

Trends and Topics for the Year Ahead (2019)

By Muriel Muirden, Executive Vice President & Managing Director, Strategy – Nov 2018



THE ROAD MORE TRAVELLED

In the 1950s a meagre 25 million tourists were exploring the globe, fast forward to 2017 when 1.3 billion tourists were traversing the world. By 2030 a mind boggling 1.8 billion tourists will be on their road to discovery. The impact on heritage icons, must-see cities and outstanding natural environments is already being felt. A key topic for the year ahead will be how to maximise economic benefits while managing environmental and social downsides everywhere from the Isle of Skye to Venice; from Maya Bay in Thailand to the Everglades National Park in Florida; this is a global dilemma. Dispersing travellers to new icons and managing flows within both an urban and natural environment context will require new investment in infrastructure, tourism and hospitality assets and innovative marketing. Indonesia's proclamation that they will create another 10 Bali's may echo across Asia. Hoteliers need to join forces with national and regional governments and have a strong voice in developing solutions and innovative strategies.

IDENTITY CRISIS

As brand proliferation continues unabated and mushiness between brands old and new perplexes the consumer, we are likely to see hotel marketers' wrestling with how to stand out from the crowd. We anticipate a movement away from hotel companies focusing on brand resonance as a marketing tool towards promoting the 'experiences' that lie in the environs of the individual properties. In short, localisation will be the primary marketing tool for properties to attract disciples.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In unsettled times, nostalgia comes back into vogue. At the peak of the 2008 financial crisis, we saw a surge back to the swinging sixties in terms of media advertising, fashion and interiors. Bright, zany colours reminded us of a time of glamour and hope. In this uncertain and somewhat crazy world, we believe it is back to the future once more with strong growth in slow travel for 2019 – river cruises, railway journeys and heritage hotels are all hot topics. Even in the much-stereotyped China market, we are seeing shiny modern hotels losing out to heritage hotels, reflecting a desire to understand and embrace history in a rapidly changing built

environment. Capella's Jian Ye Li is typical of the trend. Developers will become increasingly creative in repurposing buildings of character as history, heritage and nostalgia drive tourist aspirations.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

Hyper personalisation and the discovery of unique and bespoke experiences is a key trend for 2019. Travel curators will be working overtime to present to a highly discerning market rare encounters with wildlife, unique lodging concepts, meal experiences, exposure to local people and quirky events. Craving the unconventional and the dazzling Instagram moment will be rocket fuelled in 2019. From private dinners with influential local figures to obscure local festivals and events in breath-taking locations, creation of the 'one-of-a-kind' will have strong resonance in the year ahead. From igloos north of the Arctic Circle to abandoned aircraft in the jungles of Costa Rica, novelty lodging will become bolder and more experiential. Celebration travel will grow at a rapid pace and become stronger and more innovative in content.



GIRL POWER

Forget best friend shopping and spa breaks, women are heading out of their comfort zone and seeking new high-octane adventures. Girl Power is a trend for 2019. Women-only journeys that allow them to empower themselves and develop new skills and passions are a key trend for the year ahead. We also see growth in women-only voluntourism where this group support local woman in remote and undeveloped communities around the world. A 2018 survey of US women identified that 73% of women feel that travel makes them stronger. Now, 75% of cultural, adventure and nature travellers are female. We predict this will be one of the fastest growing sectors of the travel business in 2019.



COLOUR ME CALM

Hotel and resort landscape remains one of the most dynamic areas in the hospitality design. In 2017 we talked about the evolution of the edible resort. The next generation of landscape experiences is firmly embedded in wellness. Resort landscape designers are focussing on multi-sensory experiences where tactility, colour, scent, tastes and sounds are curated to create a high impact holistic experience. Colour therapy gardens will form a big part of resort new build and refurbishment strategies in 2019. From immersive pods to pop up healing cafes to seasonal flower and foliage transformations deliberately designed to influence mind and body will be very much in vogue.

REFURBISH, REPURPOSE, RECYCLE

An eye-wear firm in Australia, Dresden, is producing affordable, locally made spectacle frames from recycled plastic strewn across Aussie beaches and consumers love it. As the sharing and resale economy grows apace and we increasingly reject the built-in obsolescence of so much of what we buy, product designers are reassessing product lifespans. So, what are the implications for the hospitality sector? Could 2019 see the first refurbishment strategy where 100 percent of the redesign is built upon repurposed, recycled furniture and fittings? We know of more pipeline brands in concept evolution that will connect with the market through their eco-values. Exciting times ahead.

FOOD FANATICISM

Food remains a key trend in 2019 and one of the primary motivants in consumers' destination choice-making. Travellers want to uncover unique venues, localised specialities and will increasingly look to hotels to support their appetites with off-site tours and experiences. Consumers have an increasing curiosity to experience the farms where resort properties are sourcing ingredients and enjoy more rustic and exposed meal experiences. Integrity in food and beverage operations will be key in 2019.