers all over the world should take note and find solutions that work for them. One hotel that's embarking on this journey

is Bankside Hotel in London. Opening in October 2018, Bankside's Director of People and Resources, Ashwini Lakshman, is actively seeking innovative recruitment opportunities to not only attract great employees, but guests too.

“Our aim at Bankside is for the hotel to be a genuine reflection of the local area and to do that we need to support the local community by providing opportunities... I also think we need to move beyond 'hiring for experience' to 'hiring for the right attitude' – after all, millennials want to work for employers committed to socially driven ethics and values.”

It helps that Bankside Hotel, slap-bang in the middle of London's ever-evolving South Bank, is surrounded by social enterprises looking for ways to get disadvantaged people into work. One of these organisations is The Clink, which trains ex-prisoners (over 300 in 2017) in catering to work at The Clink's Brixton restaurant or elsewhere – including some top London hotels (who prefer not to be named). Another is homelessness charity Providence Row: by building skills and confidence, as well as providing vital services such as food, healthcare and mentoring, in 2017 Providence Row helped 1,400 homeless or substance-misuse victims



GHAntigua kids images courtesy of Good Hotel

Meet the recruitment pioneers...

1. UGA ESCAPES, Sri Lanka

Jungle Beach by Uga Escapes on the east coast of Sri Lanka is committed to passing on the economic stability of tourism to a population still feeling the economic and social detriment of civil war. They run the East Coast Women's Empowerment project, which trains local war widows to manage and operate the laundry room.

2. BÜRGENSTOCK HOTEL, Switzerland

This highly anticipated new spa resort hovering over Lake Lausanne is working hard to be as holistic in its operations as it is in its wellbeing ethos. By working with local authorities, Bürgenstock provides employment opportunities to refugees, and tailoring training to their needs has led to a 75 per cent retention rate.

3. GOOD HOTEL, Antigua and London

Half of the employees working at this ethically driven hotel in Guatemala have been lifted out of long-term unemployment. The hotel works closely with the not-for-profit Niño's de Guatemala to recruit parents in desperate need of sustainable employment – most of these people have had no previous access to education or training. Good Hotel in London, a floating platform in Royal Victoria Docks, offers unemployed residents a new lease of life through the Good Training programme.

4. SAIRA HOSPITALITY

Founded by Harsha Chanrai on a quest to make hotels embrace the idea that it's 'cool' to be humanitarian, Saira Hospitality creates pop-up and permanent hospitality schools for less privileged locals. Bunkhouse Hotels were the first group to fund a nine-week school in Todos Santos, Mexico, benefitting from a 100 per cent ROI when all 25 students were hired.

5. SALT SCHOOL

What started as a means to recruit top-of-the-crop residents for the new The Ashbury Hotel in 2016, the 10-week hospitality training course run by David Bowd, the hotelier behind Salt Hotels, now precedes each of the group's hotel openings. The premise is simple: provide accessible and dedicated training to enthusiastic young things and you've got the best workforce out there.

to turn their lives around. Between a soup kitchen, social-enterprise bakery and catering apprenticeships in five-star hotels, food is a vital link.

Catering is a good starting point when helping individuals to break the cycle of homelessness – simple tasks, instant results and teamwork offer motivation to people with extremely low confidence. Pret A Manger's Rising Stars Programme is exemplary, offering three-month work placements to over 50 homeless people or ex-offenders in London every year. Since its launch in 2008, more than 400 Rising Stars have been given full-time positions at Pret A Manger, adding to the 'family spirit' the company works hard to generate among employees.

"You're constantly thinking about your next hour, where you're going to go to get warm and what you're going to eat", remembers Mark – once homeless, but now an employee of Pret A Manger and living in a shared house. "I thought about committing suicide, but seeing that happen around me made me determined to get out of the trap." Jay, a Rising Star who went on to work at Pret A Manger for six years before becoming a chef at The Landmark, also recalls the sense of relief: "When you've had a bad past a lot of people don't want to know... I was fortunate enough that someone popped a little ladder in the hole so I could climb out of it."

For people like Gregory, Mark and Jay, opportunities like this can be a matter of life and death. For the hotel managers and team leaders who get the chance to work with them and instil a sense of hope, it's reason alone to stick around.

As heart-warming as it sounds, implementing a socially-driven recruitment policy isn't plain sailing. Beyond the challenges of individuals falling victim to negative external influences or being unable to keep up, some hotels worry about brand reputation, fearful that their



GHAN Room Patio Desk image courtesy of Good Hotel

five-star clientele will be put off by talk of ex-convicts or homelessness. While some of the more traditional hotel chains prefer to take a behind-the-scenes approach to activism, hushing up their humanitarian commitment, nimbler brands see it as an asset worth shouting about. Along with efforts such as implementing ethical supply chains and a zero-waste ethos, socially driven recruitment can be a means to curate the right crowd – attracting more dynamic, socially minded employees and guests alike.

DESIGN THINKING

“Putting human needs and behaviours first in defining business strategy is a powerful change of perspective. It reminds us that behind every business need there is a human need.”

Using design as a problem-solving tool might sound obvious, but all too often it's overlooked. **Ana Andjelic** outlines how this human-centred methodology applies to business – and what the hospitality industry can learn.

IN HOSPITALITY

Photo by Marten Bjork

Hospitality businesses often fail because they

try to solve the wrong problem. According to the American Hotel and Lodging Association, the use of interactive in-room hotel guides is at a flimsy 19 per cent – most guests decided they're not useful, especially when armed with their own laptops and smartphones. Smartphone docking stations proved to be similarly unexciting. Arguably, these costly ventures fall flat because they do not identify the essential challenge customers are grappling with.

Design thinking can help. The idea of design as a methodology, adopting a problem-solving approach, emerged back in the 1950s, but more recently Stanford University's School of Design and design firm IDEO started using design thinking for business purposes. Tim Brown, IDEO's CEO, characterises design thinking as "a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success."

Putting human needs and behaviours first in defining business strategy and making decisions about investments in technology is a powerful change of perspective – it reminds us that behind every business need there is a human need. A prime example is Marriott's investment in PlacePass, an online activity search and comparison platform that collates options from over 180 countries, which evolved this hotel chain's business from selling accommodation to selling life-enriching experiences.

The beauty of design thinking is that you don't have to be a designer to use it. Today, design thinking's tools – such as empathy; rapid prototyping; focus on customer experience design; iterations; and agile strategy – are widely (and successfully) applied in a range of industries. They negate the somewhat unreliable methods of guessing or relying on

"The question zero of a successful hospitality service is to ask what the problem is, why it is a problem, and how we can use resources at hand to solve it."

historical data when deciding what customers really want and instead focus on ethnography, behavioural economics and observing customer behaviour in real-life contexts.

Above all, design thinking is about asking questions differently.

The essence of any given problem, according to Harvard Business School professor Herman Leonard, can be reached through 'question zero'. As practised by IDEO, question zero is a sequence of 'whys' used to prompt designers through a chain of answers until they reach the actual challenge they need to address.

Applied to hospitality, question zero can clarify the exact thing we are trying to accomplish and help us to create smarter, more desirable services; it allows us to address bigger and more important issues than we originally set our sights on. The question zero of a successful hospitality service is to ask what the problem is, why it is a problem, and how we can use resources at hand to solve it. There are five ways to go about answering it:



Humanise It



Zoom out, find your narrative



Think about time



Think about your team



Improve as you go



Set your expectations right

1. Humanise It

At the crux of most problems is a human truth. If we do a better job of understanding that, we can do a better job of satisfying our guests' needs. Our task is to observe how our guests are currently solving their problems and build a better product or service offering based on this observation. A glance at our immediate environment offers proof that we are surrounded by solutions constructed around machine needs, rather than human needs – for example, think of your hotel's vending machines: users must bend down to retrieve their snacks, because it's easier for a machine to use gravity to drop a pack of snacks into a bin at our feet than to deliver it at waist-height into our hands.

"Storyboards helped Airbnb to humanise its user journey and develop empathy for the people they were designing the experience for."

2. Zoom Out, Find Your Narrative

Looking at the big picture leads us to a new way of seeing a problem. When a problem is very specific, a holistic approach usually proves best. One way to implement a holistic approach is to tell a story around the intended use of a product or service – a simple narrative helps us understand how an innovative product or

service is going to be used and how it's going to fit into the wider context of consumers' existing behaviour. For example, modern hospitality companies like Urban Cowboy B&B, Parlour or Nomad hotel aim to make their customers feel at home wherever they are – this experience of community and belonging, rather than the actual rooms and amenities on offer, is their key product; by adopting a bigger-picture, emotional approach they construct a powerful narrative around solving a real human need and create opportunities for organic growth by adding offerings that answer this need.

3. Think About Time

Contemplate how a solution is going to unfold with the progression of time. A few years back, Airbnb's founder, Brian Chesky, read a Walt Disney biography; he was inspired by the famous auteur making the entire Snow White animated movie in storyboards. Chesky and his experience designers applied the same method of telling a story through sequential, discrete scenes in order to imagine the optimal experience for both Airbnb guests and hosts. Storyboards helped Airbnb to humanise its user journey and develop empathy for the people they were designing the experience for. Their careful choreography of Airbnb users' online and offline activities helped them to identify the key 'wow' moments of any trip and create the seamless, end-to-end experience Airbnb is now known for. Time-stamping the experience in this way also helps Chesky's team to continuously improve each stage of their users' experience (and Airbnb's business performance) by asking what kind of value they can add, where the revenue opportunities are, and how to organise their company's process throughout each stage of the experience in order to better serve their users.

4. Think About Your Team

Ask who you need on your team in order to solve the problem at hand. Once you know



Photo by Søren Astrup Jørgensen

what kind of experience you want to create and have a hypothesis on how customers are going to move through it, it's time to think who do you need to join forces with in order to make that experience a success. Think about whether you need to bring in an ethnographer; a behavioural economist; an anthropologist; an analyst; an experience designer; a journalist; or a business consultant – or all of them.

5. Improve As You Go

There's no way to know if your solution is the right solution until you see it out in the world. Treat your creative or service brief as a straw man: use it as a perpetual draft – these briefs don't need to be perfect, but they do have to be useful. Move faster: concept something quickly and immediately put it in front of your customers to see what they say and how they behave.

6. Set Your Expectations Right

There's a great story about how a British cycling team recently won the Tour de France three times in a row after a multi-decade drought dating back to 1966. Their secret weapon was Sir David Brailsford and his one-per-cent rule: he and his team broke down every single thing

that goes into the process and experience of riding a bike, then they improved each thing by one per cent. The nutrition of riders; their weekly training programme; the ergonomics of a bike seat; the weight of the tyres; the pillows that the cyclists slept on; the gel they used for their massages: they improved it all, just by a tiny bit. By putting all those one per cent margins together, or by "aggregating marginal gains", Brailsford witnessed a significant increase in his team's performance. Improving by just one per cent isn't notable (or oftentimes even noticeable), but it is meaningful – especially in the long run.

Good service – in hospitality or otherwise – is a matter of solving customer problems. Stop worrying about making your communication more creative and start thinking about what problem you have, why it's a problem, and how you can use resources you have to solve it.

REAL



Image courtesy of Lucy McRae

MAGIC

“The goal, I think, is to make people feel those risks, yet feel looked after at the same time. Because it’s also true that, as a participant, giving over control is a massive risk – and also something that we crave, as an audience.”

What can the travel industry learn from a theatre director and a sci-fi artist? As consumer demand for experiences continues to grow, **Annie Saunders** talks to **Lucy McRae** about their secrets for crafting immersive, human ‘performances’ with that all-important touch of magic.



Image courtesy of Lucy McRae

"If you're taking a risk, that's when there's real magic, because you go beyond yourself."

Annie Saunders is a director and live artist specialising in immersive performance-making, while Lucy McRae is a sci-fi artist, film director and body architect whose work explores the impact technology has on the human body – granted, two occupations you might not immediately associate with high-end travel. But as research reveals that luxury consumers are prioritising experiences over material goods, travel brands are looking for new ways to surprise and delight guests – and where better to seek inspiration than in the world of theatre and the arts?

In this enlightening conversation between friends, they talk human connection, vacuum-pack cuddles and the importance of taking risks in creating truly immersive experiences. Travel industry, take note.

What does it mean to be human, in the context of your work? To what extent do you think human connection is fundamental to your work?

Annie: I'm always thinking about myself as an audience member as I make the work – and I think this really relates to making travel experiences. It's simple, but profound: rather than thinking, 'How do we do something shocking, or super original?', it's just about considering, 'What would I want to happen to me? What would be the most beautiful gift?'

Lucy: For me, when I start out making something I don't have an idea of what the result will be; I tend to just start with a question and move from there. There's this consciousness of curiosity, which leads to the next level of the work – usually experimenting or sketching – and the result is prototypes that can be tested on audiences. Then you discover something and develop that further.

A: Yes, it's about feeling how it lands with the audience without necessarily actively getting their feedback. You can feel whether there's chemistry in what you try. That's a massive way that human connection is fundamental to the work: the people are required to feel how the work is working, so to speak. So there's an important element of interactivity, which also relates to travel – a feeling of being engaged in a living, active process.

L: If you're taking a risk, that's when there's real magic, because you go beyond yourself. You're going to create something better than if you're formulaic about it.

A: To make a meaningful experience, I think you have to take a real risk and care about the audience – you have to care about them a lot. This applies to travel too, of course: there are so many moving parts and unknown variables, so the possibility of taking real risks and leaps into the unknown is really present.



Image courtesy of Lucy McRae

The goal, I think, is to make people feel those risks, yet feel looked after at the same time. Because it's also true that, as a participant, giving over control is a massive risk – and also something that we crave, as an audience. It's scary, but we want it.

L: Yes! And I don't think a lot of people are willing to do that – because what if it goes wrong? But that's how the magic happens.

A: I think that's the thing with live experiences: you show something knowing that it will change. But this is true of any art – you're giving a huge amount of control over to your audience.



Image courtesy of Lucy McRae

How do your own travel experiences inform your work and practice?

L: Travel is about the people that you meet – they're essential to the memories of any experience. My career is very much influenced by fringes of culture, so it depends on where I'm travelling to, and the people I meet at those fringes.

A: The spirit houses in Thailand have really stayed with me. The belief surrounding them is that there are house spirits that will haunt your house, but if you make them their own little house they'll be happy and leave you alone! Or the Russian custom of sitting down for a minute before you leave the house to go on a trip...

Anything that has to do with people being in space; how they use space and buildings; and the rituals of spaces. I attach to that type of thing massively when I travel and it always informs my work. I think the energy of a space – what it offers energetically and what it evokes – are crucial in creating experiences of any kind.

L: It's almost like every trip is a piece of research and development. I think if we continue to do things that are familiar, the magic gets diluted. So the more we do things we haven't experienced before, the more we extend our senses and imagination.

A: Yes! The unexpected extends the imagination. That's brilliant.



Image courtesy of Lucy McRae

L: I also think it's about serendipity and the unexpected. We're moving towards a world where algorithms and tracking and planning make everything quantifiable, so spontaneity in life is becoming more important.

A: I think people want that so much. For example, there's a one-on-one piece of performance that we do in *The Day Shall Declare It* where an actor writes a personal note to an audience member with their name on it and, despite the fact that if they thought about it at all they would understand how we know their name, they're always so touched because it's personal.

It's like magicians say: 'It's not enough to fool them, you have to make them like it at the same time' – it's not just about tricking, it's also about delight. The reality underneath can be (and almost always is) very simple. So, a question in creating experiences could be: 'What would be the most delightful thing that could happen? The most tender thing? The most tension-producing, or exciting, or anticipatory thing?' Then you weave them all together.



Image courtesy of Annie Saunders

How can the travel industry learn from the work you do about how to create experiences that appeal on a human level?

L: Harvard Business Review researched what consumers want from an experience and found that people's number-one desire is to self-transcend – they want to go beyond their own expectation of themselves. That's partly what my work aims to do: to give the audience an opportunity to take an exquisite risk, and maybe – just maybe – shift their behaviour with one encounter. Plus, you have no idea how that will play out for the rest of their lives. That's an exciting thing to try to achieve.



Image courtesy of Annie Saunders

A: I definitely come across people in my work who say, 'I usually hate this kind of stuff' – those are my favourite audience members: people who are surprised by their own reaction in the moment and their own delight.

L: It comes back to magic and timing. It's about creating interruptions that are so longed for, yet so unexpected – and once you've had that it stays with you forever.

To give you an example: at the *Future Day Spa* – an immersive installation that gives you a 360-degree cuddle – I created for a technology conference in London and LA, one client lay down under the pressurised blanket (where we essentially vacuum-pack the entire body) and said it felt like an embrace; he asked if he could buy one to take home, so we gave him an extra-long treatment. When he got up he told us he suffered from haphophobia, a fear of touch; yet after nine minutes under the sheet he reached out and hugged me.

That nine-minute encounter at the *Future Day Spa* has impacted him in ways we can't fathom, potentially forever changing his interactions with people in the world. If we are able to do that with our art, or with travel, it has such power – especially in a touch-averse future world.



Image courtesy of Annie Saunders

As we move toward an increasingly digitally mediated future, how do we make experiences more human?

A: I suppose the answer is to put people in them, but use technology as a bridge. If, for example, you had just offered the guy a hug, he probably would have run a mile; but the technology was used as a ritual, a portal. Objects – technology or otherwise – can be imbued with such magic and significance through ritual; they can take someone to a place they couldn't get to without a theatrical element.

I ran into a critic from NPR in LA at the opening night of *The Encounter*, who reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out this tiny toy horse, which was given to him by an actor in *The Day Shall Declare It* during a one-on-one. He said, 'I wear this jacket to opening nights and I carry this horse in the pocket to remind me of the magic of theatre.'

It's about how that personal moment unfolds – the object becomes a door to an unforgettable place and experience. The horse is a low-tech example and the blanket is a high-tech one, but the important thing is how the object makes an indelible personal memory. So I guess the way we take them out of themselves is actually to take them into themselves, or beyond themselves.

L: Yes! That's exactly where they want to go.



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CATCHING



ZZS

Photo by Daniel O'dowd

“The right kind of sleep enables us, as humans, to explore our potential via boosting creativity, emotional wellbeing, memory and the like, increasing our ability to absorb the material world”

Sleep is big business; but are hotels offering real solutions to maximise our human potential, or are they cashing in on a trend? Chloe Sachdev calls on the experts to find out.

Sleep is big business. Hotels all over the world are catering to the new age of 'restfulness', working closely with scientists, researchers and doctors to offer sleep therapies and sleep packages that range from light therapy, aromatherapy and sound therapy to nutritional supplements.

"Properly appraised, our sleeping time is as valuable a commodity as the time we are awake", writes Arianna Huffington, co-founder and CEO of The Huffington Post, in her book, *The Sleep Revolution*. Since publishing it in 2016 (as a result of a collapse due to exhaustion), Huffington has been leading the sleep-evolution, collaborating with leading scientists about the benefits of sleep as a "time of intense neurological activity – a rich time of renewal, memory consolidation, brain and neurochemical cleansing, and cognitive maintenance."

According to research, the right kind of sleep enables us, as humans, to explore our potential via boosting creativity, emotional wellbeing, memory and the like, increasing our ability to absorb the material world – to interpret it, discern order from it, derive meaning and act decisively upon it. In other words, to connect with the world and ourselves in a meaningful way, essentially maximising our human potential.

Manipulating or controlling the *type* of sleep to maximise the guest experience is a growing trend in the travel industry, according to the Small Luxury Hotels' 2018 Trend Report: "with buzzers and beepers and constant distractions, luxury travellers are increasingly concerned with the quality of their sleep... Luxury travel brands are now providing rejuvenating, memorable experiences and solutions for every hour of the evening, from guests' first dip into sleep to the moment they wake up".

Take 137 Pillars House in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which has Sleep by Design therapy – administered by a specialised 'Sleep Butler' and 'Sleep Curator' – that includes pressure point

massages, relaxing audio-guides, reiki and even the application of 'relaxing' throat spray, all to aid a proper night's sleep.

Or Etihad Airways, which – after two years of research with the American Centre for Psychiatry and Neurology in Abu Dhabi – introduced a sleep programme across all cabins that focuses on the five senses of touch, sight, sound, aroma and taste and includes all-natural mattresses (in first and business class); mood lighting; noise-cancelling headphones; pillow mist; and relaxing pulse-point oil. In short, sleep – a naturally recurring human state – is now being treated as a luxury service.

But what exactly is the 'right' kind of sleep?

Speaking to Professor Michael Banissy, director of Research in the Department of Psychology at Goldsmiths (University of London), he explains that there are two main stages of sleep: non-REM (rapid eye movement) and REM sleep. During the first part of sleep, when you are in non-REM, your brain is filtering out key information and rejecting stuff that doesn't really matter – sorting the important from the non-important. During REM sleep, your brain is using information to consolidate and

"The right kind of sleep enables us, as humans, to explore our potential via boosting creativity, emotional wellbeing, memory (...) essentially maximising our human potential."

replay – so, for instance, it might replay certain memories that allow you to learn, consolidate and aid communication between brain regions.

It's REM sleep that aids wellbeing, innovation, creative processing and creative thinking skills. Furthermore, he explains, there is growing research suggesting that you can promote and aid REM sleep – for example, by reducing blue light (the light emitted from LED-style screens on devices like mobile phones and tablets); exercising; reducing caffeine intake; reducing or cutting out nicotine and alcohol; controlling your core body temperature; or paying attention to nutrition (including eating melatonin-rich food).

Of course, offering a good night's sleep has always been the mission statement for luxury hotels – cue blackout curtains, high-thread-count sheets and pillow menus. According

to Russell A. Sanna, the Executive Director of Harvard Medical School's division of sleep medicine, hotels offering sleep amenities is a step in the right direction; but he wants to take things one step further: rather than treating sleep as a commodity, he believes we (and that means hotels, too) should consider it a third pillar of health, alongside diet and exercise.

Indeed, agrees Banissy, "sleep is one of the most important things people do. It affects your health; your wellbeing; pretty much any cognitive or psychological function, be it creativity or memory; how good you are at regulating your emotions; how good you are at perceiving other people's emotions. It's incredibly important, so taking it seriously and thinking of ways to maximise the potential of it is only a good thing."

So can sleep packages, night spas, sleep retreats and the like really help maximise guests' human potential? He remains sceptical about any hotel – or company – being able to tailor something as personal as sleep to an individual without significant data. Yes, controlling factors that that we know affect everybody – such as light, temperature and noise – can enhance sleep quality; but, like anything else, he says, "it's all about the delivery."

A question to sleep on, then.

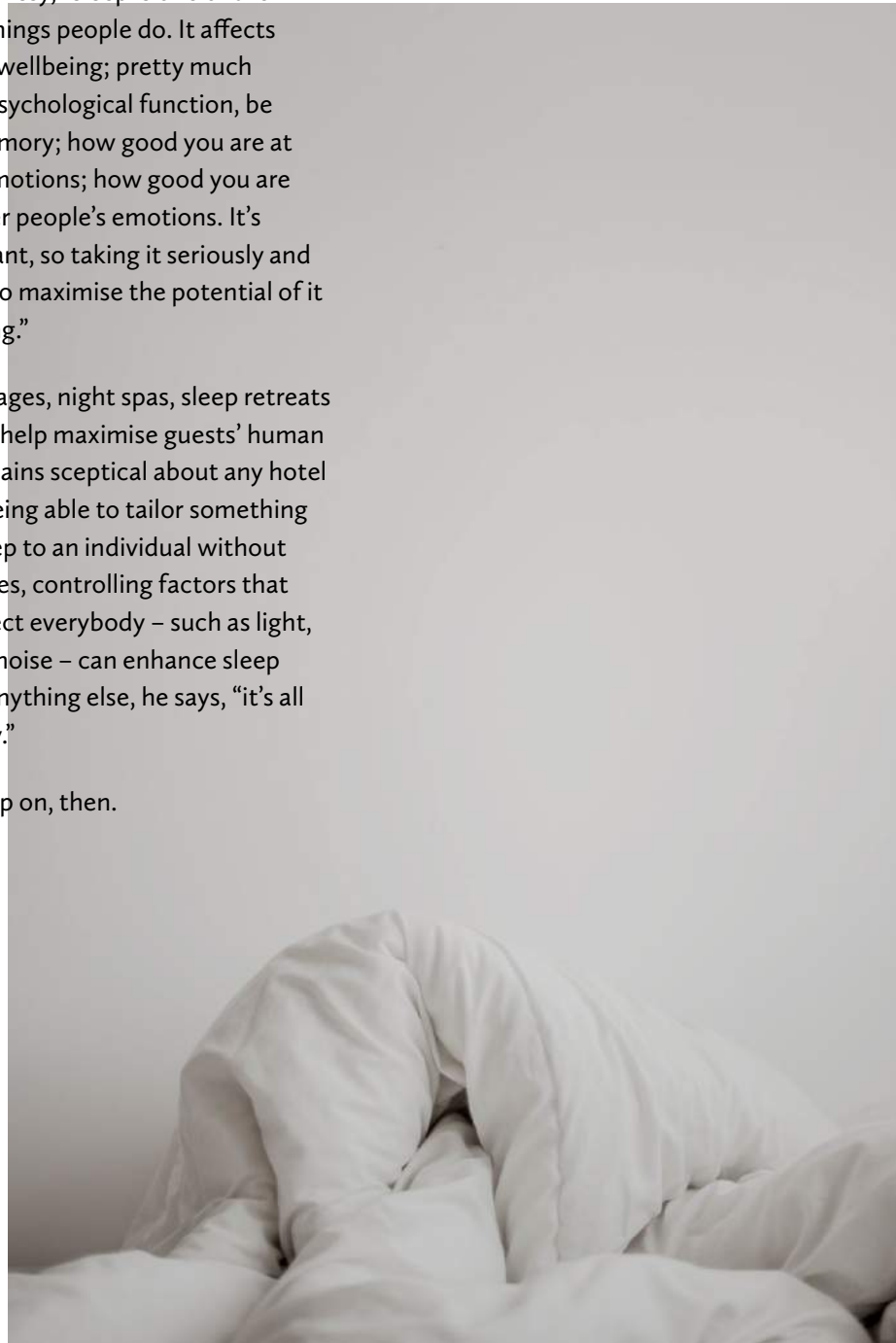


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A person in a wetsuit is sitting on a surfboard in the ocean. The background is a soft, warm sunset or sunrise over the water. The person is looking down, and the surfboard is partially submerged. The overall mood is serene and adventurous.

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