

RECESSION-PROOFING THE AFFLUENT MARKET

August 2008

In tough economic times, it's tempting to discount your product to increase business.

But take a cue from how Ritz-Carlton Hotels rode out the economic slump of the early '90s and stayed firmly atop the luxury category. "When times are tough," former Ritz-Carlton executive Joseph Freni Jr. once said, "raise your rates."

Tongue-in-cheek, perhaps, yet the message was clear: It can take a long time to re-earn prestige once your product is compromised or degraded by discounting. Cutting rates damages the product in a reputational sense by diluting the "air of exclusivity" and alienates the core customer.

Savings and value adds, not discounts

Today, luxury travel marketers are working in one of the most competitive environments ever, and facing the challenge of staying atop the pyramid. While their affluent customers consider travel an essential part of their lifestyles and are reluctant to forgo vacation spending, they have very high expectations, recession or not.

We encourage our clients to enhance their offerings, which are perceived as added value, while highlighting ways to save by traveling smart (off season and midweek for resorts, weekends and U.S. holidays for urban hotels, etc.) in lieu of slashing prices. A recent survey of more than 3,700 millionaires by Russ Prince and Lewis Schiff, authors of the book "Middle Class Millionaire," revealed that close to 90% of U.S. millionaires, with household incomes of \$1 million to \$10 million, say they would increase their spending if offered a special value add.

UPPING THE SERVICE QUOTIENT

To stay in the luxury game, it's just as important to astound guests with a platinum standard of amenities and services, to elicit the "wow factor" among experienced consumers, and to create expectations before they realize they have them. Think of services that are unique, extraordinary and authentic.

Tall order, this one. In Accenture's "Customer Satisfaction in the Multi-Polar World" survey, more than half of consumers reported their expectations for better service increased over the past five years. One-third said they were higher than a year ago.

Affluent customers are seasoned world travelers with sophisticated, discerning tastes. Think well beyond the general manager's welcome letter or a complimentary bottle of wine or fruit – they're trite and formulaic.

"I don't believe in the logic that a hotel is a home away from home. A hotel should be infinitely more than your home," Ali Kasikci, former managing director of the Peninsula Beverly Hills, told *Town & Country Travel* in a piece entitled "The Perfectionist." Guests today require their every desire, expressed or unspoken, to be met. "Look at a person's lifestyle and connect the dots," Kasikci advises. His staff constantly gathered information about guests' likes and dislikes to add to the hotel's bulging databases. The gum chewer received packets of gum. The thirsty television producer was delighted with extra mineral water. An expectant mother and loyal guest even received a crib from Neiman Marcus as a gift.

The possibilities for innovative hotel services are endless by forming alliances between like-minded companies. *Vogue.co.uk* recently reported that Net-A-Porter.com now offers an "emergency wardrobe service" for guests at select Soho House members' clubs/hotels. Forgot a pair of shoes or suffering from embarrassing stain? Guests can enjoy same-day delivery of items from Net-A-Porter's exclusive online collection of designer clothes, shoes, handbags and accessories.

At the same time, fine service is a fine line. Overly attentive service can become obtrusive or overbearing - a big "no-no" with Gen X'ers, in particular, who prefer an atmosphere of informal luxury. Inherently understanding customers' needs and expectations is key, as high-end consumers won't tolerate service providers who don't deliver.

Your VIP hotline has an annoying voicemail menu? Your maitre d' asks valued customers for their phone number each time they make a reservation? The concierge isn't on your "A" team? You've lost them.

SURFING FOR SERVICE

Today's internet-savvy customers surf the Web for all their needs. Online retail business is expected to increase from \$175 billion in 2007 to \$335 billion by 2012, according to the National Retail Foundation as reported by *Luxury Briefing*.

Think in terms of www.gucci.com, www.louisvuitton.com and the much-anticipated bridal portal from www.verawangweddings.com, which are thriving in this highly competitive marketplace. These über-stylized online stores have learned to drive more internet-savvy customers to their Websites by bolstering their brand message online – communicating a lifestyle vision that represents both the brand and the customers who shop there.

This firmly entrenched consumer habit creates opportunities for travel products to extend their brand's presence online by providing more content-rich information to attract guests before they even arrive. They need to become a coveted online resource about their destination, connecting guests to their location. Among luxury hotels and cruise lines, consider providing insider tips for visitors, such as bespoke guides or an insider's city walk. Perhaps recommend the hottest power tables in town/port or the best consignment shop for vintage fashions. Or adding an RSS subscription or posting Trip Advisor reviews about your hotel to your Website.

This strategy saves visitors the trouble of visiting yet another Webpage while building relationships and brand loyalty.

SHOPPING AS A SERVICE

What do people do on vacation? Shop, of course. Providing unique mementoes of a vacation are a welcomed part of the service package. This creates another means to extend your luxury branding while boosting your bottom line.

The roots of this trend go back to New York's The Benjamin Hotel, which introduced the first sleep concierge (a KWE group brainchild in the late '90's) with a pillow menu, offering everything from body pillows to an assortment of fillings and shapes. The campaign took off, the publicity was tremendous, and the hotel launched a new revenue stream selling its signature pillows. Westin followed soon after with its "Heavenly Bed" and linens, becoming a huge success in publicity and revenue.

New Luxury mementoes: Cashmere, Silk and Slippers

Now, haute hotels are transforming souvenir shopping by partnering with top designers to create limited edition goods. These are not sold elsewhere, thereby making the products even *more* exclusive. Christian Louboutin is leading the way at One & Only resorts by creating a limited-edition collection of espadrilles, only available at the resorts and in a limited number of Louboutin boutiques. Guests of Mandarin Oriental hotels in London and New York receive cashmere eye masks designed by Donna Karan, plus a gift certificate redeemable for matching slippers at the local Karan boutiques.

In due time, expect to see designer/resort apparel and keepsakes of the chicest nature going home in travelers' Louis Vuitton trunks. If the "Birkin" bag is any measure, why not design a Hermès beach tote only available at a resort in the Maldives?

MERCADOS DE ALTO NIVEL, A PRUEBA DE RECESIÓN

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En tiempos económicos difíciles resulta tentador bajar el precio de su producto para acrecentar el negocio.

Sin embargo, considere esta pauta de cómo Ritz-Carlton libró el bajón económico del principio de los 90s y permaneció firme en la cima de la categoría de los lujosos. “Cuando las épocas son difíciles,” dijo una vez el anterior ejecutivo del Ritz-Carlton Joseph Freni, Jr., “eleva tus tarifas.”

Un poco en broma tal vez, pero el mensaje era claro. Puede tomar tiempo recuperar el prestigio una vez que tu producto ha transigido, o se ha degradado tras rebajar los precios. Bajar los precios daña al producto en su reputación al diluir el “aire de exclusividad,” y enajena al cliente objetivo.

Los ahorros y el valor se acumulan, no los descuentos

Hoy en día, los promotores de viajes de lujo están trabajando en uno de los ambientes más competitivos de todos los tiempos, y enfrentando el desafío de permanecer en la cima de la pirámide. Si bien sus clientes de alto nivel adquisitivo consideran el viajar como una parte esencial de su estilo de vida y se resisten a renunciar al gasto de las vacaciones, también tienen grandes expectativas, con o sin recesión.

Nosotros animamos a nuestros clientes a realzar sus ofertas, lo cual se percibe como un valor agregado, mientras enfatizan formas de ahorrar al viajar inteligentemente (fuera de temporada y a media semana para los sitios vacacionales; fines de semana y días de fiesta en los Estados Unidos para los hoteles urbanos, etc.) en vez de bajar los precios. Un sondeo reciente entre más de 3,700 millonarios realizado por Russ Prince y Lewis Schiff, autores del libro “Millonario de Clase Media,” reveló que cerca del 90% de los millonarios en los Estados Unidos, con ingresos familiares de entre 1 millón y 10 millones de dólares, dicen que ellos aumentarían la cantidad que destinan a gastos si se les ofreciera un valor agregado especial.

ELEVAR EL COEFICIENTE DE SERVICIO

Para permanecer en el juego del lujo, es tan importante impresionar a los huéspedes con un estándar platino de las instalaciones y servicios, y provocar el factor “¡guau!” entre los consumidores experimentados, como lo es el crear expectativas, aún antes de que se den cuenta de que las tienen. Piense en servicios que sean únicos, extraordinarios y auténticos.

Este es un proyecto poco fácil. En la encuesta “Satisfacción del Cliente en el Mundo Multi-Polar,” realizada por Accenture, más de la mitad de los consumidores reportaron que sus expectativas de un mejor servicio habían aumentado durante los últimos cinco años. Un tercio dijo que eran más elevadas que hace un año.

Los clientes de alto nivel económico son viajeros internacionales experimentados, de gustos selectivos y sofisticados. Piense en algo mucho más allá de la carta de bienvenida firmada por el gerente general, o una botella de vino, o fruta como cortesía – esto está trillado y es predecible.

“Yo no creo en la lógica de que un hotel es un hogar lejos del hogar. Un hotel debe ser mucho más que tu propia casa,” dijo Ali Kasikci, anterior director general de Peninsula Beverly Hills, a la revista Town & Country Travel, en un artículo titulado “El Perfeccionista.” Los huéspedes de hoy requieren que cada deseo, expreso o implícito, se cumpla. “Observa el estilo de vida de una persona y conecta los puntos,” aconseja Kasikci. Su personal reunía constantemente información sobre los gustos y aversiones de sus huéspedes, para añadirlos a las voluminosas bases de datos del hotel. El mascador de chicle recibía paquetes de goma de mascar. Al sediento productor de televisión se le deleitaba con agua mineral adicional. Una señora embarazada y huésped fiel recibía como obsequio una cuna de Neiman Marcus.

Las posibilidades de agregar servicios innovadores al hotel se vuelven infinitas al formar alianzas con empresas de ideas similares. Vogue.co.uk reportó recientemente que Net-a-Porter.com ofrece ahora un “servicio de guardarropa de emergencia” para huéspedes en clubes y hoteles donde llegan distinguidos miembros del Soho House. ¿Olvidó un par de zapatos, o su ropa tiene una embarazosa mancha? Los huéspedes pueden disfrutar

de la entrega el mismo día de la exclusiva colección en línea de ropa de diseñador, zapatos, bolsos, y accesorios de Net-a-Porter.

Al mismo tiempo, al servicio fino lo separa una línea muy fina. Un servicio excesivamente atento puede convertirse en una molestia o experimentarse como prepotente. Esto es un “no-no” con la Generación X en particular, que prefiere un ambiente de lujo informal. El comprender intuitivamente las necesidades y expectativas de los clientes es clave, ya que los consumidores de alto nivel no toleran a proveedores de servicios que no cumplen lo que ofrecen.

¿Su línea telefónica directa para personajes distinguidos (VIPs) responde con un irritante menú de opciones? ¿Su *maître d'* pregunta a los clientes más importantes su número telefónico cada vez que llaman para hacer una reservación? ¿El *concierge* no está en su equipo “A”? Ya los ha perdido.

NAVEGANDO POR UN SERVICIO

Los clientes de hoy, expertos en el uso del Internet, navegan en la Red para todas sus necesidades. Se espera que el negocio de venta al público, en línea, crezca de \$175 mil millones de dólares en 2007, a \$335 mil millones para 2012, de acuerdo a la Fundación Nacional para el Venta al por Menor, según reporta *Luxury Briefing*.

Piense en términos de www.gucci.com, www.louisvuitton.com, y el muy esperado portal nupcial de www.verawangweddings.com, que están prosperando en este mercado altamente competitivo. Estas über-estilizadas tiendas en línea han aprendido a dirigir más clientes expertos en el uso del Internet hacia sus sitios en la Red, al reforzar el mensaje de sus marcas en línea – comunicando la visión de un estilo de vida que representa tanto a la marca como a los clientes que compran ahí.

Este hábito, firmemente enraizado en el cliente, crea oportunidades para que los productos para viajar expandan la presencia de su marca brindando información más rica en contenido, para atraer huéspedes aún antes de que lleguen. Necesitan convertirse en un codiciado recurso en línea, que informe acerca de su destino, y conecte a los huéspedes con su ubicación. Para los hoteles de lujo y las líneas de cruceros, considere el brindar información privilegiada (*insider's tips*), tal como guías hechas a la medida, o un paseo a pie guiado por un nativo. Tal vez recomiende los más excitantes sitios de poder en restaurantes, o la mejor tienda de consignación para ropa y modas de otros tiempos. Agregue una suscripción para un RSS, o coloque reseñas de Consejos para el Viajero acerca de su hotel, en su página en la Red.

Esta estrategia ahorra a los visitantes el trabajo de tener que visitar una página más de la Red, a la vez que establece relaciones y crea lealtad hacia a su firma.

COMPRAR, COMO SERVICIO

¿Qué hace la gente en vacaciones? Comprar, por supuesto. Ofrecerles recuerdos únicos de sus vacaciones es una parte muy apreciada del paquete de servicios. Esto crea otros medios de promover sus marcas de artículos suntuarios, al mismo tiempo que aumenta sus ingresos.

Las raíces de esta tendencia se remontan a The Benjamin Hotel en Nueva York, que introdujo el conserje del sueño (una idea concebida por el Grupo KWE a fines de los años 90s,) con un menú de almohadas, ofreciendo todo, desde almohadas para el cuerpo, hasta una variedad de rellenos y formas. La campaña despegó, la publicidad fue tremenda, y el hotel lanzó una nueva fuente de ingresos vendiendo almohadas de su propia marca. Westin le siguió poco después con su “Cama Celestial” y su ropa de cama, que se convirtió en un gran éxito de publicidad y ganancias.

Nuevos recuerdos suntuarios: Cachemir, Seda y Pantuflas

Hoy día los hoteles de altura están transformando la compra de recuerdos (*souvenirs*) asociándose con los diseñadores más reconocidos para crear artículos de edición limitada. Éstos no se venden en ningún otro lugar, haciendo a los artículos aún más exclusivos. Christian Louboutin lleva la delantera en los centros vacacionales

One & Only, al haber creado una colección de edición limitada de zapatos, disponibles únicamente en sus centros vacacionales y, en número limitado, en las boutiques Louboutin. Los huéspedes de los hoteles Mandarin Oriental en Londres y en Nueva York reciben cubre-ojos diseñados por Donna Karan, más un certificado canjeable por pantuflas en las boutiques Karan de la localidad.

En el futuro cercano puedes esperar ver que ropa y recuerdos de marca de diseñador o de un centro vacacional, de la naturaleza más exclusiva, vaya a casa en maletas de viaje Louis Vuitton. Si el bolso "Birkin" es una indicación, ¿por qué no diseñar un bolsón para playa Hermès, que pueda comprarse exclusivamente en un centro vacacional de las Maldivas?

LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE: NOSTALGIC AND EXPENSIVE

March 2008

While most of today's 24/7 world seems to be speeding up, a growing number of the affluent among us are taking a road less traveled and slowing down.

One of the latest trends is to incorporate something labeled "slow" into their lives, from food and fashion, to design and travel - even sex. What does this mean? For one thing, the affluent are looking backwards to a nostalgic past – whether real or rosily imagined – for inspiration. You may call it the lifestyle equivalent of "comfort food." Those who are detouring along this rarified path fully expect to pay a premium to apply a touch of the brakes in everything they do.

Home-Grown, Handed-Down and Locavores

Some cultural anthropologists trace the beginnings of this burgeoning lifestyle slowdown to Rome's historic *Piazza di Spagna*. It was back in 1986 that the so-called "slow food" movement was born. Disdaining the spread of American chain restaurants and fast food, as they crossed the Atlantic and began to invade the Old World, adherents of the new credo focused once again on the fresh, the local and the artisanal. In so many ways, it was a back-to-the-future moment.

The idea was to take a U-turn back to the days of farmers' markets, handed-down recipes and, above all, leisurely dining with family and friends. Two decades later, products created in artisanal mode are coveted once more. Celebrity chefs turn to long communal tables in their newest outposts (Bar Boulud) and hotels and restaurants highlight the provider and provenance of products in their fanciest menus. Old-fashioned nose-to-tail dining on all parts of the beast is back in vogue, based on yesteryear's satisfying nostrum: waste not, want not.

This lifestyle reverse even permeates our everyday vocabulary. One use of speech derived from the slow food movement was recently awarded "Word of the Year" by the *New Oxford American Dictionary*. Are you a *locavore*? It means someone who cooks with and dines on locally produced foods.

Finding the Right Speed, Not the Fastest

The idea of a slow food movement bears implications beyond simple consumption. It encompasses an entirely new direction in how the affluent choose to live their lives. As writer Carl Honore describes in his best seller, *In Praise of Slow*, the global slow movement challenges the modern *cult of speed*. It's about how to live better in a fast-paced world by striking a balance. You find not the fastest speed, but the *right* speed.

The philosophy is already spawning the notion of Slow Cities, from the UK and Norway, to Brazil. Combustion engine vehicles are strictly limited, walking is encouraged, and mission statements talk about the "serenity" of everyday life and "reflective" living. In Japan, one city's mayor issued a "Take-It-Easy Declaration", encouraging residents to leave work early, take a walk with the family and talk to neighbors. Residents are gravitating towards Slow Homes where bigger isn't always better, quality prevails, design is individual, and care is taken to use healthy building materials, preferably recycled (such as fashionable, old woods). Residents may even engage in Slow Sex, choosing to emphasize spirituality and quality over quantity.

Out With Rock Stars, In With Farmers

In this new slower world, farmers become society's heroes. Owning farmland is a new status symbol. With *slow* in mind, a growing trend among second-home buyers is to invest in less urban escapes, such as green-pastured horse farms, ranches, vineyards or olive groves. Even in dense urban areas, such as Manhattan, city dwellers are turning their backyards into mini fruit orchards. In slow food vernacular, they are "co-producers" rather than "consumers." By becoming part of the process, they control the speed, escape homogeneity and enjoy a form of creative self-expression.

Enjoying the Journey

In its most glamorous heyday, travel was slow – of necessity, but also sometimes by design. It possessed sophistication, merely because only the affluent could afford it. Now, the trend is to recapture a bit of this nostalgic haze by savoring the journey once again, not just the destination. Slow leisure is the aim. Instead of pursuing yesterday's extreme adventures, today's slow travelers seek to spend their time contemplating, relaxing and reveling in doing very little or nothing. Witness the rebirth of popularity of transatlantic cruises, luxury trains, and the newest unconventional offering – The Manned Cloud airship. Under development by French designers Massaud

Studio, the 700 foot long airship will offer 40 passengers accommodation similar to that of a luxury cruise ship plus a library, gym and even terraces. With a top speed of 105 mph, it's about simply enjoying the view.

Old Foods Are New Again

For those seeking to experience slow foods abroad, culinary tourism, one of the hippest travel trends in 2008, will go well beyond cooking classes. Epicurean adventures will extend to agricultural villages where food is grown, to food lovers markets and to obscure food festivals in the four corners of the world. For example, the annual saffron harvest attracts crowds to Consuegra, Spain. Travelers forage with the pigs at the White Truffle Fair in Alba, Italy. In Cyprus, travelers learn the secrets of making the local Halloumi cheese or how to cure olives - a blending of two larger trends: gastronomy and enrichment travel.

Fashioned From the Fields

No longer a utopian or fringe movement, Slow Fashion is emerging from the uppermost echelons of fashion designers' elite. During New York's Fashion Week, renowned fashion critic Suzy Menkes observed, "We're getting beyond the idea of 'Look at me, look at me.' Fashion today is becoming more about calmness than flash." Classic silhouettes are making a comeback, some with a sustainable or green twist. This year's Academy Awards red carpet saw the appearance of a sustainable gown from designer Linda Loudermilk - a bespoke dress fashioned from hemp silk with organic cotton and "vintage findings" as accents. A trend for jewelry lovers: classic pearls are the new choice over diamonds; sustainable, understated and with shades of nostalgia. For those who want what *The New York Times* calls "Punk Meets Park Avenue" look, pearls are combined with contemporary chains, beads and estate brooches.

Vida por la “Vía Lenta”: Nostálgica y Cara

marzo 2008

Mientras que gran parte del mundo en la actualidad se encuentra en continua aceleración, un número cada vez mayor de personas con alto poder adquisitivo está tomando una vía menos transitada y comienza a desacelerar.

Una de las últimas tendencias es la de volver a lo tradicional, incorporando el llamado “movimiento lento” o en inglés *Slow Motion*. Este movimiento influencia la comida, moda, diseño, viajes y hasta el sexo. La nostalgia y lo tradicional se han vuelto un objeto del deseo para las personas con altos ingresos que añoran un pasado nostálgico – ya sea real o imaginario–

El símil en este estilo de vida es la llamada “*slow food*”, que pretende oponerse al *fast food* para volver a la comida tradicional disfrutando con toda tranquilidad de una buena mesa en un entorno adecuado, pagando un importante extra por obtenerlo.

Cultivados-en-casa, Transmitidos y “localvíboros”

Algunos antropólogos especializados en cultura, indican que los antecedentes del “*slow food*” se ubican a mediados de los años 80s, en la histórica Piazza de España en Roma, donde los restaurantes locales se oponían a las grandes cadenas de comida rápida que cruzaban el Atlántico y comenzaban a invadir al Viejo Mundo, los adeptos a esta tendencia se enfocan en lo fresco, lo local y lo artesanal.

La idea es volver hasta los días de los mercados, de las granjas, las recetas pasadas de generación en generación y, sobre todo, poder cenar tranquilamente con la familia y los amigos. Dos décadas más tarde, los productos creados en forma artesanal son nuevamente anhelados.

Hoy en día, los productos creados en forma artesanal son artículos de lujo, tanto así que los chefs y hoteles con mayor reconocimiento montan restaurantes bajo este concepto (Bar Boulud) y distinguen a los proveedores que siguen esta línea.

Este movimiento incluso ha influenciado al lenguaje, pues las personas que lo siguen son llamados “*locavores*”, término que fue reconocido por el Diccionario New Oxford American como “Palabra del Año” y que en español podríamos denominar como “*localvíboros*”, que se refiere a las personas que cocinan y consumen ingredientes producidos localmente.

Encontrando la Velocidad Adecuada, no la más Veloz

La idea de un movimiento “*slow food*” conlleva implicaciones que van más allá de un consumo más natural. Engloba una dirección totalmente nueva de cómo las personas con mayor poder adquisitivo están eligiendo vivir sus vidas.

Carl Honore en su best seller, *In Praise of Slow*, describe al movimiento “lento” como una forma de vivir mejor en un mundo acelerado, al encontrar el equilibrio entre ambos. *Ya que no se trata de conseguir la velocidad mas alta, sino la adecuada.*

La filosofía “lenta” empieza a impregnar a las grandes naciones como el Reino Unido, Noruega y Brasil que actualmente están poniendo en práctica acciones como: limitar la cantidad de vehículos con motor de combustión e impulsar la caminata, así como mensajes de serenidad y vivir en reflexión. El alcalde de una ciudad en Japón emitió la propuesta de “Tómeselo con Calma”, motivando a los residentes para que salieran más temprano de sus trabajos, dieran un paseo con su familia y platicaran con los vecinos. Los residentes ahora tienden a adquirir casas -el que sean más grandes no quiere decir que sean mejores- donde prevalece la calidad, el diseño es individual, y se tiene cuidado en usar materiales sanos de construcción, de preferencia reciclables (tales como maderas antiguas que estén de moda). Incluso se habla hasta de “Sexo Lento”, que pretende enfatizar la espiritualidad y la calidad sobre la cantidad.

Abajo las Estrellas del Rock, Arriba los Granjeros

En este nuevo “mundo lento”, los granjeros se convierten en héroes de la sociedad. El ser dueños de tierra de cultivo es un nuevo símbolo de estatus. La nueva ola inmobiliaria es adquirir propiedades menos urbanizadas, tales como granjas, viñedos y más. Aún en áreas urbanas densas, tales como Manhattan, los habitantes de la ciudad están convirtiendo sus patios traseros en huertos de mini frutas.

En lo relativo a los seguidores del movimiento de comida lenta, ellos son “productores” en lugar de ser “consumidores” al convertirse en parte del proceso, ellos controlan la velocidad, escapan de la homogeneidad y disfrutan de una forma de auto-expresión creativa.

Disfrutando el Viaje

En su máximo apogeo glamoroso, el viajar era lento – por necesidad, pero también algunas veces debido al diseño. Era sofisticado, principalmente porque solamente los ricos lo podían solventar.

En la actualidad, la tendencia consiste en volver a capturar un poco de esa nostalgia y saborear nuevamente el viaje, no únicamente el destino. El descanso es el propósito. En lugar de buscar aventuras extremas, los “viajeros lentos” de hoy en día buscan pasar su tiempo contemplando, relajados y gozando el hacer muy poco o no hacer nada.

Ser testigos del renacimiento de la popularidad de los cruceros transatlánticos, los trenes de lujo, y la nueva oferta no convencional – *The Manned Cloud*, en desarrollo por los diseñadores Franceses Massaud Studio, ofrecerá a 40 pasajeros un acomodo similar al de un barco crucero de lujo más una biblioteca, gimnasio y hasta terrazas. Con una velocidad máxima de 105mph, se trata simplemente de disfrutar de la vista.

Los Alimentos Viejos son Nuevos Otra Vez

Para aquellos que buscan experimentar la comida lenta más allá, del turismo culinario, una de las tendencias más marcadas en 2008, irá más lejos que las clases de cocina. Las aventuras epicúreas se extenderán hasta los pueblos agrícolas en donde se cultivan los alimentos, hasta los mercados de los amantes de la comida y hasta los festivales de alimentos en todas partes del mundo. Por ejemplo, la cosecha anual de azafrán atrae multitudes a Consuegra, España. Los viajeros forrajean con los cerdos en la Feria Trufa Blanca en Alba, Italia. En Chipre, los viajeros aprenden los secretos para hacer el queso Halloumi o como curar olivos – una mezcla de dos importantes tendencias: gastronomía y el viaje enriquecido.

A la Moda Desde los Campos

La “moda lenta” está surgiendo de los más altos escalones de la elite de diseñadores, muestra de esto, sucedió durante la Semana de la Moda de Nueva York, donde la reconocida crítica de moda Suzi Menkes comentó, “Estamos llegando más allá de la idea de “*veánme, veánme*”. La moda actual se está convirtiendo más en tranquilidad en lugar de distinción.” Las siluetas clásicas están regresando, algunas con un toque sustentable o verde.

Durante la alfombra roja de los Premios de la Academia de este año hizo su aparición una prenda sustentable de la diseñadora Linda Loudermilk que era un vestido hecho a la medida, diseñado a partir de seda de cáñamo con algodón orgánico. Para los amantes de la joyería: las perlas clásicas son la nueva elección.

Top Ten Luxury Travel and Lifestyle Trends for 2008

November 2007

Luxury markets will continue to expand, while consumers of all high-end luxury products will hone their tastes ever more pointedly. The urge for self expression will spread while a new ethical and environmental consciousness will take an even firmer hold. These are among the many forces that will help dictate where and how the affluent will spend their money in the new year of 2008.

1. **Traditional demographics won't define luxury consumers.** Buying behavior, geography, interests and connoisseurship will become the new definition of wealthy, particularly in emerging markets where luxury status will be displayed outwardly via symbols: luxury goods and labels such as Louis Vuitton handbags or Chanel cuffs, which are ubiquitous among their peers.

Mature affluents are gravitating to "stealth wealth." They seek products that express personal interests and style while requiring connoisseurship. They prize uniqueness and limited-edition luxe: originals, one-of-a-kind objects, which are expensive and highly collectible. Think men's shirts with the monograms inside the sleeves, bespoke Hermes and non-branded, one-of-a-kind hotels that are all about the owner's exquisite taste, selectivity and demanding standards. To know and appreciate these products, one must savor subtle details and be in the loop.

2. **Relationships with family and friends take center stage.** Accelerating since 9/11 and fueled by a backlash against a contemporary world dominated by 24/7 work schedules and dehumanizing technology, family travel is growing at a faster rate than all other sectors of leisure travel. A recent survey of American Express travel agents revealed a significant rise in luxury travel among families; 82% wanted high-end hotels with kids programs and 56% were traveling with nannies. Parents, grandparents and friends are looking to travel as a way to reunite, and to celebrate life's landmark events. Business trips with the whole family will become as common as tag-along spouses, while high-end business hotels and resorts will roll out the red carpets for families with special suites and villas.
3. **Creativity checks in.** As Thomas Friedman writes in "The World is Flat," we are living in the *Talent Age*. Companies will need to innovate to set themselves apart and find new solutions and alliances to tap into fresh talent. The right side of the brain will trump the left as creativity and design sell. Look to more companies to follow the lead of Richemont, a Swiss luxury goods group (Cartier, Montblanc, Dunhill and others) which established [The Creative Academy](#), its own international Master of Arts in Design school, an alliance that bears creative fruits.
4. **Concierges are king.** A lack of time and an overload of information for the affluent to sort through mean they will pay for an expert to create lives they desire. Personal concierges are all the rage. They are the go-to curators for sourcing flowers, a home or even friends. Many times, they help their clients define their own tastes and style. Witness the success of the U.K.'s Quintessentially, which evolved from a concierge firm to become wine consultants, art advisors and collection managers, as well as a bespoke estate property search business.
In retail, it's labeled "curated consumption," where stores offer the finest designs, already individually selected by the proprietor for buyers of electronics, fashion, furniture, etc. Now, there is an online model – www.couturelab.com - a brilliant webzine that promises to be the template for other luxury products, including travel. Luxury travel brands will be expected to go beyond providing luxury service and hospitality in their hotel, cruise ship or airline. They will be pressed to offer quality, inside-track local information and time-saving services, such as Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class Wing, a fast track security channel to get passengers from limo to lounge in ten minutes or less.
5. **Altruism and social responsibility are back.** Differing from the cause-related marketing that prospered during the end of the 90s, today's wealthy consumers want to believe their consumption is also helping to save the planet or that there is an altruistic motive behind it all. In a recent HSBC luxury goods research report, a graphic of American psychologist Abraham Maslow detailed the hierarchy of emotional needs. The highest is said to be having oneself linked to a higher cause. He said: "The future of luxury will be about imparting real meaning into a product." The product itself must be sustainable and show a genuine

sensitivity to community. The operative words here, as succinctly put by London's Future Laboratory, are the three "T"s: *truth*, *transparency* and *trust*. A good example of responsible luxury of the future, courtesy of Jeffrey Miller, consultant and columnist for *Luxury Briefing*: a Gucci Green Car.

6. **Health, well-being and looking good continue to move up in financial priorities.** The *New York Times* recently documented the lives and beauty budgets of three women in different parts of the country. One, a real estate agent from Los Angeles, admitted she regularly spent several thousand dollars monthly just for "maintenance," as she said, to "be in the game." These motivations are driving the spa and medical tourism boom we saw in 2007. Spas are going well beyond the dedicated spa outlet or the home spa, and branching out into mobile spas, "macho" spas for men, and even for pets. We are seeing the advent of medical real estate, where entire communities are in the works, such as [Cooper Life at Craig Ranch](#) in Texas. There, monthly fees provide luxuries, including annual physical examinations and doctor house calls. Five star hotels are increasingly offering medi-healthy holiday packages in alliances with neighboring medical facilities. Next step? A key buzzword will be "age management" programs to help the rich look and feel young.
7. **Saving time.** This is the greatest luxury in our 24/7 world. So, any service that achieves this will be a big winner (as evidenced by the number of jet sales and private jet charter companies serving time-starved travelers and the boom in secondary airports). Major airports are becoming luxury shopping destinations, targeting power spenders on layovers. Aside from the usual high-end watches and handbags, Heathrow's Terminal 5 set to open in March 2008, will have a two-story Harrod's luxury department store, stocking only high-end brands. Additionally, numerous new companies are springing up to train armies of professional household and estate managers (butlers, maids, personal chefs, wine stewards, etc.). A new real estate development in Umbria offers farmhouses with onsite architect, contractors, artisans and maintenance staff, so the owner can move in with just a suitcase. Lenovo just introduced its [ThinkPad Reserved Edition](#) (\$4999), standard with supple leather case and, more importantly, in-person assistance on call, guaranteed within four hours.
8. **Big money follows culture and is big news.** From Miami's burgeoning [Art Basel](#) to the celeb-filled [Sundance Film Festival](#) in Park City, Utah, publicity seekers should take note of the international coverage that cultural events are receiving.

Art tie-ins also make good financial sense: Sotheby's introduced a co-branded [World Elite MasterCard](#), giving cardholders VIP access to cultural events and receptions, even guided tours of newly excavated, private areas of Angkor Wat. More and more hotels are realizing that art attracts a certain art-savvy clientele, who are happy to spend freely on suites, spa treatments and fine wines. We will continue to see hotels become houses of culture, with in-house museums, curators, artists as interior designers, and stepped up marketing efforts that embrace culture. But it won't stop there. We will see more luxury retail and commercial spaces being treated as curatorial, artistic projects, such as Ferragamo's flagship in New York: a boutique, corporate office and museum under one roof. Seen, too, are online sites such as [Artipolis](#), a private members club for individuals who meet on- and off-line to share their passion for the arts.
9. **The affluent are becoming sated with product and looking for unique experiences.** Luxury is being redefined as experiences because consumers are overloaded with products. Today's increasingly well traveled individuals want new and exciting experiences to be intrigued, entertained and enlightened. They will spend top dollar to be first, or reach the most remote, exotic places. Witness how quickly private suborbital flights and space travel took off. Marketers need to think big, imagining how to turn any product into a life-enhancing experience. This can mean asking how visitors could have interactive experiences instead of passively visiting the Forum in Rome or the pyramids of Teotihuacán. When selling multi-million-dollar condos, marketers must go beyond touting professional style kitchens to throw in a dinner party cooked by a personal chef on the day the buyer receives the keys or a personal training session in a state-of-the-art triathlete fitness center. Acquiring knowledge and expressing one's creative side also rate highly, with hotels, resorts and destination management companies going well beyond cooking classes to offer everything from videography and tea ceremonies, or instruction in the visual arts and even gallantry at Paris' [Belle Ecole](#).
10. **Space, space and more space is luxury.** I always recall what contemporary music composer John Cage said: the greatest luxuries are time and space. Especially when it comes to first class travel, airlines are

ving to outdo rivals in offering the world's largest airplane bed. Witness [Singapore Airlines'](#) new private suites with double beds that sleep two. Refurbishing will come to mean over-sizing hotel guest room and ship cabins, not just the usual interior furnishings and amenities. And top hotel suites will get larger and pricier, appealing, as they must, to the super wealthy who are accustomed to homes of 10,000 square feet or more.

DIEZ TENDENCIAS EN VIAJES DE LUJO Y ESTILOS DE VIDA

Noviembre 2007

1. La demografía tradicional no definirá a los consumidores de lujo. El comportamiento de compras, la geografía, los intereses y el conocimiento especializado se convertirán en la nueva definición de la riqueza, en particular en los mercados emergentes en donde la categoría de lujo se desplegará externamente mediante símbolos: productos y etiquetas de lujo tales como las bolsas de mano de Louis Vuitton o los puños de camisa de Chanel, que son universales entre sus equivalentes.

La gente acaudalada en edad madura está dirigiéndose hacia “una riqueza cautelosa.” Buscan productos que expresen sus intereses y estilo personal al mismo tiempo que requieren de un conocimiento especializado. Valoran la originalidad y la edición de lujo limitada: objetos originales, únicos en su tipo, que sean costosos y altamente coleccionables. Un ejemplo de ello son las camisas para caballero con los monogramas dentro de las mangas, pedidos sobre medida hechos a Hermes y hoteles independientes, únicos en su tipo que se basen totalmente en el gusto exquisito del dueño, y en los estándares de selectividad y demanda. Para conocer y apreciar estos productos, uno debe saborear los detalles sutiles y estar a la vanguardia.

2. Las relaciones con la familia y los amigos se ubican en el escenario central. El viaje familiar está creciendo más rápido que cualquier otro de los sectores del viaje de placer, ya que se ha acelerado desde el 9/11 y ha sido avivado por una reacción violenta en contra del mundo contemporáneo dominado por horarios de trabajo 24/7 y una tecnología deshumanizante. Un estudio reciente de los agentes de viajes de American Express reveló un aumento significativo en los viajes de lujo entre las familias; 82% querían hoteles de primera clase con programas para niños y 56% viajaban con nanas. Los padres, abuelos y amigos están buscando viajar como una manera de reunirse, y para celebrar los eventos y momentos más importantes de la vida. Los viajes de negocios con toda la familia se volverán tan comunes como los diseñados especialmente para las parejas, mientras que los hoteles y centros vacacionales de alta calidad “desenrollarán la alfombra roja” para las familias con suites especiales y villas.

3. Checks-in con creatividad. Como escribe Thomas Friedman en “El Mundo es Plano”, estamos viviendo en la Era del Talento. Las compañías van a necesitar innovar para establecerse a sí mismas por separado y encontrar nuevas soluciones y alianzas para descubrir talento nuevo. El lado derecho del cerebro triunfará sobre el izquierdo a medida que se vendan el diseño y la creatividad. Se buscarán más compañías para que sigan la guía de Richemont, un grupo Suizo de artículos de lujo (Cartier, Montblanc, Dunhill y otros) que fundó The Creative Academy (La Academia Creativa), su propia Maestría de Artes internacional en la Escuela de Diseño, una alianza que produce creativos frutos.

4. Los Conserjes son los reyes. La falta de tiempo y una sobrecarga de información para que la gente con dinero pueda llevar a cabo su selección, los lleva a pagar por un experto para crear el tipo de vida que desean. Los conserjes personales están arrasando. Ellos son los que van con los encargados para encontrar flores, una casa y hasta amigos. Muchas veces, ayudan a sus clientes a definir sus propios gustos y estilo. Por ejemplo podemos ver el éxito de la Quintessentially del Reino Unido, misma que evolucionó a partir de una empresa de conserjes, hasta convertirse en consultores de vino, asesores de arte y directivos de colecciones, así como también en un negocio de búsqueda de propiedades inmobiliarias por solicitud. En menudeo, se denomina “consumo curado”, en donde las tiendas ofrecen los mejores diseños, que ya han sido seleccionados individualmente por el dueño para compradores de electrónica, moda, muebles, etc. En la actualidad existe un modelo en-línea – www.couturelab.com – una webzine brillante que promete ser la plantilla para otros productos de lujo, incluyendo los viajes. Las firmas de viajes *premium* se verán obligadas a ir más allá de proveer servicios de lujo y hospitalidad en sus hoteles, cruceros o líneas aéreas. Se verán presionadas para ofrecer calidad, información local sobre las rutas y servicios que ahorren tiempo, tales como el Ala de Clase Alta del Virgin Atlantic, un canal de seguridad de paso rápido para que los pasajeros que viajan en limusina estén en las salas de espera en diez minutos o menos.

5. El altruismo y la Responsabilidad Social están de regreso. A diferencia de la mercadotecnia relacionada con la causa que prosperó durante finales de los 90, los consumidores ricos de la actualidad quieren creer que su consumo está ayudando también a salvar al planeta o que existe un motivo altruista detrás de todo esto. En un informe reciente de HSBC sobre investigación de artículos de lujo, una gráfica del psicólogo americano

Abraham Maslow detallaba la jerarquía de las necesidades emocionales. La más se dice que es la de unirse a una causa superior. Él dijo: "El futuro del lujo será el darle un verdadero significado a un producto." El producto en sí mismo debe ser sustentable y mostrar una sensibilidad genuina hacia la comunidad. Las palabras expresadas, tan sucintamente, por el Future Laboratory de Londres, son las tres "T"s (*truth, transparency and trust*): verdad, transparencia y confianza. Un buen ejemplo del lujo responsable del futuro, cortesía de Jeffrey Miller, consultor y columnista de Luxury Briefing es el Carro Verde de Gucci.

6. La salud, el bienestar y el verse bien continúan avanzando en las prioridades financieras. El *New York Times* documentó recientemente los presupuestos de vida y belleza de tres mujeres en diferentes partes del país. Una, agente de bienes raíces de Los Ángeles, admitió que gastaba regularmente varios miles de dólares mensuales solo para "mantenimiento", como ella dijo, para "estar en el juego." Estas motivaciones están impulsando el boom de spas y turismo de salud que vimos en 2007. Los spas están sobrepasando su original y sencilla instalación ahora de ramifican en spas móviles, spas para hombres, y hasta para mascotas. Estamos viendo el advenimiento de los bienes raíces médicos, en donde comunidades enteras están en los trabajos, tales como Cooper Life en el Rancho Craig en Texas. Ahí las cuotas mensuales dan acceso a diversos lujos, incluyendo exámenes físicos anuales y a visitas médicas con sólo una llamada. Los hoteles cinco estrellas están ofreciendo cada vez más paquetes médicos y de salud en alianza con instalaciones médicas vecinas. ¿El siguiente paso? Una palabra clave: "administración de la edad" programas para ayudar a los ricos a que se vean y sientan más jóvenes.

7. Ahorrando tiempo. Este es el lujo más grande en nuestro mundo de 24/7. Así que cualquier servicio que logre ahorrar tiempo a sus clientes será un gran ganador (una evidencia de esto es el número de ventas de jets y de las compañías privadas de jet charters que dan servicio a viajeros ávidos de ahorrar tiempo y al boom en aeropuertos secundarios). Los aeropuertos más importantes se están convirtiendo en centros comerciales de lujo, dirigidos al viajero con gran poder adquisitivo que hace escala ahí. Además de los relojes de alta calidad y de las bolsas de mano, la Terminal 5 de Heathrow prevista para abrir en marzo de 2008, contará con una tienda departamental Harrod de dos pisos, que almacenará solamente marcas de alta calidad. Además de esto, están surgiendo numerosas compañías para entrenar a ejércitos de encargados del hogar y de bienes inmobiliarios (reposteros, sirvientas, chefs personales, mayordomos de vino, etc.). Un nuevo desarrollo de bienes raíces en Umbria ofrece granjas con servicios de arquitectos, contratistas, artesanos y personal de mantenimiento, de tal manera que el dueño se puede mudar solamente con un portafolio en la mano. Lenovo acaba de presentar su *ThinkPad Reserved Edition* (Edición Reservada ThinkPad (\$4999), estándar con un forro de piel flexible, y lo más importante, asistencia personal al llamar, garantizada en un lapso de cuatro horas.

8. Mucho dinero resulta en cultura y ésta es una gran noticia. Desde el incipiente Art Basel de Miami hasta el Festival de Cine Sundance atiborrado de celebridades en Park City, Utah los publicistas deberían tomar nota de la cobertura internacional que están recibiendo los eventos culturales.

Los enlaces de arte también tienen un buen sentido financiero: Sotheby's presentó una tarjeta de marca conjuntamente con World Elite MasterCard, otorgándoles a los tarjetahabientes acceso VIP a los eventos culturales, recepciones, y hasta visitas guiadas en áreas recién excavadas, o privadas de Angkor Wat. Cada vez más hoteles se están dando cuenta de que el arte atrae a cierta clientela conocedora, quienes gustosamente gastan en suites, tratamientos de spas y vinos finos. Continuaremos viendo que los hoteles se convierten en casas de cultura, con museos dentro de sus propiedades, curadores, artistas como diseñadores de interiores, y esfuerzos de mercadotecnia avanzada que abrazan la cultura. Pero no se detendrá ahí. Habrá mayor menudeo de lujo y espacios comerciales que serán tratados como proyectos artísticos y curatorios, tales como la bandera de Ferragamo en Nueva York: una boutique, oficina corporativa y museo bajo un solo techo. También se han visto sitios en-línea tales como Artipolis, un club privado para individuos que se conocen en -y fuera de línea- para compartir su pasión por las artes.

9. Los acaudalados se saturan de productos y buscan experiencias únicas. El lujo se está redefiniendo como experiencias porque los consumidores están sobrecargados con productos. Los individuos conocedores de viajes de la actualidad, que cada vez van en aumento, quieren nuevas y excitantes experiencias que sean intrigantes, entretenidas y educativas. Gastarán el máximo de dólares para ser los primeros, o para alcanzar los lugares más remotos y exóticos. Sean testigos de que tan rápido despegaron los vuelos privados suborbitales y los viajes espaciales. Los mercadólogos necesitan pensar en grande, imaginando como convertir cualquier producto en una experiencia de mejoría de vida. Esto puede significar el preguntarse como los visitantes podrían tener experiencias interactivas en lugar de visitar pasivamente el Coliseo en Roma o las pirámides de

Teotihuacan. Al vender condominios de multi-millones de dólares, los mercadólogos deben de ir más allá de proporcionar cocinas de estilo profesional, y contar con un chef que prepare un banquete especial el día en que el comprador recibe sus llaves, o una sesión de entrenamiento personal en un centro de triatlón vanguardista para estar en forma. La adquisición de conocimiento y el expresar nuestro lado creativo también son altamente valorados en los hoteles, centros vacacionales y las compañías de administración de destinos que van mucho más allá de las tradicionales clases de cocina para ofrecerlo todo: desde videografía y ceremonias de té, o instrucción en las artes visuales, hasta la galantería en la Belle Ecole de Paris.

10. Espacio, espacio y más espacio es lujo. Siempre recuerdo lo que John Cage compositor de música contemporánea dijo: los lujos más grandes son el tiempo y el espacio. En especial cuando se trata de viajes en primera clase, las aerolíneas rivalizan para ofrecer la cama de avión más grande del mundo. Basta ver las nuevas suites privadas de Singapore Airlines con camas dobles. Las remodelaciones implicarán agrandar las habitaciones de los clientes y las cabinas de los barcos, no solamente los muebles del interior y las amenidades. Y las suites principales de los hoteles serán más grandes y costosas, para ser lo suficientemente atractivas para aquellas personas acostumbradas a casas de 10,000 pies cuadrados o más.

DESIGN: IT'S WHAT CONSUMERS CRAVE

July 2007

This season, current trends are all but impossible to survey without mentioning design. From food, to retailing, to travel, one question seems urgent: Design with what objective?

Function? Comfort? Social responsibility? Aesthetics? Certainly, design can be, and quite often is, about all of these notions. More and more, design is seen as encompassing emotion. Design, says Jean Marie Massaud, recipient of the *Createur d'Année* of the 2007 Paris Salon du Meuble, is about "feeling alive."

In *Metropolis* magazine, [Chris Younès](#), a French anthropologist who studies the philosophy of architecture, explains what this means. "Feeling alive, for this new generation of architects and designers, is our physical sensation involving our sense of touch, smell, hearing, sight and taste," Younès says. "It's about lying down in the grass, feeling the wind, taking a long shower, or enjoying the warmth of the sun."

There's that primal emotional component craved by consumers today. In retailing, this emerges as "emotion per square foot," as described by London's Future Laboratory. In cuisine, witness the dramatic food presentations of famed Ferran Adria and disciples, whose culinary experimentation with liquid nitrogen, calcium chloride and foam are intended to provoke, surprise and delight diners.

Design is attracting consumers by integrating their needs. "The Modern," a new luxury address in Boca Raton, features condominiums specifically designed with art collectors in mind. Specially lit, recessed alcoves throughout each unit allow buyers to showcase prominently their treasures.

In the travel industry, design is an increasing lure for consumers. Hotels as art galleries and as showcases for art are on the rise and the newest twist, [21c Museum Hotel](#) of Kentucky has an in-house art curator. Indeed, art is increasingly seen as an important component of the sophisticated affluent lifestyle. Spain's [Derby Hotels](#) offer a unique variation with a totally integrated marketing approach encompassing art and archaeology in sales and product offerings. Its hotel in Madrid boasts an onsite Egyptian museum and another property puts valuable ancient art in guest rooms, displaying it without security or any barriers to enjoyment, and using it to educate and cultivate its current and future guests.

Jordi Clos, founder of [Barcelona's Egyptian Museum](#) and Derby owner, offers guests check-in letters inviting them to his museum. They are informed that, by staying at the company's hotels, they are "patrons of culture" in helping to support research, exploration and preservation of ancient sites in Egypt. In addition to tours for adults to archaeological sites in the Middle East, Clos helps cultivate hotel guests of tomorrow through museum tours for children and day camps where youngsters can spend time doing a dig.

Going one step farther is Starwood's designer hotel-retail offering at the [Westin in Philadelphia](#). In a joint marketing promotion with the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation – now boosting Philly as an incubator of artistic talent - the newly renovated Room 414 is decorated with art by area artists. Hired to do the work was a "curator," not an interior designer. Another twist: All the décor is for sale to guests. Not only does the local art on the walls come with a pricetag, but so does almost every design element in the room, from Jenny Lynn's photo art shower curtain to the Sherman & Gosweiler custom dresser. Guests can even buy the lighting, designed by Warren Muller of Bahdeebahdu, as well as the armchairs and the salt and pepper checker set.

HEDGE FUND LUXE AND INFORMAL DECOR

"I like your look," said the Barney's salesperson to a young designer dressed in Bermuda shorts, fancy dress shirt and sport coat. "I can't tell if you're going to play golf or going out for a night on the town."

The anecdote, recounted in *The New York Times*, is a sampling of a new luxury market trend gaining steam on both sides of the Atlantic. Young affluents today are demonstrating different ideas about luxury: Call it informal luxury. It's not an oxymoron.

One reflection is in more relaxed dress codes, illustrated by recent print ads for the all-business class [EOS Airlines](#). Gone are the staid khakis and polo shirts of yesterday's dot.com casual. Now, even men's shorts, once restricted to backyards and beach vacations, are becoming part of the casual luxe wardrobe.

Take a look at Wimbledon tennis champion [Roger Federer's new Nike-designed](#) casually elegant clothing collection, with its tailored blazer and loose linen pants, for an idea of just what a step up today's new informal luxury is from our '90s notions. Federer, whose classic tennis game is as effortless as his wardrobe, is practically the icon of this new style. Or, taken up a notch, with bespoke tailoring and money-is-no-object expensive fabrics, it has been called "hedge fund luxe."

Hotels are noticing the need to reach out to this new class of dressed-down traveler by offering a more relaxed atmosphere. Barcelona, among Europe's design capitals, is one of the cities leading the way. [Hotel Omm](#), though just four stars, commands one of the city's highest rates by promoting its informal décor to upscale travelers who increasingly reject the stuffiness of yesterday's notions of luxury. Instead, Omm replicates the living room of a contemporary home. The lobby is easy-going, lively, and inviting. Everything happens in the open: a bar, a business meeting area, two casual restaurants, and even concerts with no walls in sight. In the absence of potentially "controversial" art, management reasons, is pure serenity.

In designing the bar at the new [The Regent Bal Harbour](#), in Miami's tony Bal Harbour Village, traditional concepts were tossed aside in favor of a "salon" environment with a mix of quiet places and areas for social or business interaction. The goal was to achieve a calm sense of "Feng Shui." Explains Jeffrey Beindorf, Principal of CMMI, the hotel's architecture and design firm: "The days of the old dark paneled bar tucked away in a hotel corner or hidden behind a large door are gone. We are designing space for the way people live and use public facilities in the 21st century, thus empowering the hotel guest to decide what he wants to do where."

Hyatt's answer to this new informal luxury niche is their new [Andaz](#) brand, positioned as luxury boutique hotels with highly functional environments of "sophistication, innovative design, local identity and casual elegance."

Simpler dress codes are making their way to hotel staff uniforms. The Hollywood Roosevelt decks its people in the season's latest Diane von Furstenberg wrap dress for women or a Michael Kors ensemble for men. The subtle message to guests is relaxed American chic.

In today's world, new notions of just what luxury means are being created all the time. This is one evolution I'm confident we will all come to appreciate the more it takes hold.

WHAT'S NEXT: LUXURY TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE TRENDS

February, 2007

Creativity is the new currency, from offbeat approaches to staff training and travelers seeking to develop their creative side on holiday, to personalizing one's environment. Script writing in Spain, stand up comedy in Devon, a dozen different textile courses in Europe from one operator alone, and writing "chick lit" are among the fast growing list of industry offerings which address one's creative side in new locales. The Four Seasons Resort in Langkawi, Malaysia goes so far as to offer a large dedicated writing room as part of their Beach Front Suites.

Look for growth in **bespoke** travel and lifestyle products for the affluent. Everyone wants something different, says Tom Ford, new entrepreneur and ex-creative director of Gucci. It's about personal style, choosing a concept that fits into one's sense of self and making a statement. Consumers will be looking to brands as partners to get them to a personalized, custom service or product. Last year Armani launched a bespoke tailoring division and Louis Vuitton will make anything from a lipstick case, to one for a tiddlywinks set. Trend tracker *Daily Candy* has dubbed custom offerings as "cutting edge". In hospitality, bespoke is being used to define unique, niche products such as design hotels, art hotels, underwater hotels, museum hotels and of late, extreme hotels. But what about bespoke as in a guest room, airline, or cruise ship cabin environment? Its still virgin territory.

Savvy marketers will increasingly tap into experienced, creative consumers to co-author product development and renovation, tying into the trend of people eager to show off their creative skills. This bottom-up phenomenon is what [Eric von Hippel](#), head of MIT's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program, calls "**lead-user innovation**." "Travelers can be your best employees for designing packages, innovations, improvements and marketing programs," said Charles Kennedy of DYG at a recent *Travel Weekly* forum in Mexico City. "Motivate them to be part of the 'smart mob' of the hotel," he continued. Besides product development, this also serves to build a bond and guest loyalty with customers.

As companies are challenged to come up with new ideas and ways to make creativity happen, they also look inward to their own employees. Offbeat team-building exercises such as recently reported "Iron Chef" style cooking competitions, incorporating ballet methods and comedy routines into hotel training seminars (*Hotel Interactive's* "[You Had me at Hello](#)"), or days off for employees to explore their creative side are on the rise (KWE group's team tried handbag making, tango dancing, and floral arranging). These new approaches are meant to stimulate the right side of the brain in the Human Resources arsenal. In conjunction with this, new products will arise as environments to heighten creativity of workers: witness [Cloud](#), an inflatable conference room made of pliable nylon walls imitating its namesake, the ideal escape for creative brainstorming.

One of the most unusual approaches is what *Luxury Briefing* called "swap shop". Retailers [Browns Focus](#) in London and [Acne Jeans](#) from Stockholm literally swapped shops. For 10 days Browns took over Acne's retail space in Stockholm selling its own brands and using its own sales staff and vice versa. Sales assistants even swapped apartments. Similarly, an Austin hotel recently sent about a dozen staffers to a local Whole Foods supermarket to see how it impresses customers, borrowing ideas for the hotel.

Look to big and bigger money following culture as the boom is just beginning. You can be sure that the phenomenal success of Miami's Art Basel both in Miami's image building and generating tourism revenue will spawn numerous imitations. Or look at the growing media appeal of the Sundance Film Festival. In culture and the arts, **architecture** is the new medium of choice. Destinations, museums, hotels and restaurants alike are turning to what the *New York Times* called "star-architects" to put them on the map - names like [Gehry](#), [Libeskind](#), [Herzog & de Meuron](#) among others. In a recent plug for [Yoo](#), a design oriented property development company Jade Jagger is involved with, she said "it's not *where* you live but *who* designed it".

With the advent of the New Year, we couldn't speak about luxury without mentioning "bling" and "over the top". Admittedly, most everyone enjoys reading about the \$1000 omelette, \$8 million getaway and \$10,000 martini, but conspicuous consumption will soon see its peak in the U.S. (not so for sure in emerging markets). Part of this phenomenon will surely be the advent of "less is more" as luxury consumers are sated with product and wastefulness. We'll be hearing more about "enlightened luxury", a return to notions of sophistication and refinement and inconspicuous consumption. Multi-purpose products will also strike a chord. My favorite new product: a dress by Ron Arad that doubles as a covering for his [Ripple](#) chair.

THE NICHE ECONOMY

October, 2006

Choices become endless, as so aptly described in Chris Anderson's *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. While the explosion of information and choice is a good thing, sorting through the limitless variety requires time. And what is the greatest luxury of the affluent? Time. Enter what trendwatching.com calls "curated consumption" – editing for the time-starved consumer befuddled by product choice. Consultancy Frog Design goes so far as to say we're leaving "The Information Age" and entering "The Recommendation Age" where the currency is giving consumers "shortcuts through the thicket of information". The "curator" shares the taste level and trust of the client. The concept where retail owners are the new curators of fine design and cutting edge novelty across product categories is springing up everywhere, from the best known of the group -- Colette in Paris and Microzine in London to Corso Como in Milan and the Miami outpost of Tomas Maier, creative director of Bottega Veneta.

But what about providing "curated services"? Regent Seven Seas Cruises recently launched their newest addition to The Regent Concierge, a partnership with *Travel + Leisure*. They provide Insider guides to "hot", trendy spots and local favorites in various ports of call. On the other hand, just when affluent consumers are looking for more help in researching and evaluating options, many hotels are beginning to outsource concierge services to third-parties, such as Expedia, Travelocity and Vegas.com, who say they can accelerate travel/activity planning with booking software and industry contacts (*Wall Street Journal*, 9/08/06). Will this result in greater guest satisfaction? Or will it backfire by not having the guest's best interests in mind, or by not serving the savvy traveler looking for edgier, offbeat recommendations? This could bode well for highly specialized travel agents and counselors. Travelers will be more than willing to pay for this expertise.

The corollary to saving time is reducing responsibility. The advantage of fractional jet, yacht and residential ownership isn't just about cost effectiveness. Affluent consumers want to experience the luxury of the finest things, but without the responsibility and headache of ownership - proving that even experiences can be "fractionalized". Innovative entrepreneurs have made it possible to adopt a [truffle oak](#) in Gascony and enjoy or sell its harvest, an [olive tree](#) in Italy for its oil and soaps, or a [vine](#) in Napa to make their "I want to be a winemaker" dreams come. Consumers can experience the ultimate in connoisseurship, while others do the planting, fertilizing, and harvesting. Plus, it's an excuse to travel to these wonderful places. We see evidence of this trend extending into the glitzy world of fashion - how about renting estate jewels for a high-profile charity gala, the latest haute couture frock, or that \$20,000 designer handbag for a week, a month or a year from a luxury leasing firm as reported in the *New York Times*. Expect this category to expand exponentially.

If food is the bellweather for where things are headed, we're going to see a return to the simple and exquisite. Quality will prevail and to get the best, look to hotels to produce their own food. I don't mean just herb gardens – from vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens, to free range chickens and cattle. A fine example of this is Salvatore Ferragamo's [Il Borro](#) family estate and village in rural Tuscany, where guests are treated to luxurious accommodations with all the charms of a working estate. Il Borro raises its own Chianina cattle fed from the estate's feed; free range chickens and ducks; home grown vegetables (including tomatoes seeded from a Capri variety - Cuori Di Bue (he passionately recounts), honey, olive oil and wine. Ever the innovator, he also offers guests experiences with master artisans where guests can learn the art of jewelry design, shoe making, ceramics or wood working (see my earlier [newsletter](#) where I explore travelers' desire to express their creative side and experiential travel).

Speaking about the simple and exquisite, the most memorable meal of my summer holiday in Europe was a perfect continental breakfast at Château Lamothe near Bordeaux: just squeezed sweet yet tangy orange juice, buttery croissants, local farm-made jams, Normand butter, fresh peach and

raspberry compote and café served in the finest Limoges porcelain. We had a 19th century mahogany table to ourselves in a dining room, surrounded by Louis XIV and Louis XVI antiques, fragrant roses, Qing vases, landscape paintings from the Barbizon school, and the elegant Madame La Propriétaire personally serving us in her floor length black taffeta skirt and cowl neck blouse. Voilà. I think of that breakfast every morning.

WHAT'S NEXT: LUXURY TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE TRENDS

June, 2006

Is a real or implicit celebrity endorsement of a luxury travel product a good thing? Is celebrity fatigue setting in? Most likely it's not that celebs are on their way out – Western society has always had its celebrity icons – but what they have stood for is; namely, over-the-top extravagance and a philosophy of “viva yo” (cheers for me). **Enter a new kind of celebrity, one who allies him or herself with social issues** as in George Clooney (who donated his goody bag, the icon of Oscar excess to charity) and Brangelina, known for bringing third world philanthropic issues to the forefront. Welcome a new Zeitgeist bred by the post boomer generation, Generation Jones, aged 41 to 52. It will behoove marketers to choose their celebrity endorsements carefully.

Trend watchers on both sides of the Atlantic are citing dramatic changes in store down the road with Generation Jones, the largest generation in U.S. history. Where Boomers are about individualism, conspicuous consumption, the next-in-line Generation is about a “**considered but conservative view of culture, values and social attributes**” according to Chris Sanderson of London's the Future Laboratory. A sense of civic and social responsibility will gain new traction, with an interest in “doing good. And it's already happening. Leading travel and hotel companies are going beyond discussions of cause related marketing to a deeper commitment to their communities and the environment. General Tours recently announced their “voluntourism” programs in partnership with Cross-Cultural Solutions, a not-for-profit organization that sponsors volunteer programs. Travelers work on beautification projects, child care, arts and crafts, or teach English. Trips are structured to be completed in a week, so participants can see results before they leave.

Paradoxically, the big difference is the advent of neo-tribalism. **The fracturing of communities** is thriving unlike never before. No longer defined only by geography or socio economic class, communities are of the like-minded. As Watts Wacker, CEO and Futurist of FirstMatter LLC said, “people are becoming desperate to find people like themselves”. Facilities which create and foster a sense of community and bring together like-minded individuals will flourish. Consider the success of Soho House. Its London members-only townhouse offers 4 floors of restaurants, drawing rooms, bars and club space to those in film, media and the arts. After its New York success, it's expanding to a 2nd New York club, Miami and Los Angeles. Witness the success of the Life Time Fitness facility for those focused on exercise, nutrition and education. At 110,000 square feet (larger than a typical Home Depot) it's a cross between a shopping center and resort, what their Senior VP calls, “a defacto community center”. Not only does it house hundreds of state-of-the-art machines, sport courts and rock climbing caverns, indoor/outdoor water parks with waterslides and an incredible child center, but it also boasts its own nutritional products, clothing line and monthly magazine.

This fracturing means a further explosion of niche travel. Many broad categories are already mature. In women's travel, for example, we're seeing the niches of that niche, everything from divas, wine and bachelorettes, to adventure women, senior women and lesbians. The affluent will still have their tribe, but motivations will be less for exclusivity and status and more to mingle with one's own kind .

Reaching these communities is easier than ever before with everything from RSS feeds, SMS, multicasting, and podcasts to the ever greater numbers of online media and blogs (at last count, over 75,000 new ones daily). At the same time, communicators will need to reach these niches with multi-media. And speaking of communities, before I leave the subject, I'm pleased to announce that I've been selected as the moderator of the global online travel and hospitality public relations forum/section of [www.wiwih](http://www.wiwih.com) (Who Is Who In Hospitality). Seven different interest groups all “meet” to discuss best practices, trends, and ask input from colleagues.

Staying connected, technically connecting with other people, will become a metaphor for how people want to live their lives. Travel suppliers who help facilitate this will build guest loyalty and thrive. In a recent issue of *Travel Weekly*, Jim Anhut of InterContinental Hotel group spoke about low tech customer relationship management and encouraging staff to engage with guests and deliver relevant, interactive services. His example: a guest arrives wearing a New York Mets cap. The employee might ask about it and then say, 'Hey the Mets are on TV in the sports bar; I'll buy you the first beer.' Providers of luxury travel products need to have all of the tech facilities but to never lose sight of the importance of "high touch" to quote the prescient Marshall McLuhan years ago or risk debasing the brand. Electronic check-in kiosks, e-concierges, wireless handheld devices for ordering food and beverage? Tread carefully.

WHAT'S NEXT: LUXURY TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE TRENDS

February, 2006

Everyone seems to have his or her own definition of luxury these days. One of the better I've heard is from Yaffa Assouline, the prominent French magazine publisher and editor of *Luxuryculture.com*. She believes that true luxury presupposes a level of sophistication and education, and products and services need to adapt their marketing message to highlighting not only quality and authenticity, but also process.

Speaking of "process", now that **organic** foods have become mainstream. Natural luxury products are the new chic, dubbed **Organic Chic**. It's the new luxury, an indulgence that doesn't seem harmful, and appeals to consumers who feel the need to express their individual values and moral responsibilities. Celebrities and consumers alike are taking the plunge, but in a way that makes the right political, environmental, or philosophical statement, by adorning themselves in non-conflict diamonds, organic fiber gowns, and leather-free shoes. They would rather hire a nonpolluting vehicle (the Toyota Prius) or book a natural gas-powered Suburban from the EVO limo service – LA's environmental luxury car service. With celebrities like Leo and Cameron leading the way in their politically correct vehicles, there is a movement towards authenticity, simplicity, and environmentally correct consumption. From the food in the fridge to the sheets we sleep on, organic is also moved to the hotel bedrooms in a big way - organic mattresses and organic bedding are becoming an important new trend for travelers on a quest for a healthier lifestyle on the road.

Another intriguing definition, courtesy of Charles Leadbetter of London's *Observer* newspaper, is that in all ages luxury reflects what we are trying to escape, as in everyday experiences. In a world grown too complex, **simplicity becomes the new luxury** as in products that are intuitive. Brands that are ubiquitous, found in every major capital and even in airports become mundane, to be replaced by unique, one-of-a-kind offerings. And, as Leadbetter said, in an "always on", tremendously fast paced world people will seek sanctuary where we can go a lot slower. Interestingly enough, the trend-spotter and trend-setter Andre Balazs in recently explaining his new hotel, The Standard, in South Beach claims to offer a hideout which is all about "withdrawing."

Goodbye to passive consumerism. 2006 will be the year where we see travel products beginning to cater more to people's desire to express their individual, creative side and interactive pursuits will open up new markets and build loyalty. This calling for creativity has produced a new category in deluxe hotels – for design and artistic voyeurs – making these hotels a destination of their own. At Madrid's Puerta America, every floor has been designed by a different name-brand architect. Or see Copenhagen's Hotel Fox, where each of their 61 rooms is an individual piece of modern art, from whacky comical styles, graphic design, and fantastic street art to Japanese Manga. A leading resort in Los Cabos is also making noise with its "Aspiring Artist Package" complete with full art supplies and private painting lessons with a well known local artist, helping guests discover their inner artist.

Moreover, hotels will begin to not only focus on the hotel experience, but will need to **address the entire travel experience**, door to door, going well beyond computerized guest preferences and airline meals to go. The Palms in the Turks and Caicos is making waves with its "Spa Journey" which begins when guests step off the plane, met by a spa attendant, and for VIPs, a private car complete with a Car Spa Kit. On departure guests are given a "Breath of Life" infused tissue to aid easy breathing and calm travels home. "Rooms by the hour" no longer has that old notorious connotation – Marquis Reforma in Mexico City, with its "Spatacular Layover Package" aims to improve layover hassles by shuttling travelers from the airport to the hotel for rest and relaxation at the largest and most luxurious spa in the city. To streamline travel, cruise ships are also allowing guests to check into connecting flights while still on board ship.

Trends in the coming year? Expect to hear more about resorts, products and services for **five-star families**. Luxury brands are targeting not only the parents, but a young demographic, trying to develop brand loyalty at an ever earlier age, not to speak of the additional revenues families bring in. Recently reported are New York nightclubs for teens, spa treatments for parent and child, designer dresses for teens (how about a \$27,000 Dolce & Gabbana for a Miami teen's party) and even computer domains for babies. The billion dollar, 13 island Durrat Al Bahrain project will have one island devoted to a five-star family hotel and aqua park and the Riviera Maya's Esencia was designed as a sophisticated family-friendly alternative to its adult only hideaway up the beach. The new *Cookie* magazine, already with a circulation of 500,000, is targeted and written for stylish and sophisticated parents, which features everything for designer families, including home decor, travel, entertainment, fashion, gear, toys and furniture. The ads alone feature kids wearing nothing less than the most luxury branded designer apparel.

WHAT'S NEXT: LUXURY TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE TRENDS

September 2005

The mass market in the United States continues to trade up as people want to act and feel rich. They've taken elements of luxury brands and the vocabulary of the luxury lifestyle and appropriated them to mass culture. The result? The upscale consumer is starting to go elsewhere. Some are going the route of ultra-luxe as in six or seven star hotels, residence clubs, ever more remote destinations, and exclusive events and services with high price tags.

Though small but growing in number, others are choosing to go to the other end of the spectrum, what Phillips technology in their latest advertising campaign is calling "**sense + simplicity**". Translated to the hotel design area we've seen minimalism, but all too often the "sense" part of the equation as in functionality and comfort are lacking. Hopefully that's next. Robinson Crusoe type experiences on private islands and endurance events are gaining new appeal. Simplicity has also reared its head as in "spiritual" holidays which attempt to leave behind not only the world of excess but also, the physical world.

A striving to look or be like "old money" is becoming a thing of the past. "The newly rich, super confident as they are, no longer feel a need for the trappings of the old rich", said Philip Hook of Sotheby's at the recent Luxury Briefing conference in London. As the *New York Times* recently reported, if Nantucket's new mogul residents can't get into an old golf club where the membership is in five figures, they build a new club of their own where membership costs six figures.

As Chris Sanderson, Creative Director of London's The Future Laboratory said, what is true across the board is that consumers are sated, bored with product. **Now it's less about product and more about experience**, preferably an emotional experience. No one is probably a greater personification of this new affluent consumer than Sir Richard Branson who realized the importance of selling the experience in his Virgin Atlantic airline and lives a life filled with unique experiences whether it's traveling to space or dressing up like a satyr to herald his airline's new route to Havana.

Travel products need to be geared to this desire for experience and connection with a place. Peninsula Hotels does a superb job of this with its academies where you can practice calligraphy, take classes in Chinese textiles and learn to make buttons or study Chinese medicine. (Check out www.thebluefish.com concierge site for one-of-a-kind experiences ranging from flying a military jet to stunt driving.) **Travel marketers and communicators need to tell a story about their product** that imparts a sense of experience along with the requisite information. In the Riviera Maya's Ikal del Mar it's about "Poetry of the Sea" and the villas named for prominent Latin American poets or the stories about Mayan rituals and a Shaman-blessed Mayan-inspired spa. Connoisseur events for high tier spenders and loyal customers are booming as never before. This kind of special VIP attention promises to grow with the opportunities posed by the internet for customer targeting and communication. In fact, though viewed as the harbinger of the antithesis of service, the internet can be used to develop previously unimaginable levels of service.

Look at American Express' "How To Get In On The Act Promotion". Gold card holders can catch sneak peeks of upcoming Broadway shows and go behind the scenes, as well as get prime seating and early on sale ticket offers on the internet.

In this new world of luxury, it's also about **uniqueness and escaping homogeneity**. Thus, the success of boutique hotels. Intercontinental Hotels recognized this in its Indigo Line, positioning it as a group of individual hotels. Cutting edge design by name architects, interior designers and icons of the fashion world like Armani, Versace, Bulgari and Phillippe Starck are creating this new "specialness." This designer imprimatur is so powerful that in real estate and hotels a name can

even compensate for a less than ideal location. It remains to be seen if when these fashion groups spread they'll be able to maintain the uniqueness which is their reason for being in the first place, or if they will also come to be perceived as formulaic.

What's the next possible progression from boutique hotels? **Making the consumer "co-author"**, much as what has happened in designing athletic shoes and jeans. Probably one of the most exciting new trends is one giving guests the opportunity to customize aspects of their physical hotel experience, and not just with a choice of pillow or mattress. It's on the way. Los Angeles' Bel Air Hotel is giving guests the option to customize a suite and in HSMAI's "Marketing Review", industry experts foretold of electronic walls that are movable so guests can apportion space as well as choose their artwork, color and lighting.

What is certain is that the traditional words to describe "luxury", "spa", and "gourmet" have been debased and a **new vocabulary needs to emerge** to take their place. Composite words maybe? Or we'll become a society of more images and fewer words --- following the age old adage, a picture is worth a thousand words.