top trends in hospitality for 2019
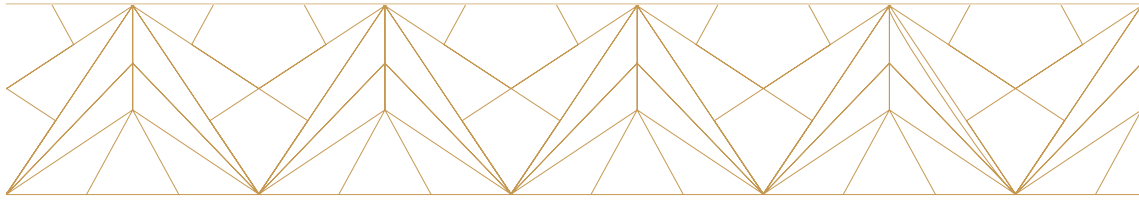
contents

Benoît-Etienne Domenget, CEO of Sommet Education, highlights the key influences shaping travel and tourism in 2019.

Accounting for more than 10% of global GDP and the creation of one in five new jobs according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism continues to be one of the world's fastest-growing industries. It is also an industry undergoing rapid transformation, shaped by new technologies and the values and needs of an increasingly diverse range of travellers.

Emerging trends in sustainability, luxury, technology and innovation are all influencing the future direction of the hospitality industry. As worldwide hospitality education leaders, our responsibility is to provide aspiring hospitality professionals with the skills and knowledge they need, and to develop the next generation of leaders for the hospitality industry. Monitoring industry trends and adapting our education programmes accordingly is essential for us to ensure that our curricula are relevant for the industry and our students. With this in mind, these are some of the top trends to watch for in 2019:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

The hospitality industry continues to provide fertile ground for aspiring entrepreneurs, while innovation will be key for established brands to stay relevant and compete with new players. Innovation strategies should also cater to the different profiles, needs and expectations of travellers.

For example, the importance of social experiences to Millennials and Gen Z travellers has given rise to a new breed of urban boutique hotels offering social spaces and activities — sometimes at the expense of individual room size, as evidenced by the success of micro-hotels. Busy business travellers, meanwhile, are most likely to appreciate innovations in technology that enable them to save time. But to entice luxury travellers, retaining the human touch will be key for hotels to deliver a bespoke experience. Understanding the different needs of guests is essential for brands to develop innovative concepts capable of yielding long-term profit and business growth.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN HOSPITALITY

Thanks to new technologies, hospitality businesses can provide guests with greater customisation, convenience and control. Technology is also transforming the way customers interact with brands — even before and after their stay.

Chatbots, robots and other forms of artificial intelligence provide users with information on-demand and personalised recommendations. Facial recognition technology is opening doors (sometimes literally) to time-saving service, while smart hotel rooms equipped with internet-of-things connectivity allow guests to customise their experience with an app or their own voice. Loyalty programmes based on blockchain and cryptocurrency are also creating interesting new opportunities for brands to engage with customers. While these examples provide a glimpse of current and future applications of technology to the guest experience, many of these technologies are still in their early stages, with the potential to change the industry in ways we have yet to imagine.

LUXURY BRAND MANAGEMENT AND GUEST EXPERIENCE

Balancing heritage with innovation is essential for luxury brands to attract an increasingly diverse range of clients. Relying on brand history alone is no longer enough — brands need to bring their identity into the future in order to stay relevant. However, storytelling is still key for brands to convey their value to customers.

Global brands will need to reflect the increasingly diverse identity of their clients through multicultural awareness and sensitivity. To meet omnichannel customers, brands will need to build seamless transitions between offline and online experiences while retaining the high levels of service that
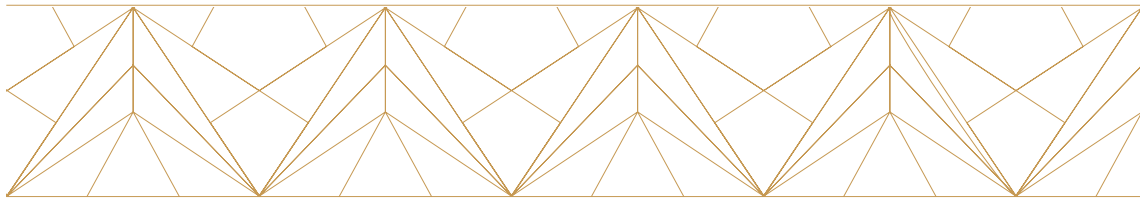
luxury clients expect. We can also expect to see more luxury brands branching into hotels and other hospitality ventures — adopting the codes of hospitality enables brands to provide customers with a uniquely immersive experience that goes beyond traditional retail. Finally, retaining the human touch throughout these interactions will be essential for luxury brands to nurture the personal relationships that build client loyalty.

SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

The United Nations have pushed issues of sustainability to the forefront of public awareness, and conscientious Millennials and Gen Z travellers in particular expect global hospitality businesses to take a more comprehensive approach to corporate social responsibility. Transparency and accountability are becoming more important as travellers want to know the impact of their footprint — not only environmentally, but socially as well.

Sustainable and socially responsible strategies now range from the reduction of single-use plastics to the development of social business concepts and the shift towards a circular economy system, in which resources are recycled and regenerated, rather than used once and disposed.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INNOVATIONS

Sustainability concerns have also become important within the realm of food and beverage. Interest in locally sourced, seasonal food and vegetable-centric cuisine continues to grow among eco-friendly and health-conscious consumers, resulting in the development of farm-to-table — and even seed-to-table — culinary concepts. However, the pursuit of pleasure is also a key motivator for customers seeking new culinary experiences that delight the senses.

Millennials are driving a shift towards the democratisation of dining, blurring the boundaries between formal and casual, and embracing high-quality cuisine at an accessible price point. Street food and open-fire cooking are introducing diners to a wider range of flavours, traditions and experiences. And in the age of Instagram, visual delights are just as important as deliciousness — something which some of the world's top pâtissiers already know.

I invite you to explore the above five trends in greater detail with the insights and observations on the following pages from Sommet Education faculty and experts. As these trends reveal, the future of hospitality is increasingly transversal, shaping and being shaped by global movements, industries and consumer values. Despite these rapid changes, among consumer-centric industries such as luxury and hospitality, one constant remains: the importance of the human touch. Human relations continue to play an invaluable role in the delivery of memorable experiences and service, making human talent one of our greatest sources of innovation.

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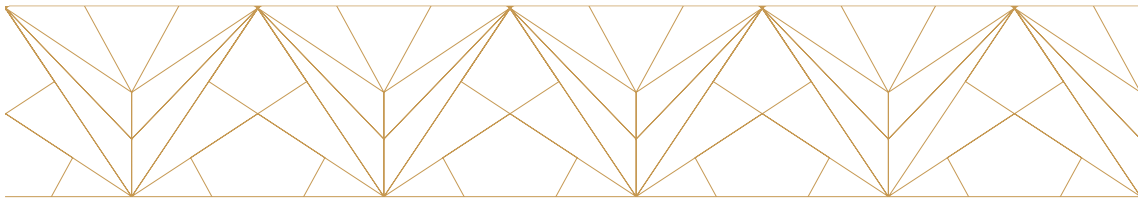
Innovation will be key for hospitality businesses to remain relevant and cater to the different profiles, needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse range of travellers.

According to the UNWTO, the number of international travellers reached 1.3 billion in 2017 and grew by 6% in the first six months of 2018. With more people travelling than ever before, the hospitality industry faces an increasingly diverse range of clients. For hospitality brands to attract and retain customers, offering different experiences to meet the different needs and expectations of guests will be key — whether that means time-saving technology for business travellers, human personalisation and bespoke service for luxury guests, or social experiences and new concepts for an upcoming generation of Millennials.

By 2020, global Millennial spending power will overtake Gen X, becoming greater than that of any other generation, according to World Data Lab. As they come to dominate the economy, Millennials are also bringing a significant shift in consumer values and preferences, leading to rapid innovation as businesses compete to keep up. This is particularly evident in hospitality — the industry specialised in providing the experiences that have become so coveted among Millennials and Gen Z consumers.

THE MILLENNIAL QUEST FOR EXPERIENCES

A study conducted by Harris Poll and Eventbrite found that 78% of Millennials would prefer to spend their money on experiences rather than things; among Boomers, that figure drops to 59%. Within travel and tourism, the shift to experiences has given rise to disruptive business models as travellers seek the authenticity of local experiences instead of the accommodation and activities typically designed with tourists in mind.

Peer-to-peer accommodation platforms such as Airbnb and HomeAway are among the most well-known in this sphere, while Airbnb has also developed its Experiences offering, which connects travellers with local guides for activities ranging from the culinary and cultural to the adventurous and sporty. The peer-to-peer business travel market has not been overlooked either: Airbnb for Work offers self-check-in work-friendly properties for solo or group business travellers as well as team-building activities for company retreats.

But the sharing economy continues to evolve, giving rise to innovations such as Wingly, an online platform where passengers and pilots can share the costs of a private leisure flight. Thanks to a combination of technology, ingenuity and a DIY spirit, experiences once deemed exclusive are increasingly within reach for Millennial consumers.

HOTELS WOO YOUNG TRAVELLERS WITH SMART DESIGN AND SOCIAL SPACES

To adapt to the tastes of younger travellers, innovative hotels are giving more priority to the social spaces and experiences they offer. Urban hotels like Mama Shelter, The Hoxton, CitizenM and 25hours hotels offer locations in vibrant neighbourhoods as well as spaces and activities that can appeal to locals and travellers alike. Rooftop bars, restaurants serving locally sourced ingredients, co-working hubs, yoga and Pilates classes, film screenings and dance parties are just some of the activities and spaces that travellers may find.

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Such hotels represent a new kind of affordable luxury that resonates with Millennial values. Their approach also holds appeal for Gen Z travellers — putting high value on social experiences and design, this next generation of consumers is even more willing to accept smaller personal living spaces in exchange for aesthetics and vibrant shared spaces. The success of micro-hotels such as Pod Hotels, The Jane Hotel and Arlo Hotels confirms this paradigm shift. Connectivity, both social and technological, is also key to catering to younger travellers, for whom online sharing is often a natural extension of offline experiences.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE TRAVELLERS SEARCH FOR LIKE-MINDED BUSINESSES

If Millennials have played a key role in bringing issues of sustainability to the foreground, then Gen Z is likely to take the conversation even further. Cone Communications has reported that 94% of Gen Z consumers believe that companies should address urgent social and environmental issues, compared to 87% of Millennials. As a result, businesses are facing growing pressure to support sustainable practices — particularly in the hospitality industry, where the social and environmental impacts of companies can be enormous.

Brands such as Six Senses and 1 Hotels are leading the way in making sustainability a core part of their identity. With these brands, the wastefulness that has sometimes been associated with luxury is replaced with eco-friendly measures and socially responsible policies. Environmental initiatives supported by Six Senses include growing organic produce for guests and bottling water in glass on site to eliminate the use of plastic. The brand also partners with local NGOs to sponsor community projects in areas like education, healthcare and disaster relief. At 1 Hotels, eco-friendly efficiency is complemented by nature-inspired design and the use of reclaimed materials, and the brand offers staff paid time off to volunteer in environmental advocacy and public education activities.

Meanwhile, locally sourced food and beverage options and organic ingredients not only offer an authentic dining experience, but also appeal to young consumers' sense of ethics. As public awareness of food waste, plastic pollution and other environmental problems grows, young consumers are becoming more critical of wasteful and irresponsible practices — opening opportunities for businesses that can provide sustainable alternatives.

TECHNOLOGY, PERSONALISATION AND EXPERIENCE 2.0

With tech-savvy Millennials closely followed by a generation of digital natives, technological innovation will continue to shape the hospitality industry. From chatbots and robots to internet-of-things connectivity, smart uses of technology will save time, offer greater personalisation and enable businesses to anticipate guest needs. The benefits of convenience and discretion are particularly relevant for business travellers, who value privacy and time-saving service. And although privacy concerns do exist, many customers are willing to entrust brands with some data in exchange for the benefits of convenience and personalised service.

Technology is also an opportunity for brands to flex their creativity, bridge online and offline channels and deliver a better customer experience. In China, leading ride-sharing app Didi has developed an augmented reality (AR) feature that helps passengers navigate their way through shopping centres and train stations to find their ride's precise pick-up location. Meanwhile, virtual reality (VR) can enable users to "travel" from home as they experience the sights and sounds of a faraway destination. Visitors to the iFly KLM 360° online platform can virtually visit a Thai jungle, Hawaii and other KLM destinations through a series of 360-degree videos using a smartphone, tablet or VR headset. In each video, celebrity chef Kiran Jethwa leads viewers on a guided tour, providing further travel inspiration to explorers seeking authentic experiences.

THE HUMAN TOUCH PREVAILS

Despite the rise of new technologies, one trend that is unlikely to disappear is the value of the human touch in building customer relationships. From the hotel concierge who remembers a guest from a previous stay to the personal guide who reveals the secret corners of a city, human interaction remains core to the hospitality industry. In the luxury industry, this human service is vital for brands to deliver a bespoke experience, in which guests can feel both at ease and pleasantly surprised by service that surpasses expectations.

Delivering memorable customer service is an area open to innovation among all brands, whether budget boutiques or five-star hotels. With experiences and authenticity becoming increasingly important to travellers, these shared moments of personal service may turn out to be the real luxury that guests most value.

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technology
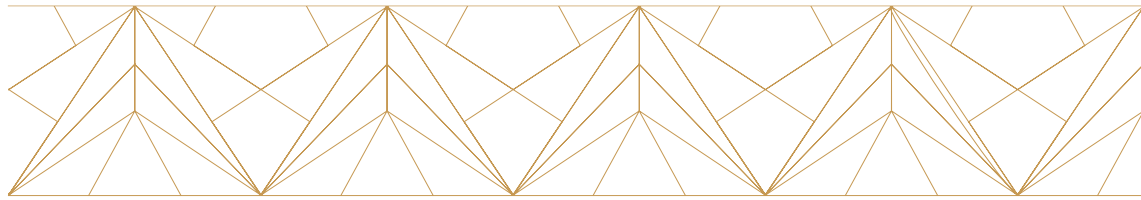
The rise of new technologies will enable hospitality businesses to provide guests with greater customisation, convenience and control.

Technology is transforming the way that travellers interact with brands before, during and after their journey. Far from pulling hospitality away from its soul as a people-centric industry, the adoption of new technologies allows hospitality businesses to deliver greater personalisation and better service. With the help of AI, IoT connectivity and other new technologies, businesses can offer a more engaging brand experience while meeting and even anticipating guest needs.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

From chatbots and robots to machine learning, AI is already present across the hospitality industry. But the technology has the potential to evolve much further, bringing customers convenient on-demand service, greater personalisation and closer engagement with brands.

Over the last few years, travellers have been meeting robot butlers and concierges in hotels like Hilton's Connie, powered by IBM Watson AI technology. Able to answer guest questions, handle check-ins and deliver discreet room service, these helpful robots can lessen the burden on human staff, enabling them to spend more time with guests who seek personal interaction. More recently, customer service robots have also been appearing in retail stores and airports; SoftBank Robotics' Pepper, a humanoid robot developed with IBM Watson, has been introduced at Munich Airport and Václav Havel Airport Prague, where the robot not only informs but entertains passengers by dancing and offering to take selfies.

Gartner predicts that 85% of customer interactions will be managed without a human by 2020. On Airbnb, travellers receive customised search results based on their browsing and booking history thanks to powerful machine learning algorithms. And chatbots, already in use by leading travel brands such as KLM, Kayak and Booking.com, provide customers with useful information, personalised recommendations and rapid response times. But AI also offers businesses an opportunity to further reflect their personality and develop brand loyalty: At The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, guests are invited to text Rose, the hotel's "resident mischief-maker" and chatbot, for VIP access to clubs and other insider tips as well as room service requests. In addition to serving as a virtual concierge, Rose answers guests with humour; tell the bot "I love you," and Rose replies with a diamond ring emoji and the message, "Back that up with some hardware and we'll talk." According to Mamie Peers, Vice President Digital Marketing, guests who interact with Rose spend 30% more in the hotel than those who do not, and they are 33% happier when they leave.

FACIAL RECOGNITION AND VOICE TECHNOLOGY

While technology is not a replacement for human interaction, lifelike features can make technology more appealing to users. Intuitive attributes such as facial recognition and voice activation can offer users faster service and a better customer experience.

At Intercontinental Shanghai Wonderland, face scanners enable guests to verify their identity

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at check-in, pick up a digital room key and gain access to the dining room at breakfast. The hotel has partnered with Chinese messaging and mobile payment app WeChat to offer travellers a seamlessly connected experience.

Ebookers, a travel site owned by Expedia, has introduced SenseSational, an online tool which uses real-time facial recognition software to track users' faces as they look at certain images and sounds on screen. The tool then reveals the user's identity as one of four "tribes" — The Adventurer, Culture Collector, Sun Seeker and Bon Vivant — and suggests destinations and activities that match the tribe's travel preferences. Beyond the screen, facial recognition could have other practical uses soon, such as enabling swift check-in at meetings and events, and quick access to public transportation systems.

Many hotels worldwide have added in-room smart speakers and voice assistants that let guests simply say what they need, but this technology is also still in its early stages. Besides enhancing the guest experience, voice technology can improve back-of-house efficiency as well. Two Roads Hospitality has partnered with Amazon and Volara to develop a customised Alexa for Hospitality platform that facilitates daily tasks for staff, such as identifying maintenance problems or signaling that a room is ready for check-in.

INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT)

A guest unlocks the door with her smartphone, walks into her room, and based on past preferences, finds that the air temperature, lighting and music are set to just the right levels. Such are the possibilities of IoT technology, which offers guests a growing range of options to personalise their environment using an in-room tablet, smart speaker or their own smartphone. Luxury hotels like The Plaza New York, Aria in Las Vegas, The Torch Doha in Qatar and GHM Hotels have all introduced high-tech smart rooms. Meanwhile, Hilton has developed its own proprietary IoT platform, and Marriott has partnered with Legrand's IoT program and Samsung's ARTIK cloud-based IoT platform, with both hotel chains aiming to roll out IoT connectivity across their properties.

Further integration of the IoT within hospitality could prove especially attractive among mobile-savvy Millennial and Gen Z travellers. Notably, such technology may also help hotel groups set themselves apart from tough competitors like Airbnb and HomeAway. A seamlessly customised experience is challenging for private residences or boutique hotels to offer, even if they have some smart technology on the premises.

BLOCKCHAIN AND CRYPTOCURRENCY

Offering transparency, security and control, blockchain technology has the potential to change business models across industries. It can revitalise loyalty programmes by ensuring that points are kept securely and can be exchanged across multiple platforms; Japanese e-commerce platform Rakuten has announced plans to transition its loyalty points into Rakuten Coins, its own digital currency.

Blockchain transactions also eliminate the need for third-party mediators, which could be a game changer in the world of OTAs. LockTrip, a blockchain-based hotels and vacation rentals marketplace, enables hotels to manage bookings and guests to make reservations without a commission being taken from either side. Travellers can browse hotel listings with prices given in LOC, a cryptocurrency whose exchange rate is shown in real time. To book, users pay the equivalent amount in euros, pounds or dollars, which is converted to LOC. The amount in LOC is released to the hotel once the guest checks out, and the hotel can then convert the cryptocurrency into their preferred currency. By eliminating the need for a middleman, this technology enables hotels to offer prices that are 20% lower without affecting profits.

Whether designed to save guests time or money, offer discretion or convenience, new technologies will continue to transform the hospitality industry and the guest experience. At the same time, by facilitating day-to-day duties, technology creates new opportunities for staff to build the customer relationships that are at the heart of hospitality.
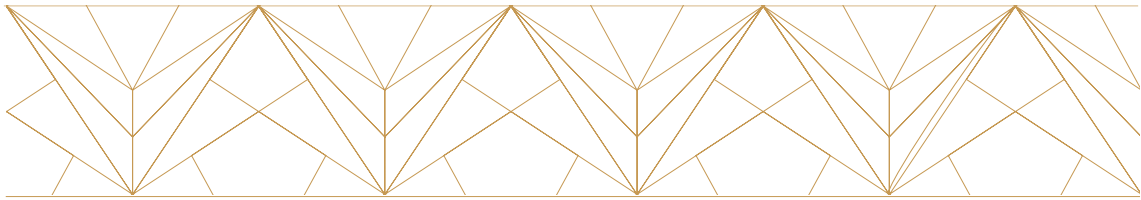
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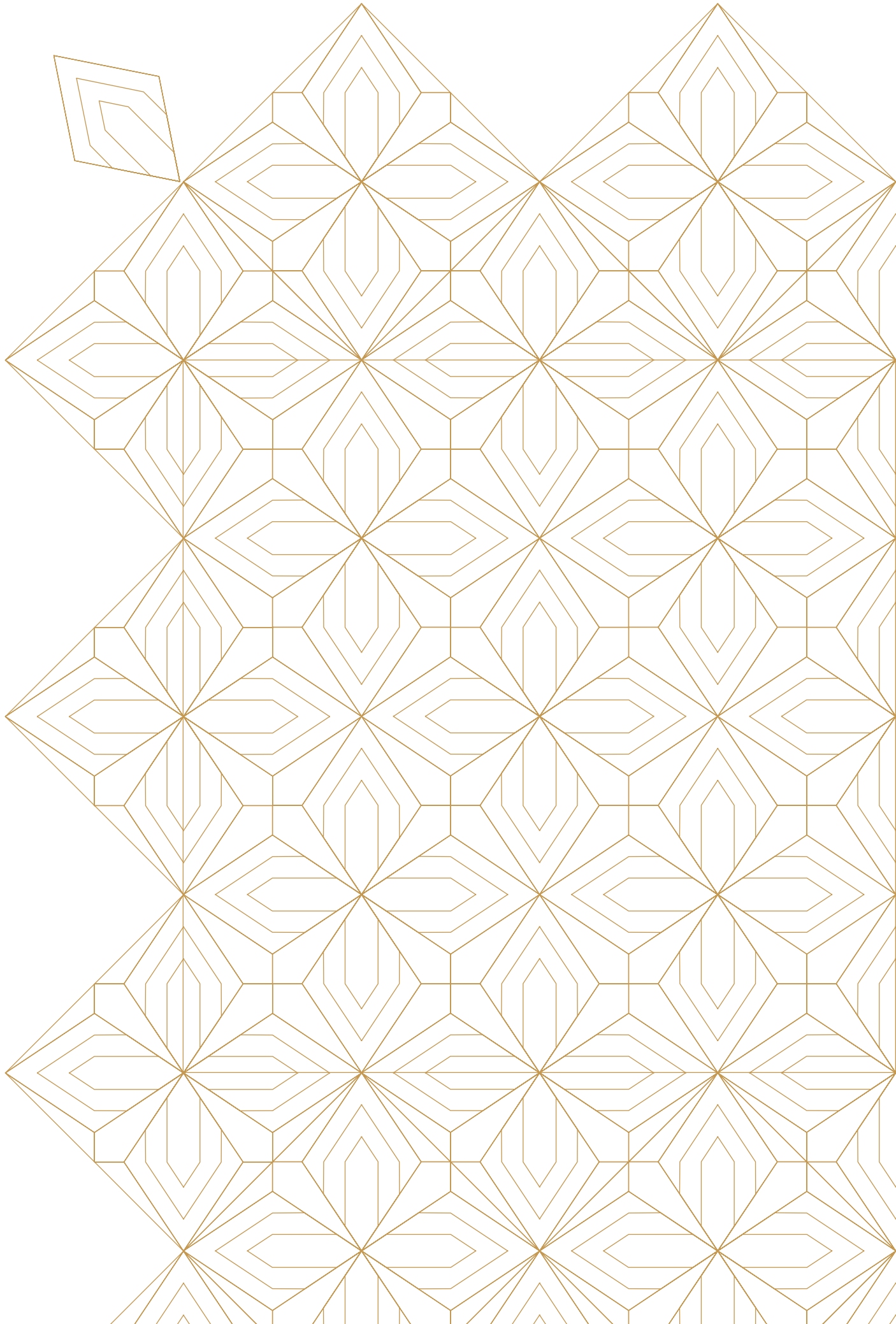
luxury

Balancing heritage with innovation will become key for luxury brands as they cater to an increasingly diverse range of clients.

One of the biggest challenges facing luxury brands is becoming and staying relevant for a new generation of clients. Bain & Co. predicts that consumers under 35 will account for more than half of the global personal luxury goods market by 2025. Meanwhile, Chinese consumers, who currently account for one third of the global personal luxury goods market, are expected to make up nearly half of this market by 2025.

Relying on heritage alone is not enough for luxury brands to woo an increasingly younger and diverse clientele. Although storytelling remains critical, innovation will be essential for brands to prove their relevancy. In 2019, successful luxury brands will need to reinvent themselves by taking inspiration from the values and global culture of Gen Y and Z. At the same time, we can expect to see the codes of hospitality becoming more widespread within the luxury industry as brands strive to build meaningful relationships with customers across multiple touchpoints.

BRINGING HERITAGE INTO THE FUTURE

While a centuries-old history once played a vital role in the allure of luxury brands, prestigious pasts are no longer as important for present-day consumers. A 2017 Deloitte study of Millennials across the US, UK, Italy and China revealed that "quality and uniqueness" are the top factors attracting them to luxury products. As a result, some of the most successful luxury brands are those that manage to make traditional craftsmanship relevant through modern innovations.

Hublot, for example, has developed a loyal client following for its integration of high-tech materials such as "Magic Gold" (a fusion of liquid gold and ceramic) into the precision of traditional Swiss watchmaking, an approach captured in the brand's motto, "The Art of Fusion." The brand has also embraced other technological innovations: in late 2018, Hublot launched the Big Bang Meca-10 P2P, a luxury watch that can only be purchased using Bitcoin.

At the same time, the backstory of a brand can add greatly to its uniqueness and value, and knowing when, where and how a product was made has become more important to young global consumers. In order to enable clients to explore the brand's heritage, Louis Vuitton has developed "Volez, Voguez, Voyagez," a free 15-room exhibition containing iconic pieces and detailing the brand's history from 1854 to the present. After opening in Paris, Tokyo, Seoul and New York, in November 2018 the exhibition came to Shanghai, where it displays additional pieces with a particular connection to China. In addition to bringing its past to life for a new generation of clients, Louis Vuitton also reinvents classic pieces with modern innovations, such as the Louis Vuitton Echo, a smartphone-controlled luggage tracker, and the Tambour Horizon smartwatch.

BROADENING THE LUXURY BRAND EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE CODES OF HOSPITALITY

Hotels continue to offer luxury brands a fresh opportunity to engage clients outside of traditional retail shops or online channels. Although examples of luxury fashion brands branching into hospitality can be found as early as 2000 with the opening of Palazzo Versace Gold Coast in Australia, we can expect this trend to continue as brands strive to offer guests immersive experiences marked by the brand's own unique traits.

Opened in summer 2018, Bvlgari Hotel Shanghai is one of the newest to this realm and the sixth of Bvlgari's hospitality collection. The luxury hotel features a contemporary blend of Italian and Chinese style, while its food and beverage offering includes Italian gastronomy and Cantonese haute cuisine. Future Bvlgari hotels are due to open in Moscow, Paris and Tokyo. Such offerings can help luxury brands to build stronger relationships with clients as consumers increasingly value experiences over material goods.

In Switzerland, luxury watchmaker Audemars Piguet plans to open its bespoke Hôtel des Horlogers in 2020 in Vallée de Joux, a cradle of Swiss watchmaking and the birthplace of the brand. The hotel will enable guests to not only learn more about the luxury brand's past and present, but also experience the surrounding natural environment in unique ways, including via a sloping rooftop that guests can ski down in the winter.

DELIVERING PREMIUM OMNICHANNEL SERVICE

In a 2018 interview with Wired UK, Ian Rogers, Chief Digital Officer of LVMH, stated that he finds "digital" to be "a bit of a nonsense word." He said, "When somebody says, 'We're really behind on digital,' my response is, 'You're behind in every aspect of your business?'"

The reality today is that the online experience has become inseparable from the customer journey — and the case of luxury brands is no exception. A 2018 McKinsey report predicts that online luxury sales will more than triple by 2025, with nearly a fifth of personal luxury goods sales taking place online. However, the particular challenge facing luxury brands is how to deliver the premium level of service that clients expect across touchpoints both online and off.

AI-powered chatbots and smart search results can provide online customers with useful product recommendations and a personalised retail experience. Online platforms can also be used to provide luxury clients with the means to customise their own products: Mercedes-Benz lets customers build their own car online. And digital channels can bring customers the same level of service they would have in-store at their own convenience. For example, through the Hublot Digital Boutique, clients can contact sales advisors at their nearest boutique via FaceTime or Skype, enabling them to discover products and speak with the sales advisor remotely. Clients can then follow up with an in-store visit, bringing the online and offline experiences together.

DIVERSITY IN LUXURY: UNDERSTANDING A NEW CLIENTELE

The shift in the luxury consumer profile has also opened the field to new players in luxury, while putting pressure on established brands to ensure they understand and resonate with their market. Brands must be culturally aware and avoid alienating consumers through tone-deafness, as Dolce & Gabbana recently experienced in China following its "DG Loves China" campaign, which was criticised for racism and insensitivity and led to the brand's products being dropped from major Chinese retail platforms.

On the other hand, in an increasingly globalised world, luxury brands can find success by exporting their identity and cultural references. Montblanc, for example, has launched a collection of pens inspired by the illustrations of Le Petit Prince — a unique combination of a European luxury brand and French cultural icon with universal appeal. Meanwhile, with young customers more focused on quality rather than labels, opportunities are ripe for luxury brands that cater to the diverse values and needs of their clientele. Online luxury retail platform The Modist has built success by focusing on modest fashion, catering to stylish Muslim women as well as non-Muslims. Another platform, 11 Honoré, specialises in plus-size luxury apparel, even encouraging fashion designers to offer a wider range of sizes.

From streetwear and androgynous aesthetics to ethical fashion and other global influences, luxury continues to be redefined and democratised. Global awareness combined with a focus on quality, uniqueness and innovation will be key for luxury brands to keep up.


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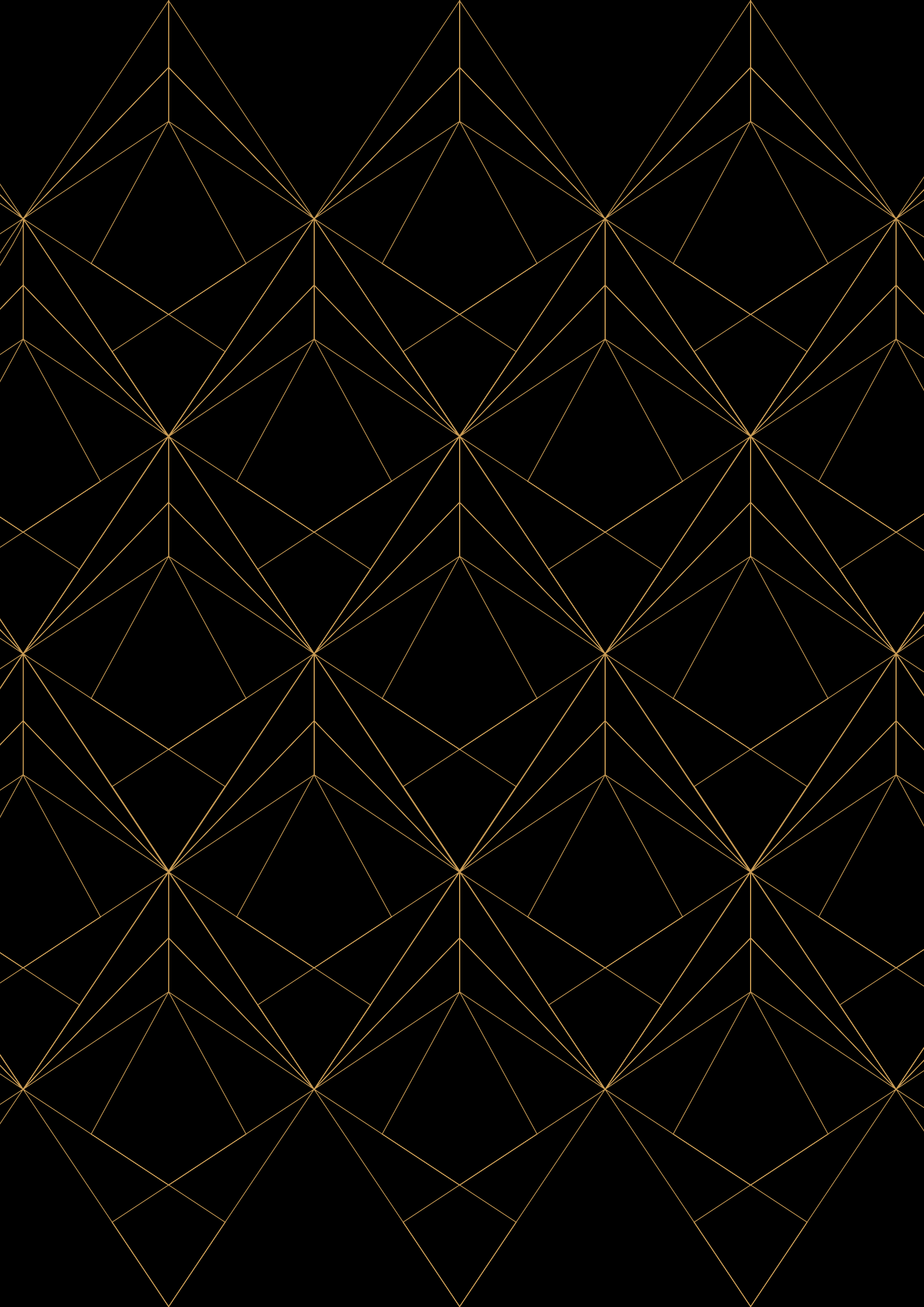
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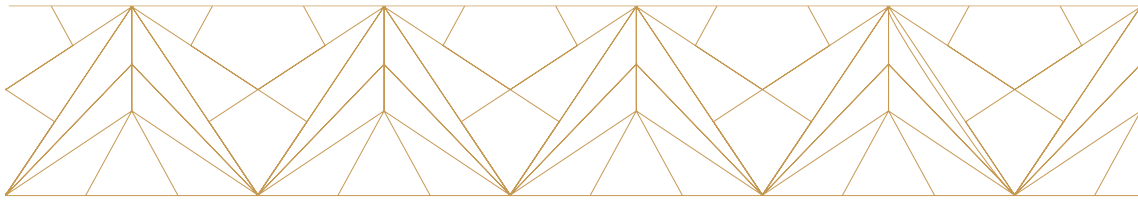
Responding to the demands of conscientious travellers, global hospitality businesses take a more comprehensive approach to sustainability.

Sustainability within the hospitality industry has come a long way since the arrival of in-room suggestions to reuse towels and save water. Hotels and other hospitality businesses are increasingly taking a more mature approach that incorporates socially responsible practices as well as sound environmental and economic policies.

As public awareness and consumer confidence in sustainability grow, the pressure is on for the travel and tourism sector to walk the talk — according to Booking.com's 2018 Sustainable Travel Report, 87% of global travellers say they want to travel sustainably. In 2019, we can expect to see hospitality companies implementing more innovative practices to benefit people and the planet as well as financial performance, while also ensuring that guests are aware of their good deeds.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: THE BIG PICTURE

Government and public support for the promotion of sustainability across industries has been mounting in recent years. In 2015, 193 nations agreed to work towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a set of 17 goals designed to ensure a better future for all through the introduction of significant changes by 2030.

Representing 10.4% of global GDP and supporting one in 10 jobs worldwide according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the travel and tourism sector has the potential to make enormous social, environmental and economic contributions — a fact that travellers increasingly recognise. The

United Nations captured this zeitgeist in declaring 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, a campaign which has spread further awareness while spurring businesses and travellers to embrace ethical policies and actions. More recently, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has developed a statistical framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) to be adopted as an international standard in 2019.

FROM GREEN TO TRANSPARENT: THE PROOF IS IN THE REPORT

As going green becomes mainstream, it will take more than claims of good intentions for businesses to convince conscientious consumers. Transparency will become even more important in the future as ethical travellers seek evidence to back up messages of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Leading the way are hotel groups such as Nordic Choice Hotels, Scandic Hotels Group and AccorHotels, which have set new industry standards in CSR transparency by releasing annual public reports and other detailed information on the sustainable practices they follow. Notably, the most effective brands focus not only on their environmental impact, but on their impact on society; for example, Nordic Choice's "WeCare" sustainability approach highlights six areas of action, which include local social responsibility, ethical trade, diversity and initiatives against child trafficking.

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MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE THROUGH SMALL HABITS

In addition to knowing the facts and figures of a company's CSR approach, socially minded travellers want to see such measures in action. Millennials in particular care about supporting brands that resonate with their values — a 2015 survey conducted by Nielsen found that 73% of those born from 1977 to 1995 are willing to pay more for sustainable goods, compared to 66% of all global consumers.

The banning of plastic straws is one clear example of how hospitality brands have responded to changing consumer attitudes. "Single-use" was declared Word of the Year 2018 by Collins Dictionary, which noted a four-fold increase in use of the word since 2013. Growing public concern about the environmental damage caused by single-use plastics has led businesses to rethink everyday practices. Hyatt, Hilton, Marriott, American Airlines, Alaska Airlines, Royal Caribbean, Carnival Cruise Line, McDonald's and Starbucks have all launched initiatives to phase out the use of plastic straws, and we can expect to see more businesses replacing single-use plastics with eco-friendly alternatives in 2019.

SOCIAL COMMITMENT AND TRAVELLING WITH PURPOSE

Innovative brands are also highlighting their engagement with social causes, often resulting in a more authentic experience for guests, who play an essential role in making these community initiatives possible. For example, Good Hotel London combines premium hospitality with a social business concept. The floating hotel docked on the River Thames provides long-term unemployed locals with hospitality skills, on-the-job training and a full-time salary. Afterwards, trainees are redirected to permanent job opportunities in the local economy.

In Vienna, Magdas Hotel is dedicated to helping refugees overcome barriers to employment and social integration. Two thirds of the hotel's staff are people with a refugee background, and the hotel celebrates this diversity, encouraging travellers and staff to interact. Meanwhile, beyond the hotel industry, Starbucks has made a commitment to hire 10,000 refugees worldwide by 2022.

As socially minded travellers continue to seek brands that reflect their values, many may also turn to volunteering as a way to interact with and contribute to local communities. Organisations like Adventure Alternative, WorldVentures Foundation, andBeyond and The Village Experience offer travellers the opportunity to work on humanitarian projects during their journey.

ENTERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Finally, the shift towards a circular economy system has the potential to transform the hospitality industry. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation defines a circular economy as one that is "restorative and regenerative by design," as opposed to a linear "take, make and dispose" economy. It's a model that resonates with the "leave no trace" ethos championed by nature lovers and the ideals of responsible travellers.

The exterior of QO Amsterdam, a hotel built on circular economy principles, features thermal panels that react to the outside climate to conserve the energy needed to regulate indoor temperatures. The hotel has also been designed with recycled materials, such as carpeting made from 100% recycled yarn previously used in fishing nets. And to reduce wastewater, QO has developed a grey water system in which all water that comes from showers and sinks is used again to flush toilets.

More sustainable innovations are on the way. Scheduled to open in 2021, Norwegian hotel Svart will be the world's first energy-positive hotel concept by the Arctic Circle. Reducing its yearly energy consumption by 85% compared to modern hotels, Svart will harvest enough solar energy to cover both hotel operations and the construction of the building.

For the future of sustainable hospitality, going in circles may not be such a bad thing.

DR ALAIN IMBODEN

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food + beverage
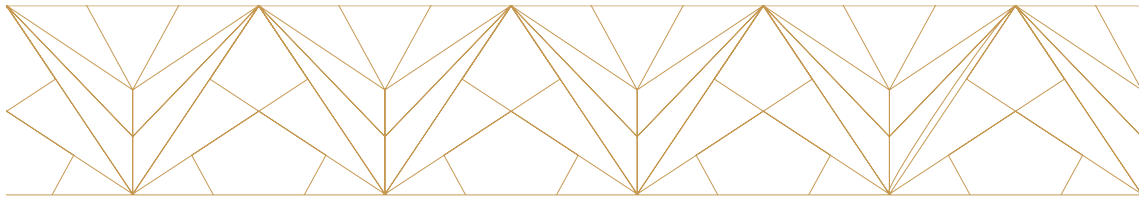
Sustainable values, health consciousness and the pursuit of pleasure are forging new frontiers in food and beverage.

From street food to haute cuisine, the food and beverage landscape is responding to the changing tastes of Millennial and Gen Z consumers who are better informed and more adventurous. A growing number of eco-friendly and health-conscious customers want to know the story behind what they eat and drink, seeking choices that are good for the environment and for themselves. However, sustainability and wellbeing are not the only trends shaping the industry: The pursuit of pleasure is alive and well, as consumers seek innovative culinary experiences (and shareworthy moments) that tease and delight the senses.

LOCALLY SOURCED AND IN SEASON

Evidenced by the growing popularity of farmer's markets and foodie tours, the locavore movement has continued to build a loyal following among consumers keen to trace the origins of their food and enjoy fresh, healthy and eco-friendly cuisine. Likewise, restaurants and chefs of the highest calibre are taking inspiration from nature to provide customers with a culinary experience steeped in local flavours.

In Paris, the three-Michelin-starred restaurant Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athénée introduces guests to the concept of "naturalness" cuisine. Healthier and more respectful of the planet, the concept features locally sourced and seasonally relevant vegetables, fish and grains, and aims to showcase the original flavour of these ingredients. High above Montreux, Swiss chef Stéphane Décotterd focuses on seasonal ingredients and makes a point of collaborating with local producers at his two-Michelin-starred restaurant Le Pont de Brent, where specialities include freshly caught féra fish from Lake Geneva.

VEGETABLE-CENTRIC CUISINE

Rather than adhering to strict or extreme diets, many consumers are exploring "flexitarianism" and the wide range of culinary possibilities offered by vegetables, grains and meat-free proteins. Health and environmental concerns are partly driving this trend, but the desire to experience new flavours, textures and sensations is also a key factor. In 2019, we can expect to see more examples of culinary innovation putting plant products at the centre of the meal.

French chef Alain Passard is a long-time innovator in this field. At his three-Michelin-starred restaurant in Paris, L'Arpège, vegetables are the centrepiece of the menu, while fish and meat feature less prominently. L'Arpège serves fresh fruits and vegetables harvested daily from the restaurant's own organic gardens in the countryside. In Passard's words, "I grow my own vegetables to be able to tell a story from the seed to the plate."

In fact, growing interest in vegetable-centric cuisine is leading to new synergies between gastronomy and agriculture. In the USA, chef Dan Barber, vegetable breeder Michael Mazourek and seedsman Matthew Goldfarb have launched Row 7, a seed company dedicated to creating more nutritious and delicious organic plant varieties. Pushing for a new concept of seed-to-table dining, the idea behind Row 7 is that diners don't need to choose between flavour and nutrition — the two go hand-in-hand. The company is working to develop foods like creamy potatoes that eliminate the need for butter, and flavourful squash that can be served on its own without sweeteners like maple syrup.

THE DEMOCRATISATION OF DINING

With their growing influence, Millennials are eroding the boundaries between formal and casual, and championing the idea that good food need not be expensive. Open-kitchen restaurants, street food and a return to cooking over fire are resulting in a more relaxed atmosphere, in which customers also feel closer to the chefs, ingredients and preparation methods that form their culinary experience.
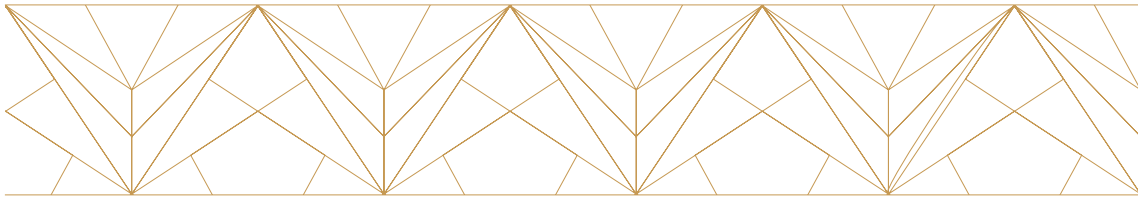
American chef Grant Achatz may be better known for his three-Michelin-starred restaurant Alinea, but he is also the owner of Roister, a lively, casual restaurant in Chicago where "the kitchen is the restaurant" and "the restaurant is the kitchen." Foie gras toast, smoked oysters and A5 Japanese Wagyu are just some of the dishes on offer at Roister, where customers watch chefs prepare their food, and chefs form an integral part of the service.

A return to primal cooking methods is also gaining popularity among diners and chefs seeking new flavours without pretension. Proper, a Buenos Aires restaurant launched by chefs Augusto Mayer and Leo Lanussol, is known for its creative open-fire cooking and has been named among Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants in 2018. Meanwhile, innovations such as the Big Green Egg, a ceramic cooker inspired by the Japanese kamado tradition, offer chefs and amateurs the versatility to smoke, grill, bake and more.

Finally, the rise of food trucks and street food in cities across the world is introducing urban consumers to a wide range of flavours in a fun atmosphere at an affordable price. In London, Street Feast markets bring region-specific international cuisine, vegan and vegetarian fare, craft beers and bespoke cocktails to derelict and disused spaces across the city. The initiative is supported by chefs such as Jamie Oliver, Yotam Ottolenghi and Thomasina Miers. Meanwhile, in keeping with Millennial values, many street food markets are working on becoming more sustainable by reducing waste and eliminating single-use plastics.

SWEET TREATS AND RAINBOWS OF FLAVOUR

An overview of food and beverage trends would not be complete without a nod to the influence of social media, which is how many consumers now discover new gastronomical experiences. Foodie photography and social media sharing has put the spotlight on culinary aesthetics as well as flavour. Many culinary innovations merging the visually delightful with the delicious can be found in the creative world of pastry and confectionary.

L'Eclair de Génie, launched by renowned French pâtissier Christophe Adam, is dedicated above all to creating éclairs with seemingly infinite variations. With ingredients like Tainori dark chocolate, Madagascar vanilla, coconut, pistachio, raspberry and yuzu citrus cream, the artful pastries offer a rainbow of flavours that is as appealing to the eye as it is to the palate.

Cédric Grolet, another celebrated French pastry chef, has more than one million followers on Instagram, where the pâtissier posts photos of elaborate creations such as his sculptured fruits or Rubik's Cube Cake. But the innovations are not only visual — reducing sugar to heighten other flavours is also a key trend within the pastry world. As Grolet has said in an interview with the Michelin Guide, "We don't rely on lots of sugar to make something delicious anymore. Flavour comes from technique, choice of ingredients and proportion. That's what evolution means."

Here in Switzerland, at the applied learning restaurants on the campuses of Glion and Les Roches, I encourage our students to explore the intersection between pleasure, sustainability and wellness. Judging from their enthusiasm, this may very well be where the future of food and beverage lies.

BENOÎT CARCENAT

Benoît Carcenat is Culinary Arts Advisor and Senior Lecturer at Sommet Education. An award-winning chef with nearly two decades of culinary experience, he earned the title of Meilleur Ouvrier de France (MOF) in Cuisine in 2015. Having worked in iconic restaurants with renowned chefs in France, Canada and Switzerland, he spent nearly a decade as Chef Adjoint at the Hôtel de Ville de Crissier.

About Sommet Education

Sommet Education is a hospitality education group committed to delivering an exceptional student experience and developing the leaders of tomorrow. Its institutions Glion and Les Roches serve undergraduate and graduate students from more than 100 countries, providing an education built on academic rigour, skills-based learning and dynamic multicultural exposure.

Sommet Education is the only education network with two hospitality institutions ranked among the world's top six for hospitality education and among the world's top three for employer reputation (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2018).

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