

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Unique experiences are more valuable than luxury products

April 7, 2017



Guest room at Four Seasons Hotel Tianjin

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

MUSCAT, Oman Travel and hospitality brands are now urged to create completely authentic experiences that also highly regard localism to cater to the new affluent traveler, but retailers need to follow suit to keep up as well.

According to the editor in chief of Cond Nast Traveller Middle East, the value of a unique travel experience has risen exponentially in the eyes of consumers, putting the pressure on travel and hospitality brands. However, it is not just travel brands that are affected, but also retailers who need to work to sell experiences along with their products.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

"Luxury consumers today do not want to be sold something anymore. They want to be a part of something," said Rhea Saran, editor in chief of Cond Nast Traveller Middle East. "Even in the travel industry we're not immune from changes.

"Today's traveler does not want the same travel experience as before," she said. "Now what they want is unique experiences and to be immersed in the culture.

"They expect their hotel and the services they use while on vacation to reflect the location. They also expect things like the concierge service to go way beyond booking dinner experiences but to actually connect them with the culture outside of the hotel."

Traveling experiences

During the session, "The Rise of Non-Material Luxury" at the Cond Nast International Luxury Conference 2017 on April 5, Ms. Saran explained that consumers today are now more interested in curating experiences rather than possessions.

While it may be considered crass to brag about a new expensive bag a consumer has bought, it is not to tell friends tales of a trip or vacation.

Retailers need to embrace that idea and craft experiences around their products so that consumers are purchasing a story instead of just a bag.



Fairmont's introduces cocktails for a more unique experience

This concept is especially true when consumers are traveling. The affluent traveler is looking for a trip that is inherently local so she can experience the culture of her destination.

Crafting experiences

Hospitality brands need to embrace this and create an environment that represents the brand while also representing local culture. Beyond just the simple architecture of the hotel, it could also be beneficial for these brands to connect with local vendors to localize visitors' trips.

For instance, Four Seasons in Texas will connect visitors with the best manufacturer of cowboy boots in the area and the group's hotel in Prague will arrange a private night at the opera.



Four Seasons tour of Prague

Not only is the brand manufacturing one-of-a-kind experiences for travelers, but the experiences are also highly relevant to their local destination.

Affluent consumers will soon be able to trace the transatlantic course of the ill-fated RMS Titanic on an exclusive survey expedition, in an example of a way for a brand to curate a unique experience.

Built in Belfast, Ireland by the United Kingdom's White Star Line, the Titanic was deemed "unsinkable," being that it

was the largest passenger cruise liner built at the time. Despite its claim to fame, the Titanic sunk on its maiden voyage between Southampton, England and New York Harbor on April 15, 1912 after colliding with an iceberg in the North Atlantic, a fact now disputed by experts ([see more](#)).

Also, Regent Seven Seas Cruises is helping passengers achieve wellbeing in mind and body through a new program.

Starting this summer, guests cruising the Mediterranean aboard Seven Seas Voyager can take advantage of Seven Seas Wellness, which will include a series of outings and spa treatments. For affluent consumers, wellness has become a key objective, with many using their time traveling as a means to further their health goals ([see more](#)).

"This idea goes beyond the travel industry into retail as well," Ms. Saran said "A luxury traveler is a luxury consumer, and if they want a unique experience for their stay they are going to want it in their retail experience as well.

"It is important to incorporate these ideas in the store," she said.

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.