THE NEW COLLECTIVE

Fresh guests. New needs. Emerging facilities.

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

WHAT AMENITIES DO TODAY’S TRAVELLERS USE, AND WHICH DO THEY ONLY EXPECT TO USE?

Guests in the US were asked about their predicted use of hotel amenities. The results show dramatic overestimates of the use of some common amenities, and interesting underestimates of others.*

Source: Cornell University’s Center for Hospitality Research 2018.

*These statistics are based on a poll of 724 guests at 33 upscale and luxury-level American properties owned by one parent company. The statistics here are based on stays of one to two nights.
The hospitality industry has reached a crossroads. The big chains are taking cues from upscale hostels and disruptive upstarts in moves that make clear economic sense. Brands are realising that the needs and wants of guests are changing—and that they have a prime opportunity to invigorate long-dead lobbies and meeting rooms. What’s becoming of these areas? Vibrant shared places that build bridges between guests and locals and serve a multitude of purposes.

Working and co-working in lobbies is old news, even in hotels that haven’t yet optimised or formalised their public spaces to suit the needs of the modern traveller. What’s more interesting is that, in many cases, what’s naturally emerging is more than just co-working. It’s the chance for hotels to be reimagined as centres of communities.

This is where we meet The New Collective. The next wave of guests with different needs than their predecessors. Though they may not share exactly the same set of needs across the board or across the globe, they share a desire for a fresh set of services and facilities. And for the hospitality industry to find new ways to be, well, accommodating.

There’s no doubt that the demand for modern, collaborative spaces in hotels is growing—and that big brands have some major course-switching to do. The names that most quickly adapt to the new sharing economy will find themselves in an enviable position, both financially and philosophically.

What’s the thrust of this new-economy movement in hospitality? The idea that underutilised square metres cost cash is central. But perhaps more importantly, there’s an opportunity to become a destination within a destination. A place that people choose to gather, rather than where they simply sleep before stepping out to more interesting addresses. These thoughts are both informing the players on how to evolve, and admonishing them for not already having done so. The truth is that the big chains have long been holding onto dusty, unused spaces and falling short of their potential.

Picture the public parts of most hotels. What do you see? Desks, couches, dark meeting rooms and empty business centres? But what attributes do they have? Often, prime locations in vibrant cities, terrific Wi-Fi and great food and drink options.

Some of the chains re-invigorating those places are doing so by beckoning the locals. By inviting artists-in-residence to create onsite, by hosting limited-run, pop-up food and drink concepts and shopping experiences.

Yotel is a good example of a brand gaining traction with The New Collective. Featuring ‘cabins’ that can be just 12 sqm, they are designed for guests to foray into the common areas instead of hiding out in their rooms. Some thoughtful Yotel features include around-the-clock gyms with Peloton bikes and the world’s first robot luggage concierge, aptly named Yobot.

The inspirational Wink brand is set to usher this trend into Southeast Asia with their first opening in Vietnam next year. Partnering with co-working venture Toong, Wink is interpreting public and private spaces for a new breed of traveller.

Whichever form shared areas take under The New Collective, the target audience needs to connect with the brand and frequent the property to provide these spaces the sense of community that will, in turn, lead to purpose and relevance. 🙌
2019–20
EVENTS

OCTOBER

9–10 October
The Annual Hotel Conference (The AHC)
Manchester, England

16–18 October
ITB Asia
Singapore

17–19 October
UNWTO/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook
Guilin, China

20–21 October
World Spa Awards
Dubai, UAE

23–25 October
Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific (HICAP)
Hong Kong

30–31 October
International Conference on LGBT Tourism & Hospitality
Los Angeles, USA

30 October–1 November
HI Design Asia Forum
Bangkok, Thailand

4–6 November
World Travel Market
London, England

7–10 November
Condé Nast Luxury Travel Fair
London, England

10–11 November
HX: The Hotel Experience
New York, USA

12 November
Top Hotel World Tour
New York, USA

12–13 November
Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition & Conference (HITEC)
Dubai, UAE

17–20 November
Loop Luxury Fair
Andermatt, Switzerland

20–22 November
InteriHotel
Barcelona, Spain

21 November
Worldwide Hospitality Awards
Paris, France

27–29 November
PATA Destination Marketing Forum
Pattaya, Thailand

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

2–5 December
International Luxury Travel Market
Cannes, France

5 December
Top Hotel World Tour
Shanghai, China

12–14 December
International Hotel Equipment and Supplies Exhibition
Guangzhou, China

12–16 January
ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF)
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei

13–14 January
Hotel General Managers’ Conference
London, England

17–19 February
Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME)
Melbourne, Australia

26–27 February
Business Travel Show
London, England

MARCH

2–4 March
International Hotel Investment Forum (IHIF)
Berlin, Germany

4–8 March
ITB Berlin
Berlin, Germany
Equinox Hotels Redefines the Word ‘Sanctuary’

Luxury gym brand Equinox is leaping into the world of hospitality, bringing the rich and famous a five-star temple of wellness in New York City’s Hudson Yards. Boasting a 5,600 sqm fitness club and spa for the ultimate detox as well as 212 futuristic rooms across 15 floors of a 92-storey building, Equinox’s new property has everything needed for the best sleep of your life, including soundproof walls and blackout shades. Stay here for a night and leave a new person.

From Retail to Resorts: How Consumer Brands are Branching Out

We’re no strangers to consumer brands foraying into the hotel business (see Taco Bell). The latest contender is Japanese minimalist retailer MUJI with the opening of MUJI HOTEL GINZA. Lodged above their flagship store, 79 rooms have been designed to offer the full manifestation of the MUJI philosophy and environment. Touting open-plan spaces, recycled materials throughout—even a wooden bathtub—and their own homeware collection, every detail is a reflection of MUJI’s no-frills vision. Feeling hungry? Pop downstairs to their branded diner. You can literally eat, sleep and wear MUJI, all in one place.

3den’s New-age Urban Lounge Scene

Shared space just received a glossy facelift. 3den (pronounced ‘Eden’) extends the idea of a members’ club into an accessible urban sanctuary packed with all the amenities a busy city dweller would need. We’re talking everything: nap pods, meditation rooms, private showers, workspaces, lounge areas, the list goes on. These otherwise luxe resources (especially for the average New Yorker) are made affordable through 3den’s pay-as-you-go system. It’s public utilities made sexy.

Taco ‘Bout Great Branding

Taco Bell’s iconic hot sauce packets have been converted into floaties and pillows... say what? Thinking outside the bun, America’s favourite Mexican restaurant amped up its brand image with a temporary pop-up opening of The Bell: A Taco Bell Hotel in Palm Springs. Vibrant décor, exclusive menu items and an onsite salon with branded offerings like Baja manicures immersed guests in the full Taco Bell experience. The fiery move paid off: all 70 rooms sold out in under two minutes upon opening. Could a permanent version be in the works? Live mas, friends!

Relax by the Pool in Retro Gamer Style

With each year seemingly more chaotic than the last, it’s no wonder we’re seeing more allusions to the good old 90s. Turning up the dial on fun nostalgia, Nautilus by Arlo equipped their 14 private cabanas with vintage Nintendo consoles—talk about one-upping the poolside lounge game! Each console is loaded with some of our favourite childhood games, like Super Mario and Pac-Man. Stay and play or soak up the rays—the choice is yours!
TRENDING: EVOLVING LOBBIES

The idea of an underutilised lobby, populated by guests solely at check-in and check-out, is a thing of the past.

Lobbies that were stale and uninspired—large, lonely rooms with one unloved sofa in the corner—are becoming extended living rooms. Picture public spaces with cosy nooks and lightning fast Wi-Fi, places where guests can find a private corner to work or join the crowd. The modern lobby melds co-working with coffee and cocktails in spaces that look like the coolest members’ club, with corners that feel like the family den. For 2020, a boring lobby is likely equated—in the minds of guests—to a boring hotel.

Peep into the lobby of The Hoxton, Shoreditch and you’ll find it buzzing with people. Many are glued to their screens, clicking away at their keyboards. Entrepreneurs discuss business over coffee. Others prefer Champagne—the bar is unsurprisingly popular. The Hoxton has turned its lobby into an all-day destination: cushy sofas, 2am last call and a never-ending string of cultural events invite you to become a part of the community. The vibe is homely, the décor industrial-cool and the chatter lively. The Hoxton brands itself as a place where guests can kick back among locals—it’s lobby conveys that message loud and clear.

These spaces work to elevate the guest experience and further convey the hotel’s brand story—which is excellent considering that hotel rooms are getting smaller, further encouraging keyholders to occupy thoughtfully designed communal spaces. Moxy Hotels offers guests group games, teasing Jenga, karaoke or even spin the bottle in their lobby.

The concept has taken off. Like The Hoxton, several hotels now boast a co-working-friendly, communal lobby. Other hotels use the lobby to highlight their eco-conscious touches. At 1 Hotel Brooklyn Bridge Park, large potted plants, hanging gardens, recycled wooden elements and loads of natural light create a sustainable oasis in the middle of the city.

Boutique hotels aren’t the only ones jumping onboard the lobby revival bandwagon. Big chains are elevating their lobbies with personal touches too. The Westin, for example, began introducing vertical gardens into more of its lobbies over the last few years.

Industry News
TRENDING: ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

How quickly would you jump at the chance to catch your favourite artists in their element?

Artist-in-residence programmes are trending in the hotel scene, and it’s no surprise why—the creative community is enthralling, and the public yearns to experience a slice of their life. Many hotels have upped the ante and moved beyond showcasing local artists’ work, with a few hotels inviting artists to live with them and giving guests the chance to kick back with the creatives and observe their process. Here’s a look at some of the most captivating artist-in-residence programmes from around the globe.

CABO’S COLOURFUL HUB

Stepping into Hotel El Ganzo in San Jose Del Cabo is akin to walking through a mini art gallery with an added bonus: you never know who you’ll bump into at dinner. Musicians swing through their doors in constant rotation—pop sensation Cody Simpson and The Tide performed there in May—and are known to mingle with guests during their stay. On the forefront of experience-oriented retreats, the hotel boasts an underground recording studio for visiting artists and shifting wall art. Head over to their popular YouTube channel and you’ll see artists transform the hotel grounds as they please. No two nights there ever look the same.

A CAPE TOWN PORTRAIT

When Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel launched their ongoing artist-in-residence programme, they put the focus on unique opportunities and brought in Nelson Mandela’s portraitist Cyril Coetzee. Since 2017, Coetzee has been hosting private art lessons for those who want to nurture their creativity. Even more special, guests can get their portrait painted by Coetzee and hung in their room or delivered anywhere in the world. The allure of artist-in-residence programmes is that they’re an incubator for once-in-a-lifetime experiences. This is one of those.

SANTA FE SOJOURN

How about seeing artists at work, or play, for three full days? Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado Santa Fe launched an artist-in-residence programme in collaboration with TOURISM Santa Fe, inviting five New Mexico-based artists—Cheri O’Brien, Janet O’Neal, Roberta Parry, Sean Mary Helen Johnson and Irene Owsley—to spend three days each at the resort. Guests were invited to interact and connect with the artists. The cherry on top? Watching artists work through three live demos each.
QUO’S NEW VISUAL IDENTITY

What could be more meta than a branding agency rebranding itself?

This was the challenge QUO took on this year. And it wasn’t easy. It required a group of creatives trying to see themselves in an entirely new light, and to see themselves collectively in the same new light.

It all started with a long, hard look at who QUO is and what we stand for. “Following the same process we take with client projects, we pulled some key team members together for an internal workshop and brainstormed QUO’s Vision and Why (our reason for being). We considered: What is our ultimate dream for QUO? Why do we exist? What’s our underlying purpose?” explained QUO’s Chief Branding Officer, Catherine Monthienwichienchai.

“We quickly narrowed our focus on what we do best—defining culture—and the lengths to which we, as an agency, go to probe beneath the surface and understand each brand’s core. This is where distinction and differentiation is born. Our Why then became obvious: ‘We believe that every organisation has a soul worth uncovering’.”

From this Why, the strategy was formed. QUO’s updated brand culture focused on a combination of passionate creativity and strategic intellect, alongside bold opinion tempered with absolute humility.

The next step was to translate our strategic thinking into visual form. And, in doing so, we discovered that we are possibly our own worst client…

What came to light in the process were ideas of duality. The inklings of the new identity were born on QUO Day, a day when our staffers were broken up into small teams, each tasked with coming up with a new identity in a short time frame.

What could represent us better?

Visual identity informs the entire look and feel of a brand, from colours to graphical devices used for brand expression. It defines how the brand looks—making it recognisable, repeatable and familiar. This means, as people see it again and again, they begin to recognise it.

Following this thinking, as brands grow and evolve, their identities must change as well. QUO CEO David Keen felt the time was right for a reinvention after a half-decade with the previous identity. “The world is changing, polarisation isn’t just for politics, it’s for branding and identity as well. We, as a branding agency, need to stay constantly fresh in Europe and Asia. If we don’t continually reinvent ourselves, we’ll end up behind the eight ball.”

Column
Nataya Brahmacupta, Deputy Creative Director, QUO
As we moved on to logo redesign, we decided to retain our split letterform, with the first half in classical Serif font while the second half morphed into the more modern Sans Serif font. It clearly communicates the dual nature of our brand and our appreciation for both the classic and contemporary.

We uncover the soul of your organisation

Evolving our logo also allowed us a chance to ‘explore our soul through the window of our letterform’, a concept that would develop as our new look took shape. Throughout the reimagined visual identity, the letterform was enlarged and merged with an image to provide a window to the soul of our brand. This visual language aims to present two contrasting yet harmonious ideas—one inside the letterform and one outside.

Each set of key visuals shares something that may or may not be easy to see. For example: perspective. One letterform shows a crowded zebra crossing, while the underlying image juxtaposes a view taken from far enough above the street to show the tops of skyscrapers nearby. Another shows an underlying image of lanterns at night while the letterform contains the same shape, but presented as a hot air balloon by day.

An identity is so much more than a logo.

As QUO Content Director Derek Kirk explained, our new strategic thinking required an updated Tone of Voice. “We felt this striking visual treatment demanded a more measured approach to copy,” he said. “We took a less-is-more stance—paring down headers, embracing white space and cutting the fluff. Our goal was to create a decidedly human voice that’s unpretentious, concise and just witty enough to keep readers smiling.”

To represent our digital department, we presented an image of intersecting highways by day and night. When you look more closely, this network is not unlike digital connections; it’s all about contrasts and blending together. Other pieces of our new key visuals include Egyptian hieroglyphics within modern typeface, or Western and Eastern cultures presented together in the forms of dancers.

When we hit the right idea, we all knew it. David said, “It was a very poignant moment. In 23 years, I’ve never seen something that represents us better.”

Old and new, East and West—this is who we are, what we do and what we want to do in the future. As much as it’s meant to represent us, it’s also meant to inspire us, beckoning us to continue discovering our own soul, so we can better understand the souls of our clients.
MAKE YOUR WORDS MATTER
How to Write Copy for People Who Hate Reading

Modern attention spans are short. Blame generations, blame the media, blame smartphones, blame an overstimulating world—but it’s the truth.

The New Collective are a busy bunch. Lots limit their travel reading to 50-word reviews on TripAdvisor, or one of the OTAs. Waste their time once and they’ll never read your content again. But give them a payoff they can relate to—or an idea they can share—and they might even bestow you with the highest of contemporary honours—a follow for your brand, company or personal social media.

So, in an age of infamously short attention spans, how do we get written brand messages across, write compelling copy and keep people reading until the end? It’s not easy.

Here’s what brand writing for the new age should look like:

KEEP IT SHORT
This should be obvious. Trim every unnecessary word and idea. If it doesn’t add to the key message or voice, cut it. Be merciless. There’s no time for asides and tangents in this new branding world. We lose readers with each line.

BREAK IT UP
The new reader is bored by blocky text. Find a way to chop big ideas into smaller pieces. Use short, punchy sentences. Paragraphs are ideal when kept under five lines.

MAKE HEADINGS HIT HOME
Many readers don’t read body copy, they just bounce from subhead to subhead. Make sure you get your message across to people who only read the big text.

DISTIL THE MESSAGE
Make your message as succinct as possible. Can you explain your concept in one line? If not, it’s too complicated. Make it the sort of thing today’s modern reader, a notorious skimmer, will still ‘get’.

MAKE IT SASSY
If writing is funny or edgy, readers will stick around to see how you say something, even if the underlying message isn’t groundbreaking. Tell jokes, offer witticisms, make your reader a friend.

DELFER SOUNDBITES
People want to sound smart in front of their friends. You know, cocktail party chatter. It’s the same reasoning behind sharing on social media. Box-outs are good, lists are great, pull-quotes are god. That’s not a typo.

PROVIDE A PAYOFF
Spend some time on your wrap-up or takeaway message. Give your reader a reason to be glad they spent five minutes of their day with your writing.

Are you still here? Have you read this entire article or just skimmed it? The fact that you’re reading these words means you’re probably in the minority. Either way, thanks for reading.
THE MYST EMERGES IN VIETNAM

Those frequenting Saigon’s trung tâm, or centre, would have noticed a new outline in their midst last year. Featuring walls that look half-finished with trees jutting out, The Myst Dong Khoi is one of the city’s next generation of boutique hotels, challenging the landscape and offering something to appeal to The New Collective, younger domestic travellers as well as those from across Asia and Europe.

The design makes reference to the forest and nature’s eventual triumph over created landscapes, but the spirit of the hotel takes inspiration from the alley, or hẻm, one of Saigon’s distinctive features. The Myst’s customers love more than the out-there aesthetic of the new hotel, which is tucked down a quiet alley but steps away from the city’s buzz. They enjoy experiencing Saigon’s hẻm in all its street-food-laden, shopping and local-café glory, a place where they can watch authentic city life unfold around them.

The hotel was founded by Vũ Hồng Nam and Nguyễn Thị Phúc, the husband-and-wife team behind Silverland Hotels & Spas, who wanted to offer something new to the landscape.

Instead of opening another Silverland, they decided to take a risk—creating something that could propel them far into the future.

“I needed to build a brand to meet a new set of expectations, a place to make a different kind of memory, and tell a fresh brand story,” said Nam.

The story of local culture, deep comfort and contemporary design was told in conjunction with award-winning Vietnamese architect Nguyễn Hòa Hiệp—albeit without a blueprint in sight.

Nam set his sights on Hòa Hiệp, with his reputation for wild creations and rebellion, after other architects called the concept for The Myst too bold.

Hòa Hiệp, of a21studio, accepted a meeting but said he’d only take the gig if he felt the two had a connection and shared similar ideas. He’d never designed a hotel before, instead making his name with community spaces and large-scale art installations that blend indoor and outdoor spaces in unusual ways.

“At that meeting,” said Nam, “we chose each other. And it was our ‘lương duyên’, a Vietnamese word for fate, that we would work together.”

A few weeks later, they met again, Nam expecting to see Hòa Hiệp’s blueprints.

“Instead, he pulled out a blank sheet of paper and coloured it green, leaving a white square in the centre.” The architect noted that all the buildings in the neighbourhood were glass and concrete and he wanted to create something different, something closer to a forest in the city.

Hòa Hiệp continued on the project with no formal plans or drawings, instead explaining his ideas to construction companies that, unsurprisingly, turned him down.

Though Hòa Hiệp lacked hotel experience, Nam believes it actually worked to the pair’s advantage, allowing them to completely step out of traditional hotel design thinking.

He likened the process to, at times, being lost in a forest, but in the end finding the light through the extraordinary design of The Myst. The new hotel quickly received acclaim and began turning a profit.

When asked about The Myst, Nam likes to say, “I did it all for money!” but that’s only partially a joke, he says, clarifying, “All that we did would be useless if people didn’t find it valuable enough to book it and enjoy it.” ✭”

Column
Ly Bao Yen, Country Manager Vietnam, QUO
Adapting websites and social media for the new reality

The Evolving Digital Audience

Only a few years ago, digital hospitality strategy was a microsite and brand-name PPC ads. This seemed sufficient for an audience of passive email recipients and Google searchers. Hospitality has always been slow to adopt new technologies and digital strategies, preferring to defer to the power of the OTAs with their high commissions, rather than investing in know-how and staff skills to empower their own adoption.

The new economy, however, is not willing to wait. The new audience has evolved—and continues to evolve—with new ways of connecting to each other and the companies they love, with higher expectations of brand and product discovery. The reach required to actively identify and engage this new audience is far wider now, with a proliferation of channels and audience platforms—many country- and language-specific—which travel wholesalers find difficult to reach and penetrate, focused as they are on more general audiences.

Properties can reach ever-more-targeted markets with specific product and offer content.

This ocean of opportunity is available to operators small and large, and hoteliers would be well-advised to consider their strategies and tactics to engage at this tribal level.

The Evolving Property Website

In the past, we’ve viewed the website as little more than a booking engine, at best, or an information portal, at worst. It’s time we take another look at this digital space to understand its role in guest experience.

The core functions of a property website are inspiration, information and booking. These functions will not change anytime soon. So what other aspects of a website are major factors in the user experience of the digital space?

The end goal is bookings or conversions. The priorities are to guide a user through a logical escalation from discovery and validation to conversion. This requires skills beyond beautiful design. No single factor takes precedence, since you still need to tell a unique brand story, present a compelling product offering and make a sale. The right approach is one that blends all three in a way which encapsulates the best your property or product has to offer.
What better way to present your human face and authentic experience than to let them loose with a remit to educate and entertain? Humour and authenticity make people popular—and these are traits that can’t be faked. Introducing them into your brand storytelling generates online buzz and social shares. Sure, there may be false starts and dead ends. But if there’s one thing the modern tribal economy thrives on, it’s innovation and honesty.

Just like physical space, your web space offers the same opportunities to focus on usage patterns and maximise user and property value. News travels much faster and across different social channels in The New Collective. This is where communities of interest thrive, where influencers can make or break new businesses with a single tweet. There’s rarely a property nowadays without Facebook and Instagram, but that’s usually as far as it goes. That’s where the strategic imagination fails, falling back on frequency and predefined content buckets instead of creative engagement that is true to the guest experience.

Instagram may be the leader in hospitality exposure, but how many properties give the chef a decent camera and hashtag to document the actual experience of preparing hundreds of delicious meals per night? You have dozens of content producers walking around your property in the form of staff.

“

Three Ways to Adapt:

Half of users perform basic hotel research on mobile but less than 20% make bookings there, preferring a computer for online transactions. Mobile should prioritise discovery and basic engagement over conversion.

Some estimates say that half of OTA users also browse the websites of the properties they are considering. Target those specific users with compelling offers and commitments to enhance the perceived and actual value of direct bookings.

Design localisation is the process of respecting the expectations of particular national and racial audience groups. Reading from right to left, content density and button-positioning preference can be strongly affected by cultural expectations. Try to adapt to the needs of your target market.

How to Harness your Social-Media Potential:

• Form Smart Relationships: Find partners who share your values, and create ongoing, cross promotional relationships that benefit both parties.

• Go Offsite: Your brand and ethos doesn’t end at your property lines. To be fully realised as a company guests can’t wait to connect with, create content with complementary brands to reinforce values and reach their audience as well.

• Be Where Your Guests Are: Use PPC and display ads across the social spectrum to ensure your name is in front of a targeted audience as they share and engage with each other. Reach out to them where they’re actually reachable.

• Social Media Guest Relations: Engage in pre-arrival and post-departure engagement through social channels; tag recent guests to ask how they felt about their stay and to share their photos.

Using techniques like these will help properties thrive in the eyes of The New Collective, allowing them to grow new audiences, in new ways, through new channels.
Super Apps and the Future of Travel

HOW CAN ALL-IN-ONE APPS AND ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCIES WORK TOGETHER?

Feature
Victoria Arnold, Senior Brand Strategist, QUO
If you’ve lived or travelled extensively in a South-East Asian city, congratulations, you’re a battle-hardened traffic warrior. You have a sixth sense (or handy-dandy app) that tells you just the right time to leave to avoid gridlock or torrential downpours. You’ve mastered the maze of side streets and alleys. And, as crazy as it sounds, you’re aware that a missed U-turn can change the course of your life.

Living in this traffic battleground doesn’t only impact our commute time and daily routine—it impacts the very core of our culture. Endless congestion demands conveniences that enable people to do as much as possible in one place. It’s why Asia’s 7-Eleven stores are becoming one-stop shops. It’s why, despite the growth of regional and global e-commerce marketplaces, mega malls at all price points are still an integral part of the landscape. We are constantly searching for solutions in order to preserve the most valuable resource of all: time. Because with time comes the freedom to plan, explore, reflect, nourish, grow and achieve.

This culture of convenience is why I’m attracted to super apps. Hi, my name is Vicky and I am a Line and Grab addict. There are many other super apps out there: Go Jek, WeChat, and hell, even Google Maps, but I’ve picked my poison and I’m sticking to it.

I use both Line and Grab for their original purposes of chatting and transport, respectively, but I’ve also grown with them, taking advantage of their different offerings as the platforms expand into new territory. I don’t want 50 apps crowding my home screen—I get eyeball fatigue.

With Line and Grab, users can go to one place, get a lot done and get useful rewards. It is undeniable that these super apps are made to attract and retain attention. Engagement is measured both by the amount of daily regular users and by the amount of time and money they’re spending on the platform. These super apps are our everyday apps and cover retail, delivery, banking, travel bookings, eating and drinking. Far more than what they were originally intended for.

What does this mean for single purpose OTAs like Booking.com and Agoda? While they aren’t most people’s daily app, OTAs have evolved to offer customers a measure of assurance and support. Could their relevance be elevated by the relationships they have with hospitality management companies and independent owners who provide them with inventory? It may be now, but knowing how hungry and competitive these super apps are, it isn’t outside the realm of possibility that super apps will change the game again by approaching owners and brands with a more dynamic financial model.

Another point to consider is loyalty. My loyalty to Grab is rewarded immediately and frequently. Points can be used to buy movie tickets, cosmetics, bubble tea, frequent flyer miles, UNICEF donations and even Agoda rewards. Meanwhile, back at Agoda, I’ve got THB 720 in AgodaCash and can only use it for booking rooms on Agoda. It’s a pretty one-dimensional model.

Will the next step in OTA evolution be to become super apps themselves or partner with these apps? Or do they continue to stand on their own but reinvent themselves and significantly rehaul their loyalty programmes?

OTAs could even be absorbed into super apps or establish permanent pathways, much like the ones Grab has to Booking.com and Agoda. But there are risks in associating your hard-earned brand reputation with a rising giant. The cost of joining forces with the wrong super app could be colossal.

The implications of this ongoing evolution are greater than I can capture in one article. My perspective and concerns as a consumer and travel industry expert may be different to someone from a financial or tech background. It’s hard to say how this will all turn out—there are still so many shifting factors, and I haven’t even discussed the super apps in Latin America or the lack of them in the US.

But let’s start by booking a ride on Grab and seeing where it takes us... 🛴

These super apps are our everyday apps and cover retail, delivery, banking, travel bookings, eating and drinking. Far more than what they were originally intended for.

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Wellness, Democritised

IN CONVERSATION WITH
INGO SCHWEDER, FOUNDER
OF GOCO HOSPITALITY AND
PASSIONATE ADVOCATE OF
WELLNESS FOR ALL

F rom time to cost, wellness is becoming easier to digest. Spa pods, wellness amenities in mid-range hotel rooms, and airport treatments that take only 20 minutes instead of an hour—or only USD 20 instead of USD 100—are on the rise.

The dawning of the democratisation of wellness relies heavily on the concept that treatments for body and soul don’t start and end in a spa and shouldn’t be the exclusive domain of the affluent.

Wellness is needed by those on a budget: fatigued workers and harried business people who have little time and money but lots of stress. It’s also for the budget traveller who is beginning to believe that self-care trumps a pricy tourist trap meal or guided tour on their annual vacation.

Earlier this year, Skift reported that wellness tourism is growing twice as fast as global tourism. And wellness tourists are significantly higher spenders, dropping 50 to 180% more than their non-wellness counterparts, which makes wellness an attractive market segment to everyone in the hospitality industry.
We sat down with Ingo Schweder, CEO and Founder of GOCO Hospitality, a pioneering consultancy, development and management company creating, designing and operating tomorrow’s spa and wellness hospitality concepts. He shared his thoughts on wellness for all and how brands can incorporate this ethos into their mission—even if they can’t drop USD 10 million on a spa facility.

He noted that most of what’s being marketed to spa clients today as ‘new’ has roots in much older traditions such as Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Homeopathy—systems that, historically, were never the exclusive domain of the affluent.

“Yoga and breathing? That’s repackaged Ayurveda. Cryotherapy and thermal treatments? They work on the same principles as the ancient Roman frigidarium and laconicum from 2,000 years ago,” he said.

“These therapies are just re-emerging in a modern context. In this wave, however, the luxury, high-end consumer is the one who jumped on it and the middle classes were squeezed out.”

When asked if he sees the pendulum swinging back, he quickly corrected, “It’s moving to the right spot. To where it should be, to where the majority of the world has the right to be well, eat healthy, exercise and know about nutrition.”

His Glen Ivy Hot Springs, in California, exemplifies that, offering wellness for the masses, with an average spend of just USD 150 for a whole day—including food and massage. They call themselves ‘everyone’s resort’.

GOCO has also developed limited but targeted platforms for hotel groups like Emaar Hospitality, creating services for seven of their Address Hotel properties in Dubai. “I believe many other hotel groups will enter that ‘limited-service space’ and that their guests will have a ‘right’ to spa services too,” Ingo said.

However, he does see some pitfalls when every hotel on the block attempts to offer what they believe is wellness. “I like democratisation and don’t like elitist behaviour, in principle. The problem with democratisation is that a mid-range hotel may hire a second-class yoga teacher or therapist that has no experience, and that’s very dangerous—it runs counter to wellness and could leave clients in a worsened state.”

So how can a budget hotel incorporate wellness without destroying their budget or risking their guests’ health?

“It doesn’t have to be treatment. It can be clean food options on the menu, natural light in the rooms,” he said.

He invited brands to look at amenities that don’t cost much. “Create an atmosphere of wellbeing, the right music, a wellness feature programmed into a smart TV, training staff to speak nicely on the phone and use guests’ names.”

“Wellness is not only the spa. It’s the air you breathe, the water you drink, the light in your room. You don’t always need to build a wellness centre. It can be sensitivity in architecture and fabric, softer things that create a feeling of wellness is a great place to start.”

Wellness is not only the spa, it’s the air you breathe, the water you drink, the light in your room.
Z Marks the Spot

BEING REAL AND RELEVANT WITH THE ALPHABET’S FINAL GENERATION

Tired of pandering to the whims of millennials? Well here comes some good news: there’s a new gen in town, and they’re coming to a hotel near you very soon.

The less-good news: they’re fiercely independent, switched on (in more ways than one) and totally resistant to all the usual marketing garbage.

So crank up your social spaces, update your Snapchat and get ready to redefine the rules of hotel branding, because this crowd plays to a different kind of beat.

Millennials may have helped to shape The New Collective, but the rise of Gen Z is set to redefine it.

Born between 1995–2000 (although no one can quite agree on the exact years) Gen Z’s influence and spending power—especially in the travel space—is set to make some serious waves in the near future.

As a group, they already outnumber millennials, making up 32% of the global population. They’re also on pace to be the largest group of consumers worldwide as early as 2020.

And they’re bringing with them a new, hyper-realist perspective on the world. While the millennial generation is a story of innocence lost, *The New York Times* observed back in 2015, “Generation Z, by contrast, has had its eyes open from the beginning, coming along in the aftermath of… the War on Terror and the Great Recession.”

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JUST CAUSE

One outcome of growing up in that environment is that Gen Z carry a healthy dose of cynicism and a fierce commitment to social issues. In other words: They’re passionate, they know when you’re faking—and they aren’t afraid to call you on it.

“I don’t need brands to use their ads to tell me that they are ‘woke’ or that their brand is ‘lit’. The worst. If you are saying it, then you aren’t it,” 18-year-old Mimi from San Francisco told last year’s *Irregular Report*.

The brands that stand out to them are the ones that “seem to care about people rather than just profit,” said 20-year-old Tosin from London.

And while they may not buy into traditional loyalty programmes, they are loyal to causes they care about. Nearly three-quarters, or 69%, of Gen Z, for example, are more likely to buy from a company that contributes to social causes. Conversely, some 33% have stopped buying from a company that contributes to a cause with which they disagree.

Bottom line: All the slick marketing in the world won’t work on this crowd unless your brand has a real purpose that’s backed up with real action.
Of course, Gen Z wouldn’t be redefining The New Collective if they weren’t social animals, thriving off face-to-face interactions and drawn to social situations. Focused on aligning with a community culture, Gen Z values the ability to meet and mingle with others even more so than their predecessors.

The New Horizons survey from 2018 found 42% of Gen Z travellers list building friendships as a key purpose for travel, substantially more than 32% of millennials. Communal seating, social hubs and common areas tick all the right boxes—but also look for the rise of co-living hotel brands that take this community spirit to a whole new level.

Gen Z is the first true generation of digital natives, and they’ve learned from the mistakes of those before them. As keepers of their own brand, they are more careful about their privacy than millennials, with Gen Z favouring vanishing media like Snapchat and Whisper. The usual suspects, like Facebook, are barely even on the radar—according to a survey by Piper Jaffray, just 9% of teens list it as their favourite platform. Visually driven apps like Instagram (24%) and Snapchat (47%) are where they’re spending most of their time, making it a crucial moment for brands to start reassessing their social-media strategies.

Gen Z also uses social media differently than others. “Humour and entertainment are top motivators for Gen Z to create and consume on social media,” according to a 2018 Snap Inc-commissioned study—they watch an average of 68 videos a day—while millennials tend to see it as a place to chat with friends.

Central to all this is a quest for meaning and authenticity. Instagram to Gen Z, for instance, “isn’t as much about how they look, as it is about what they know, believe and do,” Irregular Report found. While millennials are more focused on the exterior, Gen Z care more about substance and representing their inner lives online in a genuine way—it’s why 67% of Gen Z say being true to their values and beliefs makes a person cool.

“Gen Z’s selfies are in the caption, not the picture—or in the tension between flattering selfie and self-deprecating comment that demonstrates their wit, cultural clout, intelligence and authenticity via confessional,” Irregular Report added, noting their peers are more likely to respond to their captions rather than the photos themselves.

“As Gen Z comes of age and brings fresh perspectives to The New Collective, it’s never been more important for brands to build around a genuine purpose. If you want to appeal to this newest generation, stand for something (but no need to shout about it). Be personable. Maintain a sense of humour. And always keep it real.

But perhaps most importantly, don’t read too much into articles like this one—Gen Z will see straight through it.”
QUO’s well-travelled staff weighs in on which long-standing, high-end hotel features they still enjoy, which need to be put out to pasture—and why.

**RETIRE IT**
I have a mobile phone. I’ve been told this used to be one of those boxes hotels had to tick to get a four-star rating in some markets. For me, it would make a lot more sense if there was at least a hands-free option so I could take a call while—ahem—shaving.
– Derek Kirk, Content Director

Replace it with an iPad. Endless scrolling, endless entertainment. Just make sure all camera functions are disabled!
– Helen Heidel, Copywriter

**KEEP IT**
I spend lots of time in the bathroom when I travel, especially in a city hotel. I sometimes use the bathroom phone to call room service. I find it useful.
– Sarintip Plaraveephong, Senior Account Manager

**REPLACE IT**
Welcome drinks turn into me lingering in the lobby longer than I want to after a long day of travel. Then I often have to let the reception staff know I’m ready to go to my room once I deem the drink finished. I honestly can’t imagine a better welcome than, ‘Welcome to the hotel, let’s get you to your room’. Bonus points if they throw in a bar voucher.
– Derek Kirk, Content Director

Improve it by making it a bar voucher. It makes sense for the hotel, actually. If they can get you down to the bar for one, you’ll probably stay and buy another.
– Dane Halpin, Senior Brand Strategist

The idea is good but the execution is often lacking. I appreciate a well-made welcome drink, even if it’s just a basic herbal tea. It also gives me a chance to enjoy the lobby experience. I like to take the time to walk around and observe the design, and a welcome drink in hand is a nice addition.
– Mo Choovanapich, Assistant Brand Strategist

**RETIRE IT**
These don’t add much value and the message usually doesn’t come off as genuine... unless it comes with a complimentary bottle of Prosecco, which always feels genuine.
– Helen Heidel, Copywriter

If it’s a personalised, handwritten note or presented on a pretty card, I’m happy to have it. It’s even better if it’s to acknowledge a special occasion, like a birthday or an anniversary. But, let’s face it, the ultimate GM letter is one that offers you some kind of special perk.
– Jessica Gates, Copywriter

**KEEP IT**
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– Jessica Gates, Copywriter
I was fine with a robe until I stayed in a place that offered pyjamas instead. How luxurious to not have to pack your own. I often fall asleep in a hotel robe and wake up feeling hot and sweaty.

— Laurel Tuohy, Deputy Content Director

But think of the tall people! I’m a ridiculous 200 cm tall, and I’ve always been jealous of all the normies out there who can fit in a comfy hotel bathrobe after a long day. True luxury.

— Derek Kirk, Content Director

I don’t enjoy features like this. It feels like they are asking you to make a sort-of pointless decision.

— Fergal Barry-Murphy, former Deputy Content Director

Give it some flair and raise it to the level of art! Elephants are cool, but make it an elephant that pumps water from its trunk or has googly eyes to make it more realistic.

— Wayniq Urairat, Associate Strategy Director

They’re already an environmental faux pas, so why delay the inevitable? Plus, those weird little bottles bring out a hidden hoarder’s instinct in me that I didn’t know I had. Yes, I hoard them. I don’t know why. I’d rather not, so please stop making me!

— Jessica Gates, Copywriter

These are guilty pleasure territory, even though they aren’t environmentally responsible. I love to keep the tiny hand cream in my bag and remember my trip while using it. It would be great if they could streamline the sets and change to biodegradable packaging.

— Laurel Tuohy, Deputy Content Director
PUBLIC SPACE RACE

New lobbies boast limitless amenities. With such wild features, it’s easy to get sidetracked. Can you find your room at the far side of the lobby? A better question is, do you even want to?
See the world as we do

A colourful symphony of cultures—each waiting to be discovered.

info.bangkok@quo-global.com
www.quo-global.com

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