

Q3 2020 Viewpoint



Staying True to your Brand

As the world begins to re-open after an unfathomable few months of uncertainty, the hospitality industry is beginning to benefit from some much-needed summer footfall. But how will the experience change? And should it?

As with so many industries, recent conversations with our clients and partners are naturally around the challenges of managing a new version of a guest experience that has, to date, been so carefully created and nurtured without the limitations now imposed.

Practical adaptations have been put in place to recalibrate the use and flow of physical spaces and 'touch-less' interaction between the hotel and the guests. Travel restrictions mean the shape of guest profiling is shifting heavily towards domestic leisure. And everything that we have encouraged in the last decade such as social enrichment and personalised connections is in danger of being completely dismissed.

The road to recovery will no doubt face a number of hurdles to overcome and post-crisis travel and travel needs will drive a response to that. People have no doubt had time to think more consciously about what is important to them and how they can control the way they live, work and play. In a sense, connectivity of people and place matters more now than ever.

A balance on safety, communication and reassurance needs to be achieved. Moreover, a clear sense of self and purpose that transcends medium needs to be at the heart of any change.



Patina Hotels and Resorts, Maldives.

Our partners at Endpoint agree. Wayfinding Design Director, Alison Richings, reinforced that Place Branding in the post-lockdown world needs to meet increased emotional needs for belonging and being part of an active community. It should empower authentic storytelling through the form and expression to unlock imagination.

As Andaz Bali prepares to open their new property at the end of the year, adaptations have been put in place at an interface level. They are conscious that having already suffered overtourism in Bali, guests, especially in the luxury market, will continue to be curious travellers seeking that unique experience in locations that are near nature and open spaces. Sanur is in a great position to offer a genuine, unspoilt Balinese village and community feel. At the same time, the voice of the Andaz brand will deliver the confidence and authority of an international chain brand hotel whilst building relationships by encouraging and enhancing their positive, trustworthy local flavour of service culture.

Brands will also be dialling up their sustainability message. Air purification solutions and olfactory stimulation, sound and movement activated lighting, contactless or minimal touch transactions... Patina Hotels & Resorts are poised to open their first property in Fari Island Maldives in October 2020. Never has a story been more appropriate where in carefully selected extraordinary landscapes, the experience flows in tune with guests' needs in a way that harmonises positively with nature. The architecture is creatively interwoven with its environment, the interiors are sensitively produced harnessing materials from their surroundings, a signature plant-based restaurant Roots embodies the philosophy of respecting what nature provides by maximising taste whilst minimising waste.

All things considered, we don't know how long it will be before the world returns to 'business as usual' – or even if it will at all. But, in order to stay connected, brand commitment and the right tone of voice will inspire imagination and credibility in times ahead.

Quality, tact, and messaging – everywhere from signage to collateral – needs to match the on-brand experience and expectations of the guests.