
EDITORIAL

The concept of luxury has been a part of humanity for thousands of years — most probably since the dawning and creation of humans. In the Stone Age, one could see luxury being a warm cave with a well-lit fire; in today's world, luxury has come full circle with evidence-based research showing that luxury holds tremendous social and economic power.

The theory of the leisure class critically examines the concept of luxury as something in high regard/esteem. Details and evidence of such are plentiful throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, Asia and some parts of Africa.

While the definition of luxury is challenging, the stereotypical associations of such are well known to most people. High prices, exclusivity, high quality and excessiveness, for example, are all in accordance with what may be expected when one talks about luxury, however, the definition(s) have changed over time. While "old" luxury was viewed to be in accordance with a more tangible and focused set of luxury items, in today's modern world and "new" luxury, it could now be said to be very much based around experiences. The essence of providing an experience has pushed itself to the front for many individuals across the world — in today's global society, it could be suggested that people are now looking more for a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience rather than the product which the majority of people are able to access or afford as the distribution of wealth and money has arguably brought society into a more equalitarian place. In other words, luxury is now considered to be more easily accessible than ever before. What makes it different to other things — i.e. outside of everyday normality — is still to be seen.

In modern society, we can suggest that there has been a significant shift in both consumer attitudes towards spending, along with people's interpretations of what does and does not constitute luxury. Definitions of luxury have developed as time has progressed; cultures have become more diverse and technological advancements have played a substantial role in affecting modern day equilibriums throughout the world. How this affects hospitality, events and tourism is still to be discussed in greater detail — with this journal hopefully bridging the gap to it in the future.

This Special Issue: Luxury

This Special Issue of *Research in Hospitality Management* was curated to deepen our insight into luxury, to grow the research literature on the topic as well as to bring forth new ideas about the luxury hospitality, events and tourism sectors — all of which are a necessity, it could be argued — while much literature about luxury focuses on the retail sector.

A variety of articles have been selected that examine, discuss and explore diverse topics. **Christopher Berry** examines the moral threat of luxury as it shifts from being a materialistic phenomenon to what could be described as a need for social and personal well-being. **Kasia Minor and Andy Heyes** looks at the somewhat darker nature of luxury hospitality, a topic that is relatively under-researched or discussed. **Sophie Thorne** critically discusses the concept of spas and wellness. In a society that has now identified the importance of health in order to live well in the future, is wellness a necessity or a luxury? **Eileen Lee, Carl Boger and Andy Heyes** critically analyse the first-class airline experience, focusing mainly on the sensory nature of such experiences. **Rabab Abu Ramadan and Ioanna Karanikola** discuss the career paths of general managers in Dubai (a destination well known for its luxury image) and how progression in this career has changed over time. **Ewaldt Janssen** discusses the current predicament and importance of revenue management in the luxury hotel sector in South Africa. **Hartwig Bohne** discusses collaboration within human resource structures of luxury establishments. **Charles Bladen** explores the semiotics of luxury events with regard to service delivery and customer experience design. Lastly, an important aspect of this journal is to bring forth quality student research from the many institutions across the world. As such, **Nguyen Vinh Hoa and Isaure May**, both recent graduates from the Luxury Hotel School in Paris, discuss the need to critically analyse the *Michelin Guide's* stance and whether it is still considered luxurious.

This Special Issue has generated a series of ideas about luxury and luxury hospitality which we will explore in future, collectively, as passionate practitioners and academics, to develop a more nuanced understanding of "luxury hospitality" and "luxury hospitality management", terms in need of development and deeper understanding.

As Guest Editor, I thank all the authors who have contributed to this special luxury edition of *Research in Hospitality Management*, the generous reviewers for taking their time to review articles, and the sponsors who kindly sponsored this journal — all of whom I hope will benefit in some way from its worldwide distribution. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and comments about this Special Issue.

Andy Heyes — Guest Editor

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