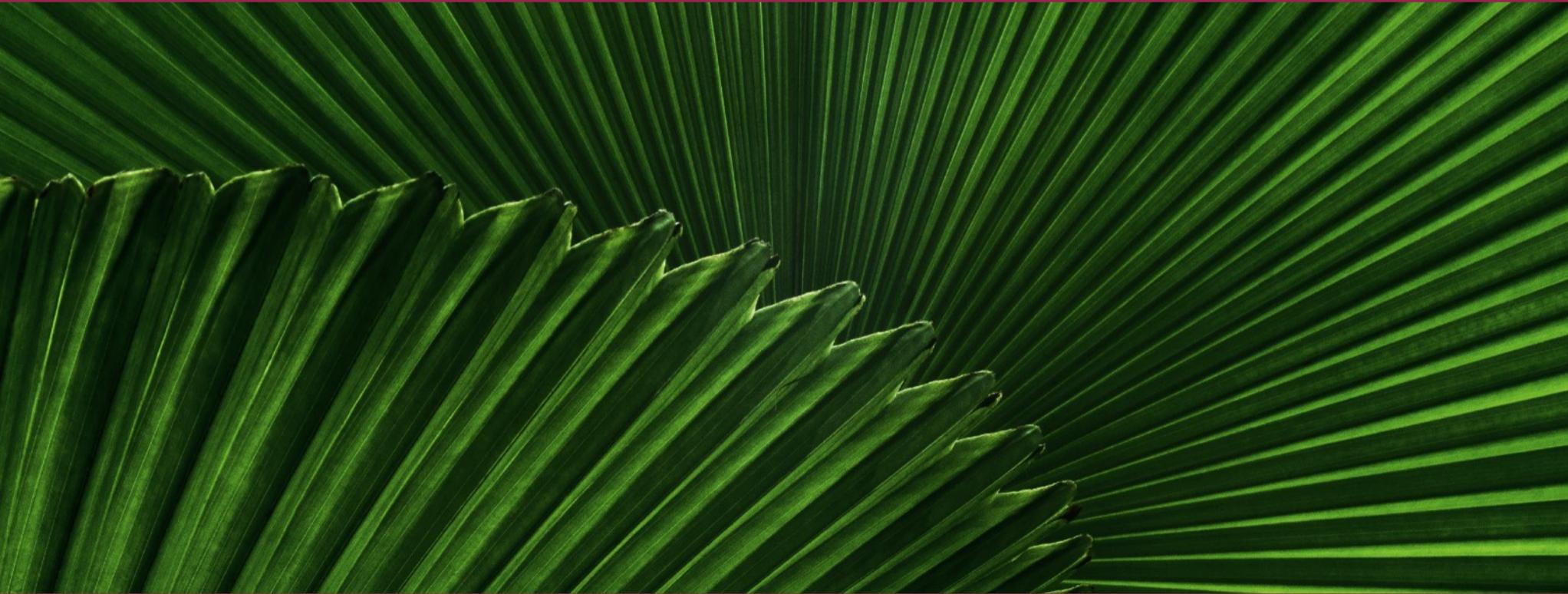




BRANDING INSIGHTS

**GUEST EXPERIENCE TRENDS IN
LUXURY RESORTS**



2024 EDITION

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Foreword

Welcome to the 2024 annual *BRTN Guest Experience Trends in Luxury Resorts* report. When operating in regions renowned for their opulence and cultural diversity, staying attuned to the evolving preferences and expectations of high-end travellers is paramount for resorts to maintain a competitive edge and for developers to optimise the value of their assets. This report delves into eight pivotal macro trends that are reshaping the luxury travel landscape in a post Covid-19 world.

In an era characterised by rapid globalisation and technological advancement, the luxury travel sector is in a perpetual state of transformation. Today's affluent travellers are not only seeking lavish accommodations; they are yearning for experiences that resonate with their individuality and aspirations. Hence, staying abreast of current trends and anticipating future shifts has become a strategic mandate to curate unparalleled guest experiences and brand marketing efforts to carve a niche within the luxury travel sphere.

Luxury travellers, known for their inclination toward seamless elegance and cultural enrichment, are now placing a heightened emphasis on sustainability, space, wellness, and authentic local encounters. With social and environmental consciousness on the rise, luxury resorts that prioritise eco-friendly practices and offer wellness-centric amenities stand poised to resonate with their target audience.

Furthermore, the rapid proliferation of digital platforms has rendered online presence and engagement more pivotal than ever. Travellers will research meticulously before making decisions, necessitating marketers to actively shape their online brand narratives to reflect their unique positioning and offerings.

In this landscape of constant innovation, the *BRTN 2024 Guest Experience Trends in Luxury Resorts* report not only identifies trends but also explores the underlying consumer behaviours and aspirations that drive them. As luxury travel evolves from the materialistic to the experiential, success hinges on resorts' ability to anticipate and cater to these changing demands.

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BRTN IS A BRAND STRATEGY COMPANY DRIVING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE FOR THE HOSPITALITY, RESIDENTIAL, AND LIFESTYLE INDUSTRIES.

Macro trends

Following thorough desktop research and insightful stakeholder interviews, BRTN has identified eight key macro trends driving the evolution of luxury resorts. From sustainability initiatives to the desire for space and immersive wellness experiences, these trends shed light on the path for resorts aiming to understand and anticipate the expectations of high-end travellers today and optimise investors' returns.

1. Wellness

2. Privacy

3. Authenticity

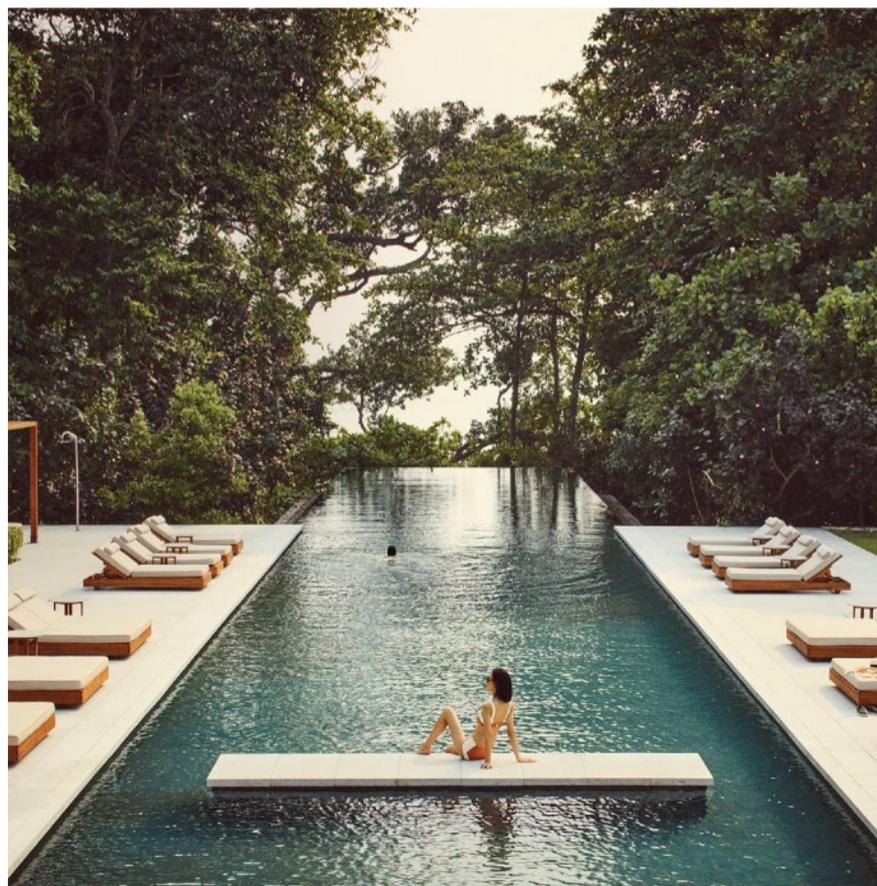
4. Sustainability

5. Free-spirited

6. Community Engagement

7. Hyper-personalisation

8. Distribution



Source: One&Only Desaru Coast

1. Wellness: fostering holistic health

Resorts are undergoing a transformative evolution by intricately weaving wellness into every aspect of the resort guest experience. As noted by Forbes*, the realm of "wellness tourism" is currently outpacing the growth of traditional tourism by an impressive 50%, and this trend shows no signs of slowing. Modern-day guests have developed a strong inclination towards seeking enriching encounters that center around not only their physical health but also their mental and emotional well-being. We have explored three prominent sub-trends contributing to this wellness-focused phenomenon.



"The pandemic brought the merit of a conscious and healthy lifestyle to many and helped make the shift from an industry for few privileged individuals to a wider audience. I applaud a more democratized global wellness economy, which will lead to many more individuals following a path of sustainable health."

Ingo Schweder - CEO GOCO Hospitality

Source: Forbes

Integrated Wellness Experience

- The holistic wellness experience is seamlessly woven into the fabric of the entire resort, extending beyond designated wellness facilities. Each interaction, from the moment of guest check-in to the point of check-out, serves as a consistent reaffirmation of commitment to wellness excellence.
- The strategic incorporation of biophilic design elements across the resort premises and within guest rooms serves to enhance patrons' direct affinity with the natural world. This deliberate approach not only fosters a heightened sense of tranquility but also cultivates a lasting and delightful imprint on their overall experience.
- Discerning guests actively seek lobby features that facilitate relaxation, such as serene Koi ponds, tranquil water fountains, and ambient music conducive to calm. Within their accommodations, patrons express interest in in-room massage and spa offerings, alongside amenities dedicated to optimising sleep quality.



Source: Hotel Haitang Bay

Mental & Emotional Well-being

- The enrichment of mental and emotional well-being constitutes an integral facet of the wellness offering within luxury resorts. This is accomplished through seminars and interactive lifestyle workshops covering subjects such as best practices in nutrition and diet, optimising sleep regimens, and mastering stress mitigation techniques.
- Immersive nature excursions stand as key activities, seamlessly integrating guests with their natural surroundings. Physical immersion in nature has been proven to substantially reduce stress, elevate mood, and enhance cognitive focus. Also, incorporating verdant spaces within resort premises bears significant advantages for the guests' psychological wellness.
- Within the confines of their private accommodations, guests manifest a desire for curated applications encompassing guided meditation and tailored fitness routines. Moreover, they seek the convenience of in-room yoga sessions and guided breathwork exercises, all designed to alleviate stress and holistically advance mental and emotional equilibrium.



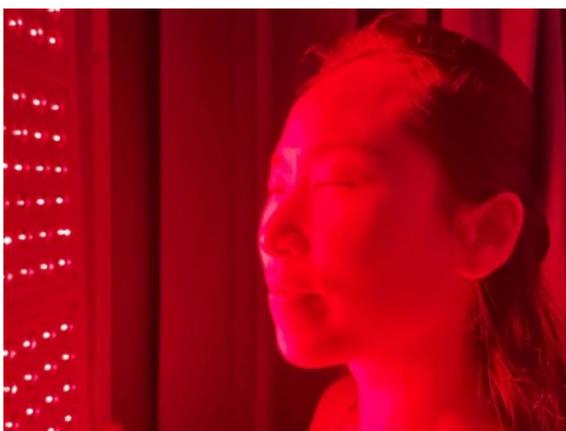
Source: Unsplash images

Physical Well-being

- Emerging as an enduring trend, biohacking has captured the attention of luxury travellers seeking to rejuvenate appearance, elevate sleep efficacy, and mitigate stress. As highlighted in the *Horwath HTL Health and Wellness report (May 2021)*, nutritional provisions like specialised diets and alkaline water, along with wearable tech and in-room cognitive-boosting elixirs, cater to travellers seeking to push the boundaries of body and mind. This novel experience is pivoting towards health enhancement and longevity augmentation.
- Guests are in search of resorts that present a spectrum of cutting-edge amenities. These can include LED Face Visors, ozone therapy protocols for immune reinforcement, hyperbaric oxygen chambers for anti-aging benefits, cryotherapy chambers catering to muscle recovery, and dry float tanks designed to amplify endorphin production.



Source: Fairmont Century Plaza



Source: Breath Inspired

2. Privacy: nurturing a personal sanctuary

The evolving face of luxury now embraces a surge in coveted experiences – from yachts and private jets to exclusive residences and secluded resorts. Amidst serene seclusion, where intimacy flourishes, connections rekindle, and heightened privacy prevails, preferences gravitate towards personalised room service, private chefs, and secluded pools. Space, once a mere dimension, now serves as both a safety requisite and a sanctuary of the mind. Resorts are now adapting to this new paradigm with redesigns that mirror this fresh reality, offering not just accommodation but a retreat from the crowds.



“Not all luxury resorts are created equal. Some provide a personal experience, where privacy and serenity foster relaxation, well-being, and exclusivity. In an era where new wealth seeks visibility, to be unseen offers unique bespoke service, creating an unmatched, distinctive experience.”

Cyndy Tan Jarabata - CEO Tajara Hospitality

Source: Bare International

Private Amenities

- An exclusive range of private amenities, including secluded pools and private chefs, offers guests the opportunity to indulge in an environment free from the inconveniences and commotion often associated with communal areas and shared facilities. These private amenities enable guests to fully customise their schedules and preferences. With the presence of a dedicated personal chef, for example, specific meal schedules, dietary constraints, and even impromptu cravings can be readily accommodated. This element of exclusivity empowers guests to wholly immerse themselves in a peaceful ambience, augmenting their overall sense of well-being.



Source: Chandra Bali Villas

Space

- Spacious accommodation in a post-COVID-19 world is considered a key aspect of a luxury resort experience.
- Guests seek private accommodations, such as secluded villas, suites, or private bungalows. These accommodations provide guests with their own space, away from the hustle and bustle of common areas. Features like separate entrances, a private terrace and a pool can also help guests feel undisturbed and maintain their personal space.
- Moreover, furnishing guests with generous open spaces wherein they can seek solace and tranquility - be it a secluded beach or a private garden - significantly enhances the overall guest experience.



Source: Anantara Mai Khao Phuket

Discreet Staff & Service

- Privacy is now an integral aspect of a luxury resort experience, with resorts prioritising it and training staff to provide service with utmost discretion.
- Guests value staff with a professional demeanour while interacting with them. This means they are polite, friendly, and attentive but also understand the importance of being unobtrusive. This ensures that guests feel comfortable and not overwhelmed by the presence of staff during their stay.
- To ensure that guests are not disturbed by service-related activities, luxury resorts prioritise separate entrances and pathways for staff to access guest accommodations discreetly. This minimises the visibility of staff movement and ensures that guests can enjoy their space without interruption.



Source: JL & TM

3. Authenticity: the power of storytelling

Modern luxury travellers are increasingly drawn to authentic narratives and a genuine sense of transparency, a trend that has been influenced by the rise of Airbnb-style solutions. This movement is rapidly gaining traction as individuals seek not just mere destinations but meaningful connections with local cultures, history, cuisines, and traditions. A compelling statistic from Booking.com* underscores this shift, revealing that a significant 66% of individuals aspire to partake in experiences that authentically capture and reflect the essence of the destinations they visit.



“In luxury travel, culinary authenticity reigns. Over the past years, DestinAsian magazine readers surveys showed that high-end travellers are seeking local ingredients, seasonal flavours, and traditional techniques – savouring a destination's true taste.”

Ronald Liem - CEO DestinAsian Media Group

Source: Pinterest

Hyper Local Design

- Guests are looking for luxury resorts that are designed to immerse them in the local destination where the resort is a part of its surroundings. The resort design should reflect the unique character of the destination, whether that be through the architecture, adding local art pieces, creating spaces that showcase nature, lush tropical gardens, or integrating cultural themes.



Source: Ignant

Local Cultural Immersion

- Local cultural immersion in resorts involves providing guests with authentic and immersive experiences that allow them to connect with the local culture, traditions, and way of life. It goes beyond surface-level interactions and aims to provide meaningful and enriching encounters with the destination's cultural heritage.
- Guests are looking for cultural activities within the resort like learning traditional crafts, art forms, cooking techniques, or musical instruments from local artisans and experts. Luxury resorts may host cultural performances such as traditional dance, music, or storytelling. These events can provide guests with a glimpse into the artistic and entertainment traditions of the region.



Source: Shutterstock.com

Culinary Experiences

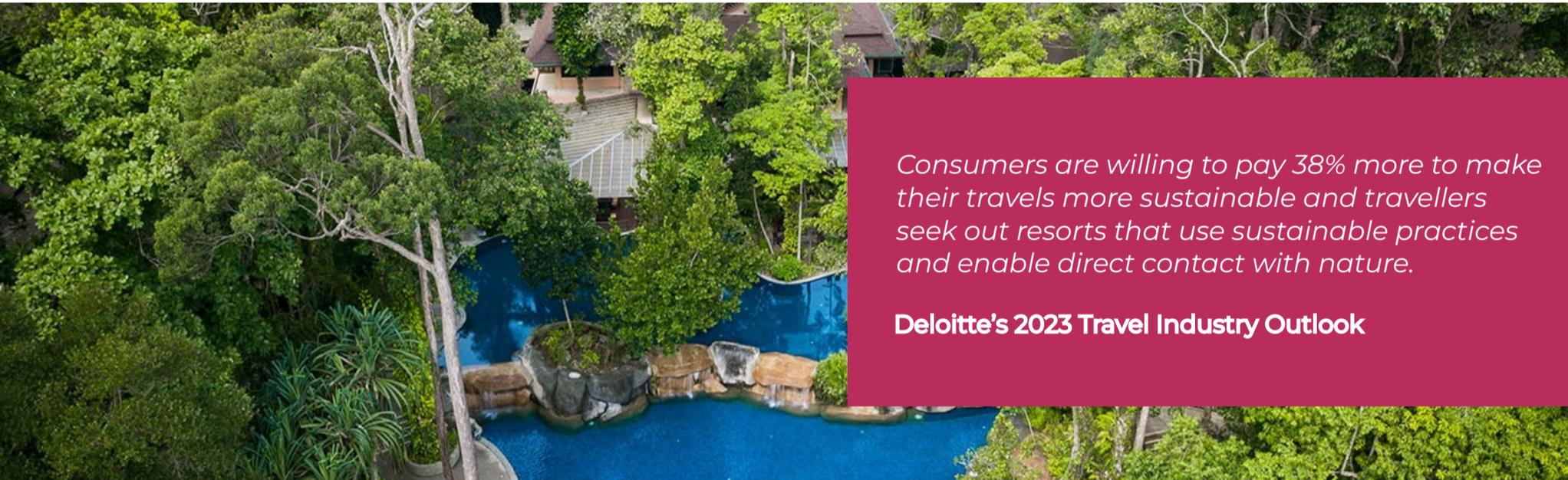
- Resorts are spotlighting regional specialties and distinctive dishes to provide guests with an immersive culinary experience. Renowned chefs are not only creating these exceptional dishes but also sharing captivating narratives that delve into the cultural significance and rich history behind each culinary masterpiece.
- Guests are looking for local sourcing of ingredients for fresh, seasonal, and regional flavours, and the use of traditional recipes and cooking techniques.



Source: The Royal Santrian

4. Sustainability: green is the new black

According to Deloitte’s 2023 Travel Industry Outlook*, the demand for more sustainable travel options is growing as public awareness of humanity’s role in climate change increases. Additionally, research have revealed that consumers are demonstrating a willingness to invest an additional 38% in their travel expenditures to promote sustainability. Travellers are also actively seeking resorts that incorporate sustainable practices and facilitate direct contact with the natural environment.



Consumers are willing to pay 38% more to make their travels more sustainable and travellers seek out resorts that use sustainable practices and enable direct contact with nature.

Deloitte's 2023 Travel Industry Outlook

Source: Khaolak Merlin Resort.

Green Building and Design

- Luxury resorts are adopting sustainable construction and design principles to reduce environmental impact. Guests are favouring resorts that use eco-friendly materials, maximise natural light and ventilation, implement energy-efficient systems, and prioritise water conservation.
- Discerning guests want sustainable transportation options like shuttle services, bike rentals, or electric vehicles. Moreover, the presence of green spaces with native plants, which require less water and maintenance, will also promote biodiversity and local ecosystems, aligning with guests' preferences for an eco-conscious resort experience.
- Through the integration of green design principles, resorts not only diminish their ecological footprint but also elevate guest experiences by creating a seamless blend of natural beauty and eco-friendliness.



Source: Yanko Design / MASK Architects

Eco-friendly Amenities

- Luxury resorts prioritise eco-friendly toiletries, cleaning products, and other amenities made from natural and biodegradable materials to reduce the use of single-use plastics and harmful chemicals.
- Guests are seeking biodegradable and non-toxic toiletries, such as shampoo, conditioner, soap, and body wash, which are made from natural and organic ingredients. As well as refillable water stations, reusable tote bags, eco-friendly slippers, and robes made from organic or recycled materials in the guest rooms.



Source: Ecoluxe

Nutrition

- Local sourcing of produce and farm-to-table initiatives promote environmental responsibility, community support, and a more sustainable approach to food production and consumption. It naturally reduces carbon footprint, preserves biodiversity, supports local economies, and provides seasonal and fresher ingredients to guests.
- Building long-term partnerships with local suppliers and farmers, developing menus that incorporate seasonal produce and local ingredients, educating and training the kitchen and service staff about the importance of local sourcing and farm-to-table practices, are key to reducing carbon footprints and minimising food waste, contributing significantly to a more sustainable and environmentally conscious approach to hospitality.



Source: The Peninsula Hotels

5. **Free-spirited:** the luxe of being yourself

Modern travellers aspire to enjoy the elegance of luxury without the accompanying haughtiness often associated with high-end resorts. What they truly yearn for is an ambiance that evokes the sense of "home," where comfort seamlessly intertwines with a feeling of unburdened relaxation. This is a realm where authenticity reigns, allowing guests to embrace their true selves without the weight of judgment.

“ Sometimes you want to wear a suit and sometimes you want to wear flip-flops. I think a lot of people are like that. We’re living high-low and dressing high-low. ”

Glenn Pushelberg, Co-Founding Partner at Yabu Pushelberg



Source: Shem Creek Inn

Feeling ‘at Home’

- Discerning guests have a distinct preference for a sense of homeliness, comfort, and ease when staying at a luxury resort.
- Personal touches like familiarity and recognition by staff, and the design of the rooms by using interior design elements and furnishings, all create a homely ambiance, rather than a formal hotel setting. Services such as laundry facilities, kitchenettes, and in-room amenities like coffee makers give guests a strong sense of convenience and comfort.
- All these elements create an atmosphere that is relaxed, casual, and a ‘home-away-from-home’ feeling that is considered a luxury.



Source: Conde Nast Traveler

Curious Expeditions

- Guests seek resorts that offer experiences beyond the ordinary, allowing them to rediscover their sense of wanderlust and curiosity. They're drawn to interactive art installations, themed events, and unconventional activities that spark joy and playfulness.
- Modern travellers desire resorts where they can escape the pressures of daily life and immerse themselves in carefree exploration. Quirky attractions, surprise encounters, and a sense of spontaneity help them shed worries, fostering a light-hearted and joyful state of mind.
- In addition to fun and adventure, guests are eager to learn during their stay. They seek opportunities to acquire new knowledge, whether it's about local culture, wildlife, or the environment. Resorts that offer educational programmes and immersive learning experiences enhance their overall stay.



Source: Trazy

Casual Elegance

- Guests being able to be comfortable in resorts without feeling obliged to over-dress allows for a more relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, promoting a strong sense of freedom during their stay.
- Without strict dress codes, guests can feel more at ease and enjoy a laid-back atmosphere, enhancing their overall vacation experience.
- Encouraging casual wear also promotes inclusivity by accommodating guests with various clothing preferences and cultural backgrounds, aligning with the concept of authenticity and allowing guests to feel more like themselves.



Source: Etsy

6. Community engagement: for the love of the land

Community engagement is now integral to luxury travel, aiming to connect travellers with the local community for mutual benefit. Beyond lavish accommodations, today's discerning guests prioritise experiences that foster an appreciation of their destinations and their culture, inviting travellers to discover, connect, and contribute in profound and unforgettable ways. These meaningful interactions enrich the traveller's journey while also contributing positively to the local community. Resorts that facilitate such connections embrace responsible tourism, leaving a lasting impact on both travellers and the communities they engage with.



“The most powerful experiences for our guests are not the wildlife sightings, but those moments when they stop being tourists and become the guests of the local Maasai community - invited, like any other member of the community, to a warrior initiation ceremony, a wedding or any other life event.”

Andre P Cohen, Director, OL Lentille, Kenya

Cultural Exchanges

- Guests seek resorts that offer the opportunity to be a part of the local community during a short period of time. This immersive approach establishes a real connection with members of the community, creating opportunities for meaningful cultural bilateral interactions. Local home dining experiences, for example, allow travellers to become guests in the 'warm' and welcoming homes of local residents. This concept goes back to the roots and true meaning of local hospitality.
- Resorts take this immersion a step further by arranging participation in life events, such as weddings, for guests to engage with a rich tapestry of local customs and traditions. These may include partaking in traditional games that have been passed down through generations, joining in traditional ceremonies that express the region's cultural heritage, interacting with students and teachers at a local school, gaining insights into the local education system, and engaging in cross-cultural learning experiences.



Source: OL Lentille, Kenya

Responsible Tourism Initiatives

- These initiatives go beyond leisure and immersion, offering guests opportunities to actively contribute to the well-being of the local community. From volunteering in meaningful projects to participating in environmental conservation efforts and engaging with local associations and charities, travellers can align their travel experiences with positive social impact.
- Resorts can partner with local schools to facilitate educational interactions between guests and students, fostering cultural exchange and supporting the local education system.
- Resorts can arrange eco-friendly volunteering activities like tree planting, enabling guests to actively engage in local environmental conservation alongside the locals, promoting responsible tourism. These hands-on projects make a direct contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the environment. The collaborative efforts of guests and locals produce substantial results, nurturing a sense of achievement and a positive impact.



Source: Fluentu

Local Heritage Explorations

- Guests seek resorts that offer an immersive exploration of a destination's history and culture guided by local historians or storytellers to provide a more intimate and culturally rich experience. This can include visits to museums, religious venues, and sites of historical significance.
- Travellers can also be guided through neighbourhoods where they have the chance to meet and converse with local residents. These encounters often include impromptu interactions with shop owners, artisans, and community members who can share stories about the neighbourhood's history and evolution.



7. Hyper-personalisation: it's all about you

Today's travellers are in search of a more individualised approach, one that empowers them to personalize every facet of their journey, spanning from room amenities to dining experiences. Citing insights from PressReader*, a noteworthy 78% of travellers display a heightened inclination towards booking accommodations that extend personalised experiences. Guests are actively seeking resorts that can deliver an unparalleled individualised experience - one where they are not only acknowledged and remembered but also enriched with thoughtful recommendations meticulously tailored to their unique preferences and profiles.



“Pursuing excellence in guest experience implies pursuing excellence in terms of leadership. We don't believe in scripting behaviour but creating the right context, so all associates have an emotional experience, in line with the experience their guests should have, on every touchpoint.”

Andre Wiringa - Start Reverse

Source: Raffles Doha

Being Recognised and Remembered

- Collection of guest preferences and rigorous analysis are employed to comprehend the unique requirements of individual guests throughout their stay.
- Guest profiles encompass a spectrum of information collected during the reservation phase or via pre-arrival surveys. These profiles encapsulate intricate particulars like room predilections, dietary constraints, commemoration of special occasions, and any bespoke request expressed.
- Armed with these insights, resorts can adeptly tailor and individualise the current guest experience while enhancing future visits. For instance, the resort could pleasantly surprise a recurring guest with their preferred welcome amenities or make activity recommendations based on their prior interests.



Digital Guest Experience

- Resorts are incorporating in-room technology that allows guests to personalise their environment for ultimate comfort and convenience. Through in-room tablets or mobile apps, guests can control lighting, temperature, and entertainment options according to their preferences, ensuring a seamless and uniquely personalised stay experience.
- Guests now seek the ability to provide real-time feedback and preferences through digital platforms, enabling resorts to customise services instantly, from housekeeping schedules to dining options, ensuring every stay is uniquely satisfying.



Source: IPORT

Wellness Concierge

- The presence of a dedicated wellness concierge, readily accessible and highly responsive to guest inquiries and requests, represents a paramount amenity. This service not only ensures expeditious aid but also guarantees fluid communication throughout the stay, a feature highly regarded by high-end travellers.
- The wellness concierge is trained to evaluate the needs of the guests, formulate bespoke recommendations, and comprehensive wellness programmes. These encompass personalised dietary plans, curated supplements in the room's mini bar, consideration of guests' preferred pillow firmness, and the provision of guidance for wellness treatments.
- The wellness concierge takes spa experiences to the next level, offering tailor-made treatments based on individual preferences and wellness goals. Through one-on-one consultations with spa experts, guests can choose treatments that align with their unique preferences, intensity levels, aromatherapy scents, and specific massage focus points, ensuring a personalised and blissful spa journey.



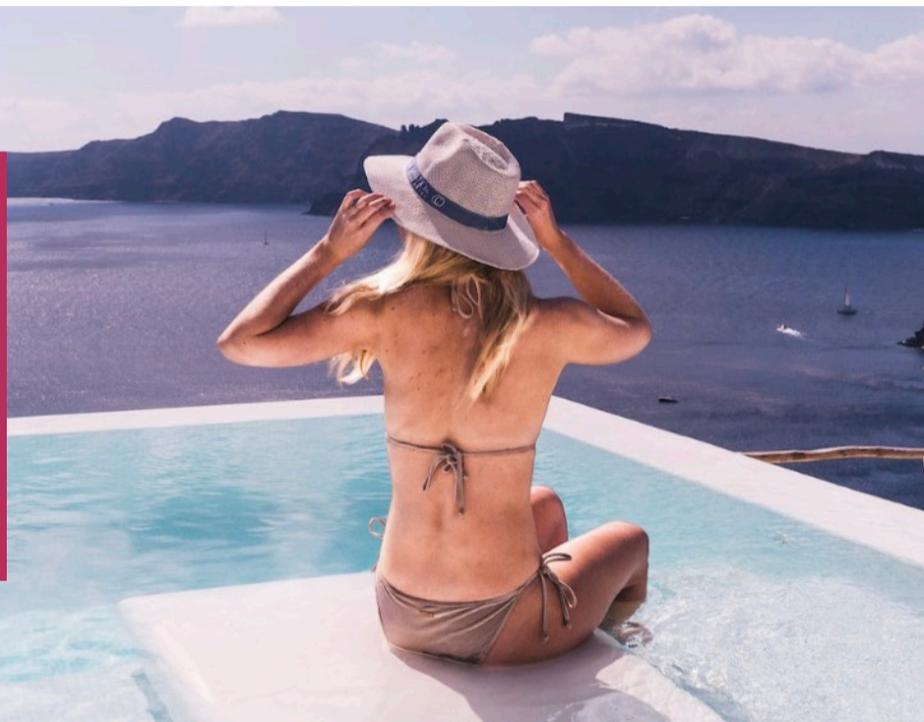
Source: Moontide Consulting

8. Distribution: where the experience begins

A successful distribution and marketing strategy in the luxury hospitality sphere encompasses a multitude of channels, all designed and interlinked to connect with the right clientele and consistently deliver a premium experience. Furthermore, we've witnessed a significant evolution in how high-end guests seek out the perfect luxury resort. This shift is attributed to technological advancements, shifting preferences, and external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. We've grown accustomed to the hyper-personalised experiences offered by platforms like Netflix and Spotify, and we now seek a similar level of personalisation in luxury hotel choices, akin to what we find in retail experiences, such as Nike or Starbucks.

“Omni-channel distribution strategies are of paramount importance in luxury resorts as hospitality is all about providing an exceptional guest experience. An omni-channel approach ensures that guests can interact with the brand seamlessly at all touch-points from research to post stay engagement.”

Philip Schaetz - CUBE



Research

- When high-end guests are researching and booking luxury resorts, the first stop is the internet relying heavily on online reviews and ratings from fellow travellers. Platforms like TripAdvisor and Google are still go-to sources for gauging a resort's quality, unique features and reputation.
- During the research phase, it's crucial for luxury resort providers to engage the target audience with relevant and captivating content. This helps make an informed decision without feeling overwhelmed by excessive details.

Distribution Channels

- Booking behaviour analysis shows that high-end travellers are more likely to book direct however this is not necessarily a definitive trend as independent luxury resorts still heavily rely on indirect travel portals and specialised travel operators.
- Before anything luxury travellers crave high-quality visual content, such as photos and videos, to make informed decisions. Detailed imagery of hotel rooms, amenities, dining options, and common areas significantly influences choices. This content must be optimised irrespectively of the channel.
- Loyalty programme: Analysis shows that high-end travellers are less sensitive to miles but highly value relevancy, engagement and how the brand communicates with them. Therefore the CRM's main role is an optimisation of personalisation and be more relevant in content and offers.

Conversion

- A well-designed, user-friendly website is paramount. It should showcase the property's unique features, amenities, and offerings through stunning visuals. The site must be responsive, load quickly, and provide seamless navigation.
- To capture interest and actively drive conversion, offering live chat support on your website is a game-changer. Chatbots can assist with inquiries in real-time and guide you through the booking process.
- Personalisation is key. Recommending room options and packages based on preferences and past behaviour, as well as offering personalised promotions and discounts, enhances the online experience.



Pre and Post-Stay Engagement

- Interactions with guests before and after the stay makes all the difference.
- Pre-stay engagement holds great significance in the luxury hospitality experience. It is essential for managing expectations, optimising in-resort revenue, and collecting guests' preferences that will subsequently enable the team to personalise the experience (*See Hyper-personalisation*).
- Post-stay engagement is equally vital, maintaining a positive relationship with guests after they've checked out. Personalised post-stay communication and feedback collection are simple yet effective ways to stay connected and foster loyalty.
- A perfectly configured Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) will put it all in motion.



Source: travelcollective.co

About BRTN

BRTN is a brand strategy company driving business performance for the hospitality, residential, and lifestyle industries.

Great brands inspire customers, employees, and investors. They impact the way we live, work, and consume. BRTN creates visionary and transformative brands as platforms for businesses to achieve their goals, infuse positive change, drive revenue, and increase asset value.

For more information visit
[BRTN-strategy.com](https://brtn-strategy.com)

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