

LUXURY EXPLORED

CHINESE LUXURY TRAVELERS'
EVOLVING DESIRES



In Collaboration with
Marriott International Luxury Group Greater China



LUXURY GROUP
MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

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ABOUT JING DAILY

Launched in 2009, Jing Daily is the leading digital publication on luxury consumer trends in China. It is our mission to understand the forces shaping the future of the luxury industry by bringing our readers the latest news, analysis, features, and reports exploring developments in that landscape. We seek to understand how the definition of luxury, and by turn its consumption, is changing, how the digital landscape in China is developing, and how brands are adapting and taking advantage of those changes. Our readers are industry leaders seeking to understand China's complex and rapidly evolving luxury industry.

JING INTELLIGENCE

Jing Intelligence is the strategic advisory arm of Jing Daily, renowned for its deep insights into China's market. We specialize in guiding global brands through the complex and dynamic landscape of China's consumer economy. Leveraging the collective wisdom of Jing Daily's editors and our extensive network of local experts, we offer unparalleled market analysis and strategic solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by international businesses in China.

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INTRODUCTION

CHINA'S DYNAMIC LUXURY TRAVEL MARKET

CHINESE LUXURY TRAVEL SEGMENT AND GROWTH OVERVIEW

During China's Labor Day holiday, from May 1-5, 2024, both domestic and international travel and spending surged above pre-pandemic 2019 levels, reflecting the positive outlook for China's travel market.

According to Ctrip's 2024 May Day Holiday Travel Summary, Chinese travelers made almost 10 million plane trips, visiting nearly 200 countries and over 3,000 cities worldwide. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism recorded 295 million domestic trips over the five-day period, with domestic spending totalling 166.9 billion RMB (\$23.13 billion), a 12.7% increase from the previous year and 13.5% higher than 2019.

China's luxury travel landscape has undergone a profound transformation over the past several years, reflecting the evolving preferences of affluent Chinese travelers. This change is a testament to the country's economic development and a reflection of Chinese consumers' ever-changing aspirations.

Over the past decade, the Chinese luxury travel segment has grown exponentially, powered by rising affluence, increased spending power, and a growing middle class with a penchant for indulgence.



From opulent vacations in exotic locales to bespoke experiences catering to discerning tastes, the scope and scale of luxury travel in China continues to develop and expand.

As disposable incomes have risen, making international travel more accessible to millions, Chinese travelers are increasingly seeking new and more personal experiences. Luxury travel, once synonymous with ostentatious displays of wealth, has evolved into a nuanced pursuit of exclusivity, authenticity, and cultural immersion. The allure of luxury travel lies in grand accommodations and lavish amenities, as well as experiences that leave a lasting impression.

Marriott International is one of the leading hospitality groups that has successfully adapted to the changing demands of today's Chinese luxury travelers. With its portfolio of eight dynamic luxury brands, the company seeks to offer authentic, rare, and enriching experiences. Marriott's approach emphasizes the creation of highly contextualized, nuanced brand experiences that resonate with the modern luxury traveler's quest for exclusivity and personal growth, positioning itself as a responsive brand.

Images: Marriott International

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHINESE LUXURY TRAVEL MARKET



Several factors have contributed to the transformation of the Chinese luxury travel market. Foremost among these is a cultural shift, fueled by changing attitudes, towards luxury consumption. As China's society and economy have developed, so too have notions of luxury, with an increasing emphasis on subtlety, sophistication, and understated elegance.

According to [Bain's](#) latest China luxury report forecasts, China's luxury market will grow this year in mid-single digits (4-6 percent). From 2017 to 2021, the market tripled in size as Chinese consumers switched from purchasing luxury products and services abroad to buying them at home.

In 2023, Chinese luxury consumption accounted for 22% to 24% of the global total.

Bain forecasts that by 2030, it will account for 35% to 40% of the world's total, with consumption within mainland China reaching 24% to 26%.

Images: Marriott International

The proliferation of digital platforms and social media has played a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and driving demand for unique, Instagram-worthy experiences. Chinese travelers are well-connected digitally and discerning, relying on online reviews, recommendations, and social media influencers to inform their travel decisions.

The emergence of experiential luxury, characterized by a focus on personal enrichment, emotional resonance, and authentic connections, has redefined the parameters of luxury travel in China.

Today's affluent Chinese travelers are not merely interested in ticking off bucket-list destinations; they seek meaningful encounters that foster cultural exchanges, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual rejuvenation.

According to Robert Pei, VP and Head of Product for Visa Greater China, luxury travel spending trends have significantly changed, with a growing preference for digital payment methods. Pei points to the increasing adoption of technologies such as Tap to Pay and mobile wallets among luxury travelers, citing their convenience and enhanced security features as drivers.

Regarding the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Pei states, "The pandemic has accelerated the digitalization of payment methods in the travel sector. Travelers prioritize contactless and touchless transactions to minimize physical contact. We anticipate continued growth in digital payment adoption among luxury travelers, with a focus on safety, convenience, and flexibility."



Images: Marriott International

UNLEASHING POTENTIAL PERSPECTIVES ON FUTURE GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



As the Chinese luxury travel market evolves, opportunities abound for stakeholders across the travel industry to capitalize on burgeoning demand. From luxury hoteliers and tour operators to destination management companies and cultural institutions, a wealth of untapped potential awaits exploration.

Businesses can position themselves at the forefront of this transformative trend by embracing a more holistic approach to luxury travel that emphasizes sustainability, wellness, and experiential enrichment. By curating immersive experiences that resonate with the aspirations and values of Chinese luxury travelers, businesses can forge deeper connections and foster brand loyalty in an increasingly competitive market.

In conclusion, the evolving desires of Chinese luxury travelers underscore the dynamism and adaptability of the global luxury travel industry.

As consumer preferences evolve and new trends emerge, understanding Chinese travelers' nuanced motivations and aspirations will be paramount to unlocking the full potential of this burgeoning market segment. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing authenticity, the future of luxury travel in China promises to be as awe-inspiring as the destinations travelers seek to explore.

Images: Marriott International



UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S LUXURY CHINESE TRAVELERS

Understanding luxury Chinese travelers requires a deep dive into demographics, personas, and the unique characteristics that distinguish them from their counterparts elsewhere. From the drivers of future growth to the intricate motivations behind travel choices, delving into these aspects illuminates the evolution of luxury travel in China.

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

China's economic expansion has birthed a new wave of affluent travelers, driven by urbanization, rising incomes, and a burgeoning middle class. This demographic shift positions China as a critical player in the global luxury travel market, with projections indicating sustained growth in the coming years.

As urbanization continues and disposable incomes rise, many Chinese consumers seek premium travel experiences, reshaping the landscape of luxury tourism both domestically and internationally.



Images: Marriott International

KEY PERSONAS AND EVOLVING TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS

China's first generation of entrepreneurs, comprising business owners from the early days of Chinese economic reforms, exhibits a blended approach to travel, combining business and leisure. This persona seeks efficient and effortless travel experiences and indulges in fine dining, catering, leisure entertainment, spas, and exclusive services. These travel choices reflect a desire for a balanced mix of efficiency and enjoyment.

The heirs to family wealth and business legacies are navigating a landscape shaped by tradition, expectation, and the pressures of modernity.

Their travel motivations extend beyond material indulgence to encompass a quest for global connections, personal growth, and asserting individual identity. Travel is a platform for self-discovery, cultural exploration, and cultivating a persona separate from familial expectations.

Jackey Yu, a partner at McKinsey's Hong Kong office who leads the consultancy's Travel, Tourism, and Consumer practice in Greater China and Asia, believes the younger generation's needs and desires are shifting towards community-based experiences and a solid connection to the world.



“For the younger generation, brand association is less significant than it was for previous generations. They are often drawn to quiet luxury and niche brands that resonate with their identity. They seek brands representing niche communities, or contributing to sustainability, carbon neutrality, and doing good for the world. Sustainable travel and brands with contribution attributes are increasingly important to this segment,” Yu says.

While not a distinct luxury traveler segment, the digital nomad lifestyle is growing in popularity among Chinese millennials. Digital nomads' lives are characterized by remote work and boundless exploration. For them, travel represents freedom, flexibility, and the pursuit of authentic experiences. Digital nomads seek destinations that offer a blend of connectivity, cultural immersion, and work-life balance. While digital technology, such as generative AI, is essential, it is seen as an enabler to enhance the human experience during travel, rather than the sole purpose of consumption.

In summary, luxury travel in China is shaped by demographics and evolving travel motivations. The first generation of entrepreneurs seeks a blend of business and leisure, while its successors prioritize personal growth and global connections. Digital nomads embrace a remote work lifestyle, valuing freedom and authentic experiences. As Chinese consumers' incomes rise and their travel preferences evolve, the luxury travel market in China is poised for continued growth and transformation.

Images: Marriott International

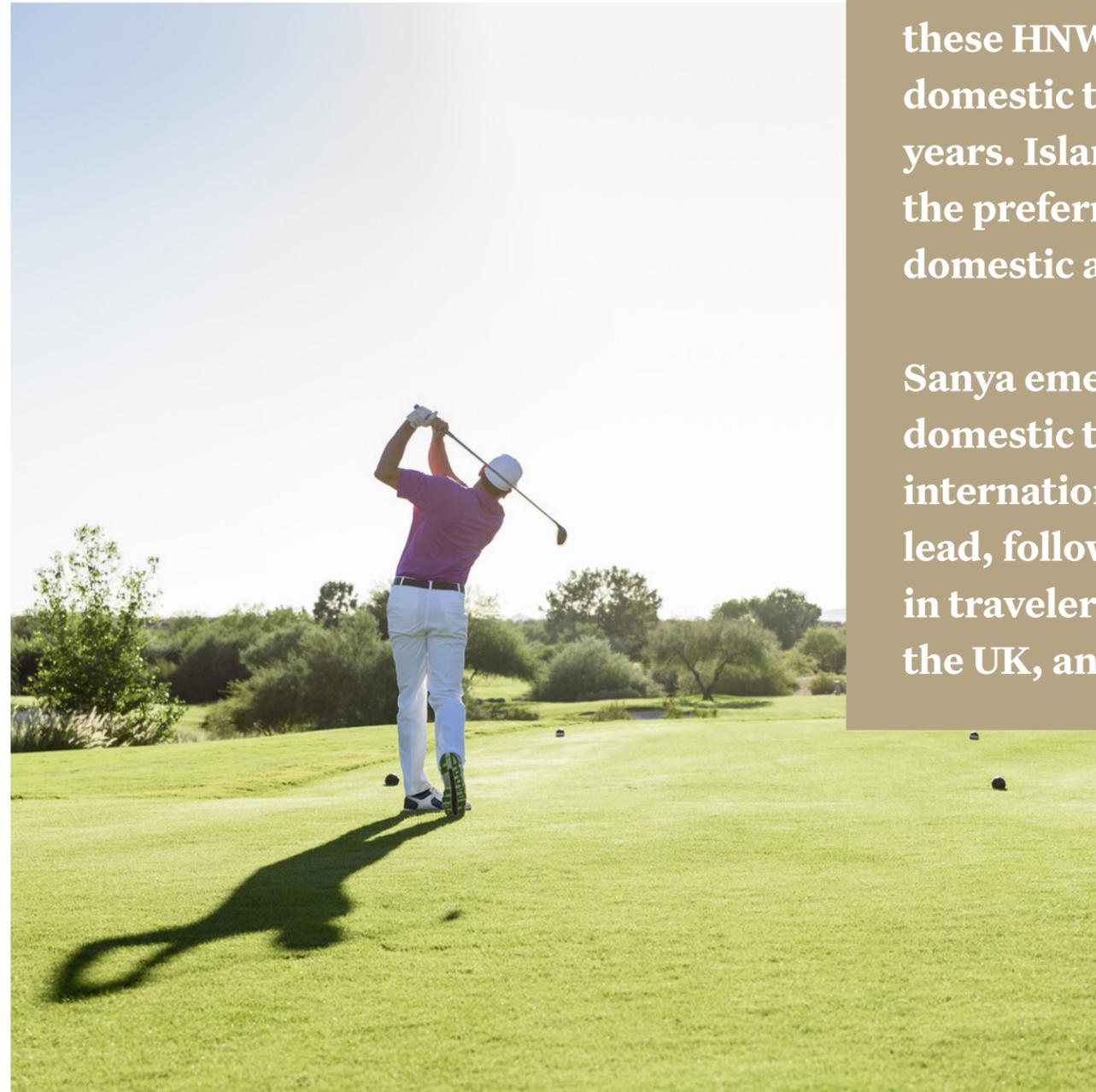
DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS CHINESE LUXURY TRAVELERS VS PEERS

Vincent Wang, a prominent Chinese travel influencer and writer for Condé Nast Traveler magazine, highlights Chinese luxury travelers' changing expectations. He notes that while exclusivity remains paramount, there's a nuanced difference between mature and young travelers. The former prioritize exclusivity, whereas millennials and Gen Z favor uniqueness. "For global luxury travelers, exclusivity is key, but they also value social interactions during their trips, a preference less emphasized among mature Chinese luxury travelers," he explains.

Wang observes a shift in priorities among Chinese luxury travelers, with an increasing appreciation of craftsmanship alongside quality. While quality still reigns supreme in terms of destination and accommodation selection, there's a growing interest in experiences that showcase artisanal skills and creativity.

"Stable destinations and renowned brands like Japan and Thailand, and The Ritz-Carlton remain a top choice," he notes. "However, admiration for craftsmanship has surged in recent years. Chinese luxury travelers now seek itineraries and excursions centered around themes like floral art, art studio visits, and behind-the-scenes tours. The process of creating beauty and perfection captivates and excites them."

The [2023 Hurun Chinese Luxury Consumer Survey](#), which surveyed 750 high-net-worth individuals (HNWI) in China from families with assets of 45 million RMB (\$6.22 million), found respondents took 23 vacation days per year, which is consistent with the previous year's findings.



Furthermore, nearly 90 percent of these HNWIs intend to increase their domestic travel over the next three years. Island destinations remained the preferred choice for both domestic and international travel.

Sanya emerged as the top domestic travel destination, while internationally, the Maldives took the lead, followed by a notable increase in travelers opting for Dubai, France, the UK, and Singapore.

The Hurun survey further unveils that, within the realm of reveals that, among luxury hotel brands, The Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, and Peninsula emerge as the top three favorites among this discerning group.

Images: Marriott International

Carol Chen, a China travel expert and co-founder of Shineway, a Chinese luxury travel agency, says that compared to their global counterparts, Chinese luxury travelers exhibit distinct preferences when it comes to luxury and prestige.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Chinese luxury travelers is their strong sense of group identity. Chen notes that they are acutely aware of their social status and wish to fit in with their peer group. “Chinese luxury travelers are more likely to follow trends and purchase the same brands and experiences as their friends and colleagues to maintain social cohesion,” Chen adds.

“Chinese luxury travelers highly value the showy aspect of luxury,” she explains. “They enjoy showcasing their wealth and status, and they seek out brands and experiences that will attract attention and admiration.”

Furthermore, the concept of “face” plays a significant role in Chinese luxury travelers’ purchasing decisions. “‘Face’ is the desire to avoid embarrassment or shame. Chinese luxury travelers prioritize purchasing luxury goods or services that will not embarrass them in public, or among their social circle,” Chen explains.

These unique characteristics shape the preferences and choices of Chinese luxury travelers, influencing their brand picks, destination choices, and purchasing decisions.



McKinsey's Yu notes that Chinese luxury travelers seek experiential and transformative journeys that extend beyond functionality. “They aspire to immersive experiences that foster learning, create enduring memories, and facilitate genuine engagement with local cultures,” he explains.

Key considerations for these travelers include personalization, exclusivity, sustainability, health and well-being, and immersive local experiences.

To meet the preferences of today's luxury Chinese travelers, travel providers must adopt a nuanced approach that embraces cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and innovation. By identifying and accommodating these evolving preferences, aspirations, and values, Yu says providers can forge meaningful connections and deliver transformative experiences that resonate deeply with this dynamic and discerning demographic, fostering continued growth and prosperity in the luxury travel market. He emphasizes the imperative for luxury and boutique hotels to differentiate themselves and articulate a distinct value proposition.

“Mere provision of expensive and high-quality travel experiences no longer suffices. Luxury travelers seek personalized, distinctive, and culturally authentic services and products that authentically reflect the destination, culture, or region,” he observes. “Brands must identify avenues to establish leadership in specific niches, whether through an Asian exotic theme, beach resorts, ecotourism, or other distinctive offerings.”

Images: Marriott International



TRAVELING
WELL

HOW TO CAPTURE
CHINESE LUXURY
TRAVELERS'
HEARTS

LOCAL CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

Travel providers must adapt to meet the shifting demands of this dynamic demographic. From a growing emphasis on local cultural experiences to concerns about environmental impact and the pursuit of holistic well-being, understanding the aspirations of Chinese luxury travelers is paramount to capturing their hearts and loyalty.

Chinese luxury travelers increasingly seek authentic encounters that foster emotional connections and cultural immersion. To cater to this desire, travel providers can explore innovative solutions that resonate with local narratives and cultural relevance.

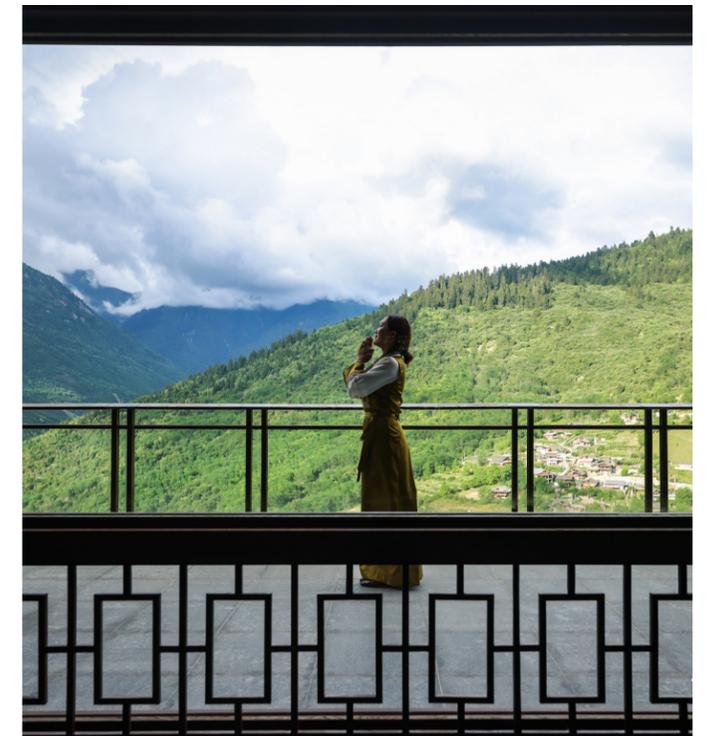


Rissai Valley, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve — the sixth Ritz-Carlton Reserve in the world—is located in Jiuzhaigou, southwestern Sichuan province, and exemplifies this trend. Ritz-Carlton Reserves are rare places for those who appreciate an exclusive sanctuary tucked away in the most exquisite corners of the world.

Nestled amid the awe-inspiring beauty of alpine mountains, forests, lakes, and waterfalls designated as a Unesco World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve, Rissai Valley, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, offers an intimate luxury retreat. Guests can immerse themselves in traditional Tibetan village life and explore the ancient forest ecosystems of Jiuzhaigou National Park, home to giant pandas and diverse flora and fauna.

The hotel's wellness spa, drawing inspiration from Tibetan philosophy and traditional techniques, enhances the guest experience by providing relaxation and rejuvenation rooted in centuries-old wisdom. Rissai Valley, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve reflects a growing trend of travel products emphasizing cultural immersion and authenticity, appealing to the preferences of luxury travelers seeking transformative journeys.

Similarly, The Luxury Collection, one of Marriott International's eight dynamic luxury brands, caters to the preferences of high-end Chinese travelers who value enriching experiences, a healthy lifestyle, and a deeper connection to local culture.



Images: Marriott International



Hotels such as The Azure Qiantang, a Luxury Collection Hotel in Hangzhou, are tailored to cater to these preferences, providing tranquil accommodations and curated experiences that capture the essence of the destination.

For instance, guests can luxuriate in elegant rooms overlooking the picturesque Qiantang River, savor traditional West Lake Longjing tea upon arrival, and partake in culinary workshops and cultural tours, allowing them to delve into the city's rich heritage.

Guests can make use of bespoke concierge services to embark on scenic boat trips along the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, explore ancient temples, and indulge in authentic cultural performances, immersing themselves in Hangzhou's history and traditions.

According to Chen, co-founder of Shineway, demand for immersive experiences among high-end Chinese travelers is growing. "We're witnessing a shift away from rushed, surface-level sightseeing tours," she notes. "Instead, travelers seek deeper engagement with local art, culture, cuisine, and community life. They crave emotional connections with both places and people."

As Chinese travelers gain more experience, they are veering towards smaller-scale, unique, and niche experiences perceived as more authentic. This trend is fueling growth in culinary tourism, agritourism, and ecotourism.



Chen highlights the trend towards personalized, private tours, indicating a decline in the appeal of group tours. "Luxury travelers now seek customized private experiences that offer flexibility, status, and exclusive access to local culture," she explains. "Travel brands must cater to this demand by providing VIP amenity-packed tours."

Moreover, long-stay trips are becoming more popular among Chinese travelers whereas short sightseeing trips are becoming less favored, Chen observes. "Travelers now opt for longer stays to immerse themselves in destinations at a slower pace, integrating activities such as language classes, cooking workshops, or volunteering opportunities," she says.

Lastly, Chen points out a heightened demand for responsible tourism. "Younger generations show growing environmental and social consciousness. There's rising demand for sustainable travel products that also preserve and respect local culture," she adds.

Images: Marriott International

PERSONALIZED AND CUSTOMIZED TRAVEL INSPIRATION AND INFLUENCE



Chinese luxury travelers make travel decisions based on various sources, including digital platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu, known in English as the Little Red Book, as well as traditional media and word-of-mouth recommendations.

They increasingly rely on online resources, such as WeChat and Little Red Book, for destination research, travel reviews, and advice from fellow travelers. Social media, particularly Weibo and Douyin, serves as a vital source of inspiration, with travelers following brands and influencers to stay updated on trends and offers.

While traditional media still plays a role, Chinese luxury travelers favor digital platforms due to their convenience and accessibility.

According to travel expert Chen, engaging with digital media is integral to every stage of these travelers' journeys, from planning and booking to experiencing and sharing their trips. Brands that understand their media consumption habits and offer personalized experiences are poised to effectively capture this market opportunity.

Images: Marriott International

SOLUTION 1

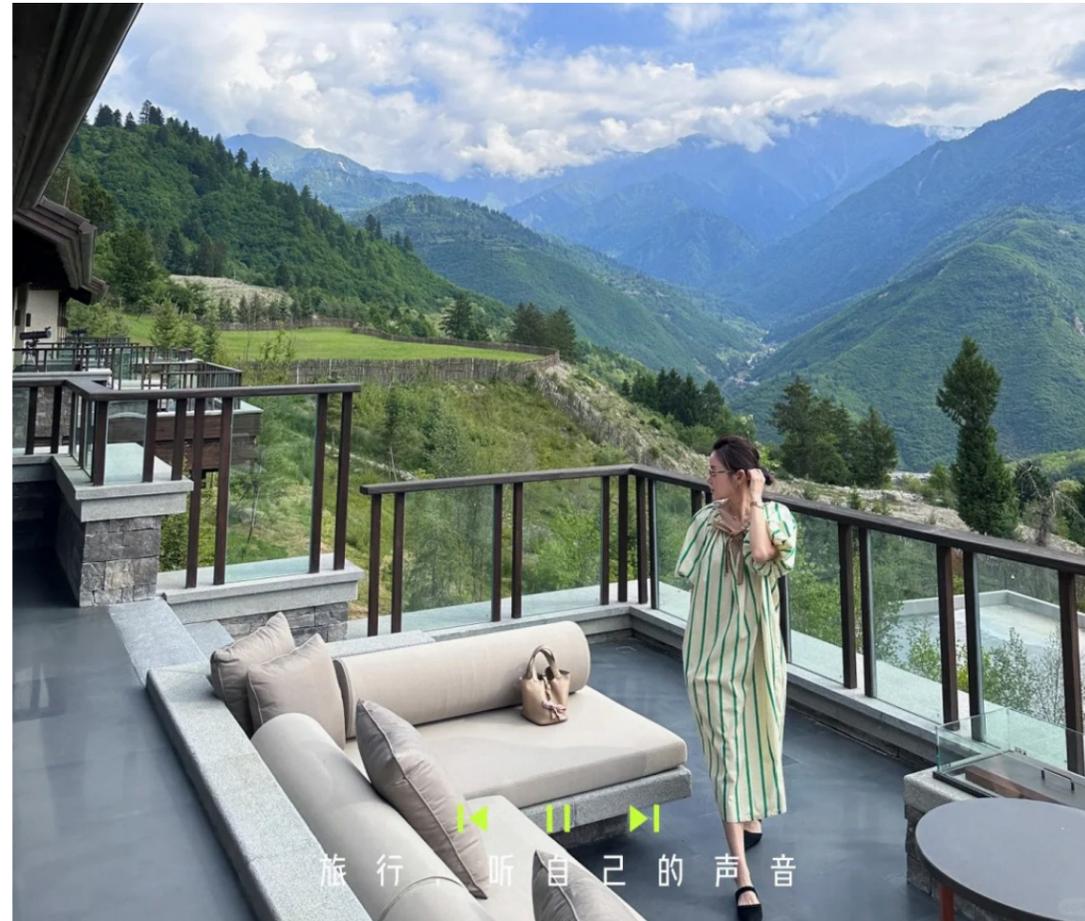
HARNESS

XIAOHONGSHU

CHINA'S LIFESTYLE SEARCH ENGINE

Xiaohongshu, known as China's lifestyle search engine, has emerged as a prominent platform for travel inspiration and recommendations among Chinese luxury travelers. Leveraging social commerce and user-generated content, brands can partner with influencers to showcase unique destinations and experiences, boosting engagement and bookings. Travelers seek exclusive and personalized experiences that enhance their social status and provide opportunities for sharing on social media.

McKinsey's Yu points to the shifting influence of social media on travel preferences across generations in China. "While older generations



rely on word-of-mouth from friends and family, younger ones, like Gen Z, turn to platforms such as WeChat and Douyin for inspiration. Travel brands need to make a huge effort to deploy and strategize their chosen new media strategy regarding the marketing and sales channel."

Moreover, Yu believes integrating public and private domain operations is crucial for effective customer engagement and conversion. "By migrating leads from public to private domains, brands can foster personalized interactions with potential customers. Understanding each channel's unique value proposition and crafting a seamless end-to-end experience are vital for success in this dynamic landscape," he adds.

Another crucial aspect is the establishment of emotional connections through personalized recommendations and interactions, which fosters loyalty and satisfaction among travelers. To cater to these preferences, Chen, co-founder of Shineway, suggests that travel brands can employ various strategies. These include partnering with influencers, utilizing social listening tools, collaborating with high-

end establishments, and developing VIP tiers with escalating benefits based on past trips and spending.

Wang, a prominent Chinese travel influencer, emphasizes that most luxury travelers have their preferences when choosing hotels, activities, excursions, and dining experiences. Customization and personalization should be based on travelers' fundamental needs and expectations.

"What travel providers need to do," he adds, "is to ensure that the itinerary and experience are meaningful, seamlessly integrating local authenticity with customers' needs, and leveraging experiences and awareness to enhance connections. Drawing insights from Xiaohongshu hot spots, travel providers should offer deeper insights into destinations, philosophies, and experiences."

In summary, understanding the diverse sources of inspiration for Chinese luxury travelers and offering personalized experiences are key to capturing this lucrative market segment. By leveraging digital platforms, social commerce, and tailored services, travel brands can effectively appeal to these travelers' discerning tastes and preferences.



Images: Marriott International

SOLUTION 2 CREATE SURPRISES THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

Collaborating with leading fashion houses, renowned artists, and elite sporting events allows travel providers to create unforgettable experiences that transcend traditional boundaries. This approach will enable travelers to engage with their passions and interests more deeply. For instance, travel destinations can partner with fashion designers to provide exclusive runway shows or pop-up boutiques. Luxury hotels may collaborate with renowned sports figures to host exceptional experiences with these legends.

The popularity of skiing in China, mainly propelled by the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, has prompted luxury brands to leverage emerging



consumer trends and preferences through innovative lifestyle activations, including ski pop-ups. Dior, for instance, epitomized this strategy by unveiling a ski pop-up store at the esteemed Lake Songhua Seibu Prince Hotel in Jinling province, China, in January 2023.

The creation of this ice-sculpted store resonated with local customs, echoing a traditional practice observed in Northern China during the winter months. Similarly, Fendi engaged consumers by launching its Winter Sports Capsule Collection pop-up space at The Westin Changbaishan from December 2021 to February 2022. Concurrently, Fendi expanded its presence by establishing a Fendi Café atop the Changbaishan Wanda Ski Resort.

Brands like The Ritz-Carlton surprise their high-value customers through cross-sector collaborations. For example, The Ritz-Carlton continues its partnership with the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team as its first Official Hotel Partner, providing exclusive privileges to guests during the 2024 Shanghai Formula 1 Grand Prix.

Images: Marriott International

The St. Regis signature butler service is meticulously designed to cater to the nuanced needs of Chinese luxury travelers, prioritizing personalized and customized experiences. These butlers go above and beyond, offering anticipatory services and unexpected surprises to ensure guests feel both the convenience of luxury hotel living and the comfort of being in their own homes. From finding unique travel memorabilia, pressing suits for special occasions, and delivering favorite evening reads, to selecting thoughtful last-minute gifts, the butlers make each stay memorable.

Each St. Regis location offers unique experiences tailored to its setting – whether it's facilitating an ideal seaside vacation in Qingdao, a healing journey of spa and cuisine experiences in Shenzhen, or participating in the traditional evening ritual of sabering champagne in Zhuhai. These localized services are not just about luxury, but about creating a connection between guests and their surroundings, enhancing their stay with authentic and unforgettable experiences.

The St. Regis butler service effectively meets the desires of Chinese luxury travelers for experiences that are not only exclusive and luxurious but also deeply personalized and reflective of their individual preferences and the cultural richness of the destinations. This service paradigm ensures that every guest's stay is characterized by comfort, carefreeness, and enjoyment, setting a new standard for luxury travel.





W Hotels has innovatively embraced cross-sector collaboration to captivate Chinese luxury travelers through its music campaign, W PRESENTS. This initiative, launched in the Asia-Pacific in November last year after its North American debut, exemplifies the brand's dedication to creating immersive, inclusive experiences that showcase musical talent. By hosting private live electronic concerts in its iconic W Living Rooms and Sound Suites – special in-suite recording studios – W Hotels has set a new standard for integrating entertainment with luxury hospitality.

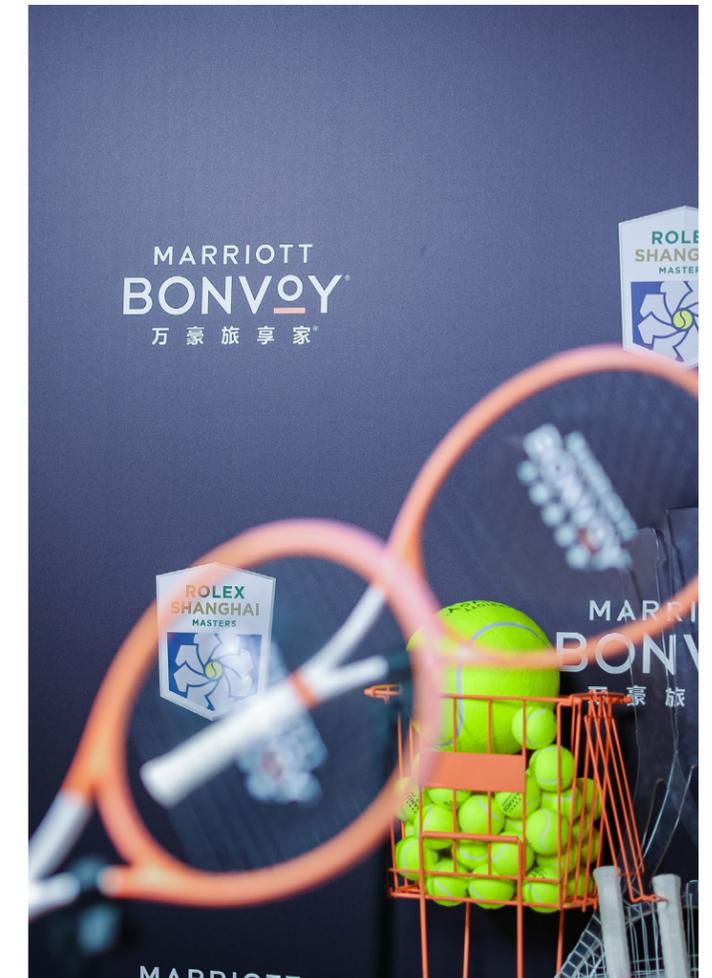
The Asia-Pacific launch of W PRESENTS featured an event at W Osaka with performances by the renowned Japanese actor, model, and DJ duo Shuzo and Yamato, and headlined by the Italian DJ and producer duo Gioli and Assia. Known for their indie techno pop sound, Gioli and Assia's performance highlighted the brand's effort to blend classical and contemporary elements, offering guests a unique, powerful musical experience. This series of music campaigns not only enhances the guest experience with unexpected entertainment, but also strengthens W Hotels' position as an innovator in offering culturally rich and diverse experiences to attract luxury travelers.

Forged in 2019, The Ritz-Carlton's partnership with the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team demonstrates the brand's commitment to delivering truly singular experiences. Over the past few years, the two like-minded brands have successfully delivered one-of-a-kind experiences in cities including Melbourne, Montreal and Budapest.

Similarly, Marriott Bonvoy has partnered with the Shanghai Rolex Masters to offer exclusive experiences like the Dream Seat series and Master Classes with tennis legend Li Na. These collaborations enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by providing unique and unexpected experiences beyond traditional hospitality.

McKinsey's Yu emphasizes the value of utilizing events or loyalty programs to drive tourism activities, noting that this aligns with the evolving preferences of Chinese travelers who are shifting towards more experiential forms of travel encompassing sports, culture, music, and art.

Last year, the concert economy in China proved to be a potent driver of tourism traffic and spending, even for traditionally unpopular destinations. Yu stresses that events have the



potential to attract niche personas and influence travel behavior, extending beyond luxury travel to general tourism.

While events driving local tourism is not a new concept, Yu believes it is gaining increasing popularity. "Classic examples like the Olympics and the World Cup have long been known to stimulate tourism," Yu says. "Now, we're seeing a similar effect with various other events."

Images: Marriott International

CONCERN FOR PERSONAL TRAVEL'S SUSTAINABILITY

The Chinese tourism industry plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable travel as the world faces an unprecedented climate change challenge. In 2019, Chinese travelers embarked on six billion domestic leisure trips and over 150 million international trips from mainland China.

This contributed approximately 6 percent to 8 percent of mainland China's total carbon emissions, according to a [joint research report by McKinsey, Accor, and Trip.com Group](#) titled *The Path Toward Eco-friendly Travel in China*. Accommodation was responsible for 60 percent of domestic travel emissions, primarily due to high energy consumption.



Chinese travelers are increasingly concerned about climate change and actively seeking sustainable options, as a recent McKinsey survey on sustainable travel found. However, they are unwilling to pay more for these solutions, believing that achieving climate-friendly travel is a shared responsibility requiring contributions from the government and industry.

As awareness of environmental conservation grows, Chinese luxury travelers are becoming more conscious of the ecological impact of their journeys. They are actively seeking travel experiences that minimize harm and maximize positive contributions.

According to Yu, a co-author of the McKinsey report, Chinese luxury travelers can make choices that immediately reduce their environmental footprint. For instance, they can spend more time at a single destination, choose rail travel instead of short-haul flights, reduce the frequency of hotel cleaning services, and avoid single-use plastics.

The report highlights that travelers could reduce their environmental footprint on a typical trip by 10 percent to 20 percent by making smarter decisions and leveraging incentives from travel providers.

Yu believes that tourism providers can help travelers make sustainable choices. This can be achieved by making climate-friendly options visible, such as providing food labeling indicating carbon emissions and incentivizing sustainable actions through rewards programs and discounts.

The Ritz-Carlton, Nanjing sets an example by participating in the Community Footprints program, collaborating with local charitable organizations for ongoing support and volunteer activities.

The hotel has implemented various environmentally friendly practices, including energy-efficient lighting, smart room controls and emission-reducing boiler upgrades. There are plans for air-source heat pumps. Additionally, the hotel minimizes the use of plastic, promotes food conservation, and recycles kitchen waste into organic soil for local farms.



Images: Marriott International

These initiatives are part of Marriott's broader commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, reflecting significant strides in sustainable development. Marriott's dedication to these practices has not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by its inclusion in the 2023 Bloomberg Green Gold ESG 50 list and receiving the accolade for "Fast ESG Developing" company. This recognition underscores the successful integration of sustainable practices within its operations, highlighting Marriott's role as a pioneer in the hospitality industry's movement towards a more sustainable and responsible future.

Promoting responsible tourism practices and supporting community-led conservation efforts foster a sense of stewardship and environmental consciousness among luxury travelers.

Amanda Ho, co-founder of Regenerative Travel, a company that fosters a regenerative mindset in the travel industry to promote positive change and equity through education and collaboration, emphasizes the importance of taking a holistic approach involving all stakeholders to transition from sustainability to regeneration. This involves creating abundance for communities, wildlife, and ecosystems by making choices beyond being "green" or sustainable, and actively improving a place.

She highlights the importance of personal intentionality in adopting a regenerative mindset, influencing choices from transportation to accommodations, and ultimately shaping the impact of travel experiences. According to Ho, regeneration begins with individual intentions and mindsets, which are reflected in every aspect of travel planning and execution.

However, achieving sustainable travel in the future requires collaborative action from industry and stakeholders. Businesses can directly reduce their environmental footprint by identifying



sustainability gaps, developing comprehensive sustainability plans, and implementing upgrades to hotel infrastructure. Innovative sustainable technologies, such as machine learning solutions, can also contribute by monitoring and optimizing resource consumption in real-time.

Images: Marriott International

JW Marriott integrates sustainability into the travel experiences of luxury travelers in China through its Signature Experience – JW Garden. This initiative embodies the farm-to-table dining philosophy, emphasizing the use of fresh, locally sourced ingredients. At the JW Marriott Hotel Shenzhen Bao'an, an exclusive 200 square meter garden and vegetable plot have been established, supplying fresh seasonal produce directly to the kitchen. This initiative not only enhances the dining experience with healthy and delicious meals, such as garden mango and shrimp vitality salad and garlic spicy seafood angel hair pasta, but also invites guests to explore the pure taste of nature.

Additionally, the JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Shanghai Pudong's JW Family Plan provides guests with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in nature by picking vegetables and fruits directly from an outdoor vegetable and fruit courtyard garden. This approach not only creates memorable experiences for guests longing for nature, but also emphasizes JW Marriott's commitment to sustainability and providing luxury travelers with environmentally friendly and immersive experiences.



NURTURING MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING HEALTH AS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY

In today's fast-paced world, the well-being of Chinese luxury travelers has become a top priority. These travelers seek travel experiences that offer the mind, body, and soul rejuvenation. Wang, the Condé Nast Traveler magazine writer, highlights the significance of health and well-being among Chinese luxury travelers, particularly in the post-Covid era.

According to Wang, concepts associated with health and well-being are trendy among Chinese luxury travelers. However, he emphasizes the importance of considering the comfort level and duration of these experiences, or concepts. For instance, when it comes to healthy dining options, Chinese customers are interested in food that balances taste and healthiness. They appreciate offerings that provide both nutritional value and a delightful culinary experience.



Regarding healthy practices, Wang suggests avoiding treatments and classes that may be tedious or time-consuming. Chinese luxury travelers value efficiency and smoothness in their wellness activities. Technology can enhance the overall experience by increasing efficiency and streamlining processes.

Wang says: "In the post-Covid era, the priorities of Chinese luxury travelers have expanded to include the value of family gatherings, a healthy lifestyle, quality time, and meaningful travel experiences." Wang emphasizes that these aspects have become more critical than ever before.

The Ritz-Carlton is innovating its Ritz Kids program across Greater China to align with the latest trends in family-focused travel and the preferences of young parents, offering a more engaging and immersive experience for its younger guests.

From the cultural richness of Beijing and Shanghai to the scenic beauty of Guangzhou, Sanya, and Hong Kong, the program introduces Leo the Lion as its new mascot. Leo will guide children through a series of activities and adventures, enriching their understanding of local art, culture, cuisine, and nature. As a special memento, children will receive a take-home Leo the Lion plush toy, capturing the essence of their memorable stay.

Tailored for children aged four to 12, the Ritz Kids program is structured around four pillars of experiences: nature, exploration, responsibility, and culture. These activities are intended to nurture mindful engagement and foster a sense of global citizenship, emphasizing children's connections and responsibilities to the world. The program transforms each stay into a significant journey of discovery, offering inspiring and educational experiences that resonate deeply with young guests.



Images: Marriott International



Regarding staycations, Chinese consumers seek properties that offer a family-friendly atmosphere, cater to pets, provide a residential and community-friendly vibe, and are surrounded by nature. An accessible location and a fine dining experience with unique concepts are crucial elements for Chinese luxury travelers.

In the context of workstations, there are specific elements that Chinese luxury travelers look for. Wang notes that community-friendly environments equipped with high-tech equipment, flexible spaces, and diverse scenery are considered essential for a successful work experience. These features enable travelers to seamlessly blend work and leisure while maintaining productivity and convenience.

According to Chen, co-founder of Shineway, a noticeable trend of “slow travel” is emerging among Chinese luxury travelers. Affluent Chinese individuals increasingly seek leisurely and immersive travel experiences, moving away from rushed sightseeing tours. Chen attributes this trend to the rise of the Chinese middle and upper class and luxury consumption

growth. Nowadays, Chinese luxury travelers desire luxurious accommodations and cuisine, want to delve into new cultures, and have immersive experiences during their journeys.

Chen further explains that staycations and workcations meet this evolving need. “These types of travel experiences offer opportunities for in-depth exploration, unique encounters, and local interactions, satisfying the desire of Chinese luxury travelers for localization and immersion,” she says.

For example, Chen highlights how some high-end hotels and resorts now provide mid to long-term stay packages, enabling guests to work and travel simultaneously over one or two months. Additionally, creative parks and art districts have been developed in certain locations, allowing vacationers to engage in handicrafts and cooking classes.



Chen emphasizes that this form of slow travel places higher demands on destinations. To attract slow travelers, destinations must provide rich experiences and foster deeper cultural integration. Ultimately, this trend will drive the upgrading and improvement of tourism sites, benefiting the industry.

Marriott Bonvoy is tapping into the trend of slow travel among Chinese luxury travelers, who are increasingly seeking rich, immersive experiences and deeper cultural integration, with the release of the gourmet video series *Knowing the Chef*, *Enjoying the Meal*.

Collaborating with documentary director Chen Xiaoching and master chefs, the series delves into the cultural and culinary depths of Chinese cuisine across various regions through four short films: *Sichuan and Sea*, *Chasing Freshness*, *Breaking Through*, and *Crossing Guangdong*. These films not only explore regional cuisines, but also offer insights into the chefs’ unique culinary perspectives and dedication to their craft.

Images: Marriott International



The initiative is part of Marriott Bonvoy's commitment to providing guests with high-quality dining experiences that reflect local flavors and traditions, acting as a gateway to discovering the destination's culture through food.

Each chef, acting as a culinary guide, introduces guests to local specialties, revealing the stories behind the different cuisines and the cultures they originate from. The series emphasizes the diversity of Chinese cuisine, from Sichuan's "seven flavors" and "eight tastes" to the innovation of Jiangsu and Zhejiang cuisine, the freshness of Huaiyang cuisine, and the refined flavors of Cantonese cuisine.

Knowing the Chef, Enjoying the Meal serves as an invitation for guests to engage in a gastronomic journey that not only satisfies the palate but also enriches the travel experience, aligning with the desires of travelers seeking to slow down and deeply connect with the destinations they visit.

Through this series, Marriott Bonvoy aims to create a diverse and culturally rich dining experience across its network of restaurants in over 120 cities and regions nationwide, encouraging guests to explore the vast culinary landscape of China and earn rewards through their dining adventures.

Images: Marriott International



To meet the sophisticated needs of Chinese luxury travelers who view health as a paramount luxury, JW Marriott, has rolled out the Stay in the Moment campaign throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This initiative, highlighted by a K-drama-inspired video starring South Korean actor Lee Minho, embodies JW Marriott's philosophy of inspiring guests to engage deeply with transient yet impactful moments through exceptional settings, thoughtful experiences, culinary artistry, and exemplary service.

The campaign narrative emphasizes the significance of reflection, introspection, and forming meaningful connections in memorable environments. It displays the captivating beauty and enriching encounters that are hallmarks of every JW Marriott hotel, designed to rejuvenate guests' mind, body, and soul.



Recognizing the emerging trend of health as the ultimate luxury, JW Marriott meticulously crafts its offerings to suit these changing preferences. The brand advocates for mindfulness, inviting guests to cherish every moment with a variety of holistic experiences that draw from a deep well of wellness traditions. The "Stay in the Moment" packages provide avenues for exploration, relaxation, creativity, and meaningful engagement.



Notable initiatives include the JW Garden, which connects guests with nature and allows for the hands-on harvesting of herbs and vegetables, alongside fun and educational activities for families. Family by JW offers activities that appeal to guests of all ages, strengthening family ties. Spa by JW serves as a sanctuary for relaxation through luxurious spa treatments, and Savor by JW enhances the in-room dining experience with nutritious, flavorful cuisine. Collectively, these initiatives cater to the desires of travelers seeking luxury travel experiences integrated with wellness, reinforcing JW Marriott's dedication to health as the ultimate expression of luxury.



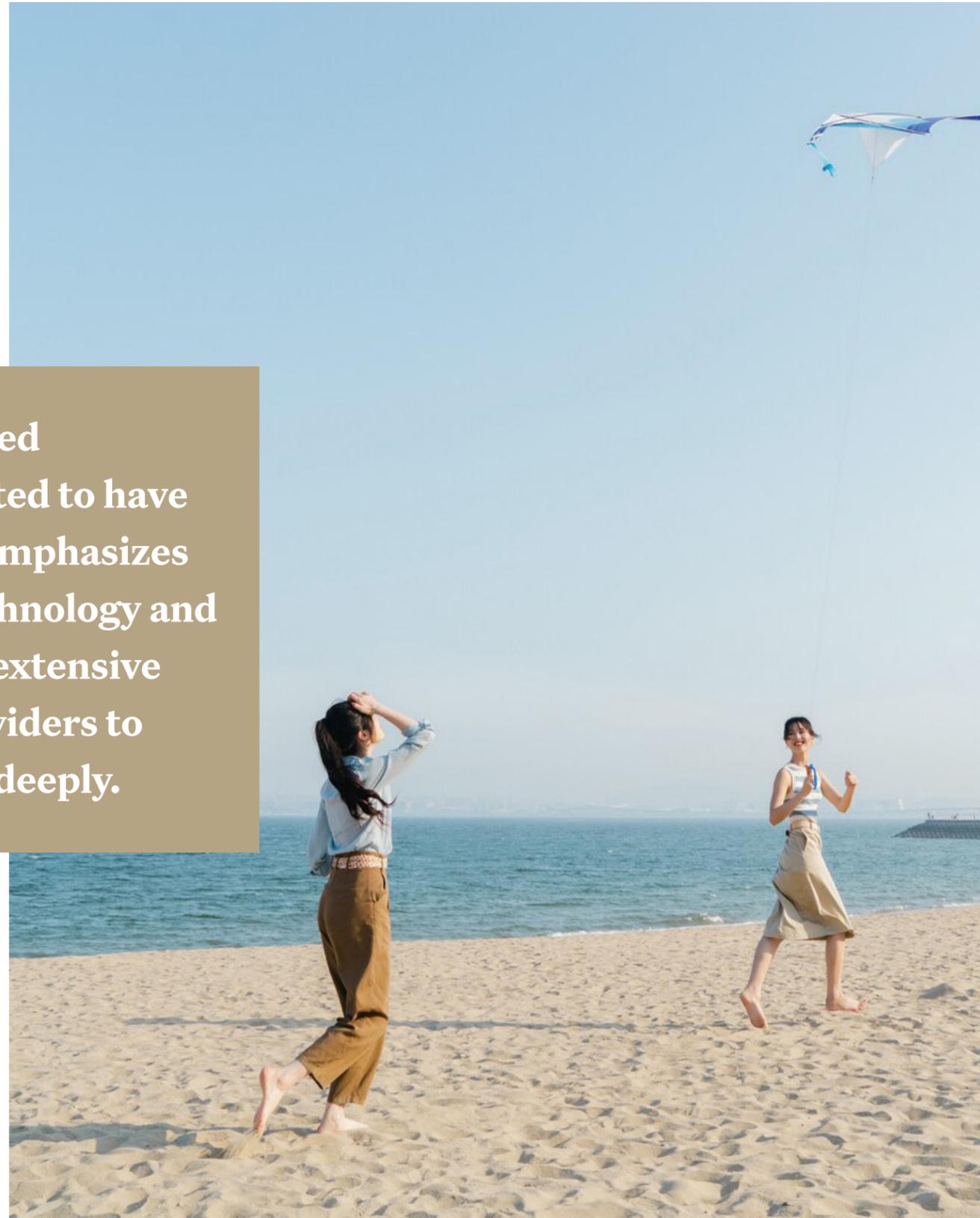
Luxury travel is continually evolving, shaped by the interplay of shifting consumer behaviors, technological advancements, and global trends. As we peer into the future, it's evident that several trends will redefine the luxury travel experience for Chinese consumers, influencing how travel providers innovate and cater to their evolving desires.

Yu from McKinsey highlights several key themes expected to shape the industry.

Firstly, technology-enabled personalization is predicted to have a significant impact. Yu emphasizes that advancements in technology and AI and the availability of extensive data will allow travel providers to understand guests more deeply.

This will enable them to offer highly personalized experiences and products, transforming how travel is perceived and how travelers are inspired to research and plan their trips.

Secondly, Yu discusses the importance of equipping employees with better assistance through technology and data. By understanding customers' preferences and needs, staff members can optimize the human touch aspect of their service, enhancing the overall customer experience.



Another trend highlighted by Yu is the increasing demand for experiential and exclusive travel. Travelers, especially luxury travelers, seek to explore hidden parts of the world and discover destinations from unique perspectives. Even popular destinations can be experienced differently by uncovering hidden histories, cultures, and alternative exploration methods. This trend aligns with the growing popularity of slow travel, where people visit familiar places but engage with them in new and distinctive ways.

Wellness, sustainable travel, and eco-tourism are identified as another significant trend.

Yu suggests that these themes will gain more traction, potentially altering how people travel. Luxury travel may incorporate wellness and health elements, and luxury travel could be merged with medical-related services, particularly for affluent retirees.

Lastly, Yu emphasizes the influence of the rising Generation Z travelers. This generation will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of travel. Its members' hybrid social characteristics and strong desire for community engagement will likely shape travel preferences and products tailored to their needs.

Images: Marriott International



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The forecasted trends in luxury travel present both opportunities and challenges for travel providers seeking to cater to the discerning tastes of Chinese consumers. To thrive in this dynamic industry, it is imperative that travel brands proactively adapt to these trends and meet the evolving expectations of luxury travelers.

Firstly, investing in sustainable practices and eco-friendly initiatives is crucial. Chinese luxury travelers are increasingly conscious of their environmental footprint and seek travel options that align with their values. By prioritizing sustainability, travel providers can attract and retain environmentally conscious customers and contribute to preserving natural and cultural resources.

Secondly, embracing technological innovations is essential for enhancing the travel experience. From seamless booking processes to immersive digital interactions, incorporating technology can streamline operations, improve convenience, and create personalized touch points throughout the customer journey. Technology integration can enhance customer satisfaction and differentiate travel brands in a competitive market.

Furthermore, prioritizing wellness and well-being offerings is key to meeting the holistic needs of luxury travelers. Chinese consumers emphasize self-care and seek travel experiences that rejuvenate and enhance their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Travel providers that offer wellness-focused amenities, activities, and services can tap into this growing demand and provide a distinct advantage.



Curating authentic cultural immersion experiences is another important aspect of luxury travel.

Chinese luxury travelers desire connections with local communities and opportunities to explore diverse cultures and heritage.

By collaborating with local partners, travel brands can offer unique and immersive experiences that foster meaningful interactions, allowing travelers to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their destinations.

Lastly, embracing hyper-personalization is crucial for exceeding travelers' expectations. Chinese luxury travelers expect tailored experiences catering to their preferences and desires. By leveraging data and technology, travel providers can gain valuable insights into customer preferences and deliver personalized recommendations, services, and offerings that create unforgettable moments for their guests.

Travel providers can position themselves as leaders in the luxury travel market by staying attuned to emerging trends, understanding evolving consumer preferences, and delivering exceptional experiences that resonate on a profoundly personal level. By implementing these strategies, travel brands can create memorable journeys for Chinese luxury travelers, fostering long-term loyalty and advocacy.

Images: Marriott International



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