

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## 58pc of travelers believe their trips should benefit local community: Accor

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*Travelers are becoming more socially and environmentally conscious, deeply impacting the travel industry at large. Image credit: Accor*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French hotel giant **Accor** is revealing the characteristics of the emerging age of hospitality per its latest **Hospitality Ahead: Transforming How We Welcome, Engage and Manage** report.

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As a continuation of the brand's From Change To Opportunity series, the report is an exploration of the industry's shifting tides and how leaders can adapt to them. Aside from the insider knowledge and outlook on the coming and current trends, the report also explores ways that leaders can not only adapt to the changes but turn them into opportunities for growth and furthering profit.

The findings are based on Accor-led research from 2022 in which the brand interviewed 15,000 travelers across 7 countries. The report is also based on interviews with industry experts and real-life examples from top hospitality brands.

### Purpose-driven

The report covers three main points: travelers' new mindsets and goals, the guest-to-brand relationship and the new management style, turning heavily towards a sustainably localized focus.

From these topic explorations, Accor found an underlying common thread throughout: travelers are wanting more meaningful experiences, seeking to connect on a deeper level with the destinations that they go to, and the people and brands that they interact with.

The world is shifting and transforming at a rapid pace, and hospitality is moving right along with it. As a global leader, we need to make sure that we anticipate, adapt and respond to these transformations. [pic.twitter.com/p9tV0Oiodi](https://pic.twitter.com/p9tV0Oiodi)

Accor Group (@Accor) **March 13, 2023**

Travel is not viewed anymore as merely a chance to get away from everyday life, but is rather a way to connect more deeply with one's self while living a new experience. For this reason, travelers are engaging in far more research before they pick a vacation spot.

The desire to "live a new experience" is in fact the most important criterion in the "traveler emotional needs and choice" category of the report, showing that immersive discovery is a key driver of travel today.

For this reason, rather than picking the same destinations each year, or picking from the limited lineup of popular spots, travelers are doing their own research, looking for places that they believe will provide personal enrichment and meaningful experiences. If they pick a place they have been before, it is reported that they are prioritizing ways that they can get to know the location on a deeper level, seeking out fresh ways to experience the destination.

In other words, gone are the days of passive travel.



Travelers are leaning more than ever towards purpose-driven travel, seeking enriching experiences for the soul and communities. Image credit: Accor

Today, when people travel, they are not just paying for a change in scenery. They expect to be totally immersed in a new culture, experiencing a new way of life through authentic experiences, all while finding ways to connect to themselves.

Because of this emphasis of purposeful travel and self-fulfillment, hospitality brands that embrace a personal branding approach are expected to perform well in the evolving market. Brands that show a commitment to sustainability, offer ways to connect with the local culture, communicate brand values and strengthen relationships with consumers through initiatives such as guest loyalty programs and events are especially well-positioned.

"Loyalty is not a destination, it's a customer journey," said Mehdi Hemici, chief loyalty and ecommerce officer of Accor, in a statement.

"Our customers essentially want us to satisfy three needs: make my life special, make my life simple and look after me."

### Leaning green

With travelers wanting to not only feel personally fulfilled while on vacation but to also connect with local cultures, sustainability is quickly rising to be among their top priorities.

In fact, a recent report shows that 60 percent of travelers are citing sustainability as their very top priority (see story). Accor echoes this, citing that "over two-thirds of consumers expect companies to be a driving force in positive social and environmental change."

Travelers want to support brands that show a commitment to providing ethical experiences, engaging in climate action and offering them ways to travel in a way that supports their values. This includes promoting community well-being something that has risen to be an extremely influential marker in travelers' minds since the pandemic, with travelers often picking brands that have a positive community impact over ones that do not engage with local communities or actively harm them (see story).



*As travelers seek out more meaningful travel experiences, eco-tourism and local-led encounters are expected to rise even more in popularity.  
Image credit: Accor*

It seems that as travelers seek out experiences that will provide emotional nourishment and purpose, looking to establish a stronger sense of self, brands will have to do the same; brands will have to present a stronger identity in marketing, speaking to the values that travelers are holding dearer.

"Shifting hospitality's business model is the only way we can ensure a positive contribution, solving more problems than we create," said Brune Poirson, chief sustainability officer of Accor, in a statement.

"We need to inspire new narratives around travel and promote what we call a more Conscious Exploration' getting that sense of place,' discovering the richness of the local environment and communities, moving away from standardized experiences, exploring destinations closer to home and new ways of traveling, while also promoting soft mobility to our guests," Ms. Poirson said. "We strongly encourage our hotels to go further in connecting with their local ecosystems across the board working with their community, protecting local nature and its resources, favoring local, responsible sourcing including local food producers; and thereby connecting guests more authentically to each destination."

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