



EHL INSIGHTS REPORT

# Hospitality Outlook 2026



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# Foreword

Today, perhaps more than ever, the way we work is changing. Technological advancements, generational culture shifts and new customer and employee expectations are having a huge effect on hospitality. At EHL, we believe that successful businesses do not simply adapt to these changes but spearhead them.

As research by EHL faculty and industry experts shows, change presents both a challenge and an opportunity: to innovate and experiment, to create holistic systems that place people and planet at the center, and to harness new technologies to empower staff and guests. In other words, to reshape our workplaces for the better.

One such opportunity is presented by AI agents, the new frontier of artificial intelligence. These autonomous systems can anticipate needs, make decisions and execute complex tasks, freeing up staff to concentrate on what matters most in hospitality – the human touch.

Change is also afoot in food, as sustainability and technology drive a transformation in how food is sourced, prepared and experienced. The foodservice industry is in a unique position to lead this global shift towards more meaningful food experiences. Meanwhile, increasing consumer appetite for immersive travel experiences is generating creative new offerings that engage the senses and resonate emotionally.

Our relationship with sustainability is changing, too. Net zero is no longer enough; to really make an impact, companies must actively give back to their communities and ecosystems – a net positive approach that can be both purposeful and profitable.

At the heart of all this is the notion of human-centricity. As the industry faces an increasing labor shortage, human-centric leadership is more important than ever as we seek to make the workplace more attractive for employees and reshape hospitality to meet the challenges – and opportunities – of the future.

**Markus Venzin**  
CEO, EHL GROUP

# Facts & Figures

## **\$4.9 TRILLION**

The global hospitality market grew from \$4.67 trillion to \$4.90 trillion in 2024 (Source: Hospitality Global Market Report 2024)

NOW

## **371 MILLION EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE**

The hospitality sector employs approximately 371 million people worldwide (Source: WTTC)

IN 10 YEARS

## **1 IN 8 JOBS GLOBALLY**

Within the next decade hospitality jobs are expected to comprise one in eight jobs globally, totaling more than 460 million (Source: WTTC)

## **5.3% ESTIMATED ANNUAL MARKET GROWTH**

Future projections estimate the market will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.3% (Source: Hospitality Global Market Report 2024)

## **\$7,011.13 BILLION BY 2029**

The projected growth of the global hospitality market is set to soar to \$7,011.13 billion by 2029 (Source: Hospitality Global Market Report 2024)

## **\$9.9 TRILLION IN TRAVEL SPENDING**

Travel & Tourism contributed just over \$9.9 trillion to the global economy in 2023. In the next decade international visitor spending will reach about \$ 2.9 trillion (CAGR 3.4%) and domestic spending will grow to \$7.7 trillion with a CAGR of 3.3% (Source: WTTC)

## **10.3% OF WORLD'S ECONOMY**

Travel & tourism contributes \$11.7 trillion to the global economy, accounting for 10.3% of global GDP (Source: WTTC)

# AI Agents in Hospitality



# Driving Innovation, Well-Being, and Personalized Guest Experiences

Artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere nowadays. There is no conference or expert talk where AI does not take center stage. In the hospitality industry, the use of AI tools is gaining importance and gradually becoming a practical resource that, if used correctly, can support staff, improve operations, and enhance the well-being of both employees and guests.

The success of these tools depends not only on thorough staff training and integration into operational ecosystems but also on a clear intention: to use AI to empower employees rather than replace them. By taking this approach, the hospitality industry can harness AI-driven systems to reduce operational strain, free up staff for meaningful guest interactions, and create more resilient workplaces where people thrive – ultimately improving the guest experience.

The impact of AI on hospitality is already evident, even if widespread implementation is still developing. A survey of 327 hospitality professionals worldwide by [Canary Technologies on AI in Hospitality](#) found that 73% think AI will have a big impact on the industry. Some 61% of hoteliers said that AI is impacting the industry now or will within the next year, while 39% think it will impact hospitality in two or more years. Over 80% believe AI will significantly reshape pre-booking interactions and guest communications, enabling more personalized, seamless connections with customers.

Guests are also growing increasingly familiar with AI and are encountering more tools designed to enhance their travel experiences. According to the June 2025 [Skift US Travel Tracker Survey](#), which gathered responses from over 1,000 US travelers, more than half are using AI-based tools for travel planning.

In a survey of 86 primarily US-based travel executives, cited in the 2025 report [Remapping Travel with Agentic AI](#) from McKinsey & Company and Skift Research, 26% of respondents indicated that implementing AI reduced their operational costs, 30% said it sped up decision-making, and 33% reported improved customer personalization. In addition, 36% observed higher-quality outputs and 59% noted increased employee productivity. Overall, a majority of participants stated that AI adoption over the past three years had contributed to more than 6% annual revenue growth and the same percentage in annual cost savings.

## AI IMPLEMENTATION IN HOSPITALITY STILL LIMITED

While the potential of AI in hospitality is significant, adoption remains relatively limited. A 2025 survey of 170 European hospitality businesses conducted by [HES-SO Valais](#) found that most AI applications in use today focus on real-time revenue management (42%), guest personalization (38%), and predictive analytics (37%). The analysis shows that most hotels currently focus on guest-facing tools that are easy to implement.



Among hotels already using AI, perceptions are notably positive. On a 1-10 scale, the average rating of AI's benefits by survey respondents was 6.6, with a median of 7. Nearly one in four hotels (23%) rated the benefits as 8 out of 10, and 14% gave the highest score. Only 5% reported seeing no benefit at all. Time savings (76%), improved communication (54%), and enhanced operational efficiency (51%) were most frequently mentioned as advantages. On the other hand, challenges include high implementation costs, technical complexity, and lack of technical skills. Data privacy issues and integration challenges are also significant, particularly for larger hotels with complex legacy systems. Research shows that AI is most effective when integrated into a broader digital strategy aligned with business goals, guest experience, and operational needs, which leads to enhanced efficiency without replacing the human touch that defines hospitality.

"In practice, this can look like using AI to optimize processes such as dynamic pricing or demand forecasting, but not to eliminate staff roles," says EHL Professor and tech expert Ian Millar. Instead, it should be used to complement human skills, providing staff with better tools, information, and support. "The lesson so far: AI can increase

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efficiency – but without reliable integration, careful training, and a focus on the needs of people, its impact and purpose remain limited," Millar adds.



**Ian Millar**

EHL Senior Lecturer, expert on Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Hospitality Information Technology



**Dr Reza Etemad-Sajadi**

EHL Professor, expert on Customer Experience, CRM, Digital Transformation, AI, Human-Machine Interaction, Services Marketing, and International Strategy Management



**Dr Jie Yu Kerguignas**

EHL Assistant Professor, expert on Service Marketing, Transformative Marketing, and Technology-User Interaction

## HOW AI CAN ENHANCE EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Beyond efficiency, AI can improve staff well-being – a growing priority in an industry associated with long hours, high turnover, and stress. EHL Professor Dr Reza Etemad-Sajadi, an expert on human-machine interaction, explains that AI can function as a “buffer” against burnout and workload imbalance. Predictive scheduling can anticipate peak stress periods and allocate staff effectively, while AI analytics can identify patterns of overworking or absenteeism, enabling proactive management.

AI can also support mental health by reducing repetitive tasks and enabling more balanced workloads. “When employees feel less overwhelmed by administrative burdens, they are better able to focus on the creative, social, and service-oriented aspects of their roles. These are factors strongly linked to job satisfaction,” says Dr Etemad-Sajadi.

Importantly, he emphasizes that AI must be implemented responsibly, with safeguards for privacy, data security and ethical considerations. “Used well, AI doesn’t just boost productivity, but can actively contribute to healthier, more sustainable workplaces.”

This dimension is particularly important as younger generations of workers increasingly look for employers who care about well-being and purpose. “In a competitive labor market, companies that use AI to create less stressful, more supportive environments may find themselves better positioned to attract and retain talent,” says Dr Etemad-Sajadi.

## AI TOOLS SHOULD EMPOWER EMPLOYEES, NOT REPLACE THEM

Another advantage of AI tools is their ability to help staff manage problems that arise from increasing digitalization. A recent research project led by Dr Jie Yu Kerguignas at EHL and funded by HES-SO explores how the digitalization of services affects frontline employees’ productivity. Drawing on a panel of 262 hospitality professionals

and interviews with 10 hotel experts, the study found that system failures, complexity, and insufficient training undermine productivity and service quality.

Connectivity breakdowns, outdated software, and high training costs increase employee stress and can lead to guest dissatisfaction. “Hotel managers agree that technology is essential to modern operations, yet its shortcomings can quickly paralyze service delivery,” says Dr Yu Kerguignas.

Hotel managers consistently emphasize that technology is essential but must be reliable and aligned with operational needs. “Software that appears intuitive to IT experts can feel confusing and illogical for hospitality staff,” says Denis Wang, Administrator of Hôtel Beau Rivage Neuchâtel.



High investment in technology without guaranteed reliability can backfire, increasing stress rather than alleviating it. “This reflects a growing managerial concern: technology is indispensable, but only when it is both reliable and aligned with operational needs,” emphasizes Dr Yu Kerguignas.

## AI AS A STRATEGIC ALLY

Against this backdrop, subsequent research by Dr Jie Yu Kerguignas reveals that most managers regard AI as a strategic ally, helping staff to manage technology and

overcome problems associated with it. “Today, AI enables greater personalization while also supporting staff – not to replace them, but to enhance their performance,” says General Manager of the Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa Egbert Buursink. Instead of removing jobs, AI can be used to predict system failures, reduce repetitive tasks, and serve as a digital assistant.

According to this study, the consensus among managers is that AI should operate quietly in the background, strengthening operations and boosting staff confidence while preserving the essential human element of hospitality. “The human being is at the heart of the matter. We must think about the benefit for the person,” says Nicolas Messian, Vice-President of Operations at Corner Collection.

To conclude, Dr Jie Yu Kerguignas notes: “The study clearly shows that hotel leaders are not afraid of AI. On the contrary, they are eager to experiment with tools that empower employees. The greatest demand is for AI solutions that increase productivity by predicting failures, simplifying workflows, and analyzing repetitive errors. And secondly, tools that support training and confidence through AI coaches, chatbots, and on-demand guidance.” It is also important to consider security, data protection, and cross-jurisdiction regulatory requirements, which remain major concerns for hotel groups and make AI adoption dependent on strong safeguards and increased compliance costs.

## THE RISE OF AI AGENTS

Looking ahead, one of the most transformative innovations is the development of AI agents, whether in hospitality, healthcare, finance, or many other industries. [In an interview in February 2025](#), Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said that AI agents will reshape the landscape of Software as a Service (SaaS) businesses. These agents act as the primary interface between people and technology, responding to questions, executing tasks, retaining memory across interactions, and reshaping both enterprise and consumer computing.

In hospitality, AI agents are particularly relevant, representing the next step beyond traditional AI and Generative AI (GenAI).

AI agents can enhance guest experiences, streamline operations, and support data-driven decision-making. For example, by analyzing competitor pricing and market demand, AI agents can dynamically adjust room rates to optimize revenue and occupancy.

In a recent interview, Jeanelle Johnson, PwC’s travel, transportation and hospitality expert, said: “These are autonomous tools that make decisions in real time, whether that is curating a personalized guest offer or resolving an operational issue.”

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*They anticipate needs, offer solutions, and adapt to context, reducing interruptions and letting staff focus on high-value interactions that define hospitality.*

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## AGENTIC AI IN PRACTICE

The report [Remapping Travel with Agentic AI](#) from McKinsey & Company and Skift Research identified several ways in which agentic AI can significantly enhance hotel operations and property management by autonomously handling complex, real-time decisions:

**Guest room allocation:** Automatic assignment based on guest preferences, loyalty, and past feedback, saving 30 minutes to 2 hours per day for front-office staff.

**Predictive maintenance:** Anticipates issues, manages repairs, and orders parts autonomously, reducing rooms' out-of-service time by 20-30%.

**Housekeeping management:** Dynamically assigns tasks using real-time data, reducing hours by 10-30% and optimizing workflow.

**Menu engineering:** Analyzes offerings, pricing, and inventory, increasing net profit by 5-15%.

Unlike traditional chatbots, AI agents are proactive and capable of natural language interaction, system integration, and complex task execution. Florian Montag, EHL alumnus and VP at Apaleo, explains: "They anticipate needs, offer solutions, and adapt to context, reducing interruptions and letting staff focus on high-value interactions that define hospitality."

For hotels facing labor shortages, AI agents help maintain service quality, reduce staff pressure, and preserve organizational knowledge, which is increasingly valuable in a sector with high turnover. Hospitality tech expert Montag says that this is not about "robots replacing people" but about creating a collaborative dynamic where digital assistants handle routine complexity autonomously, freeing human employees to do what they do best: provide genuine hospitality.

EHL International Advisory Board (IAB) Member, investor and former CEO of Booking.com Gillian Tans sees AI agents as a game changer for the travel industry. "Generative AI will reshape travel by creating seamless, personalized journeys that anticipate traveler needs and remove friction. For hotels, it means transforming operations – from smarter demand forecasting to hyper-personalized guest experiences – unlocking new levels of efficiency and loyalty. Already today, agents make exploring destinations and planning activities simple and inspiring; the next leap is AI agents seamlessly moving from inspiration to action – such as booking your entire trip for you.

The rise of AI in hospitality demonstrates that technology can empower rather than replace human staff. AI agents can handle repetitive, data-driven, and complex tasks, allowing employees to focus on human-centricity and meaningful interactions. When implemented with careful training, integration, and ethical safeguards, AI becomes a tool to enhance workplace well-being, increase efficiency, and improve guest satisfaction, showing that a people-first approach and technological innovation can coexist, paving the way for a brighter future for our industry.

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**Florian Montag**  
EHL alumnus, Vice President of the hospitality tech company Apaleo



**Gillian Tans**  
EHL IAB Member, investor and former CEO of Booking.com

# The Future of Food

THE FUTURE OF FOOD



# From Sustainability in Foodservice to Tech Innovations in Food Production

Food is no longer just about nourishment, but has become a reflection of how we live, what we value, and where we are headed as a society. It is what connects us, sustains us, nourishes us, builds communities, keeps traditions alive and shapes our cultural identity. With so many trends emerging when it comes to gastronomy, nutrition, and well-being, the food industry is constantly transforming and reshaping itself. From health concerns to sustainability initiatives, from technological innovation to cultural identity, the way we produce, prepare, and consume food is undergoing profound changes.

The EHL *Food & Well-Being 2025* report explored food as a multidimensional lever for well-being that goes beyond nourishment and engages health, purpose, culture, and planetary integrity. It explored key developments like the rise of the conscious consumer, the union of convenience and personalization, and the notion of co-responsibility across the food ecosystem.

It also showed that the hospitality industry is uniquely positioned to drive this shift, because foodservice touches so many lives every day. Hotels and restaurants can influence sourcing, design more health-conscious menus, promote social dining practices, and foster transparency and innovation in their operations. In doing so, they can support consumers' desire for food that is not just satisfying, but meaningful, regenerative, and aligned with both personal and planetary well-being.

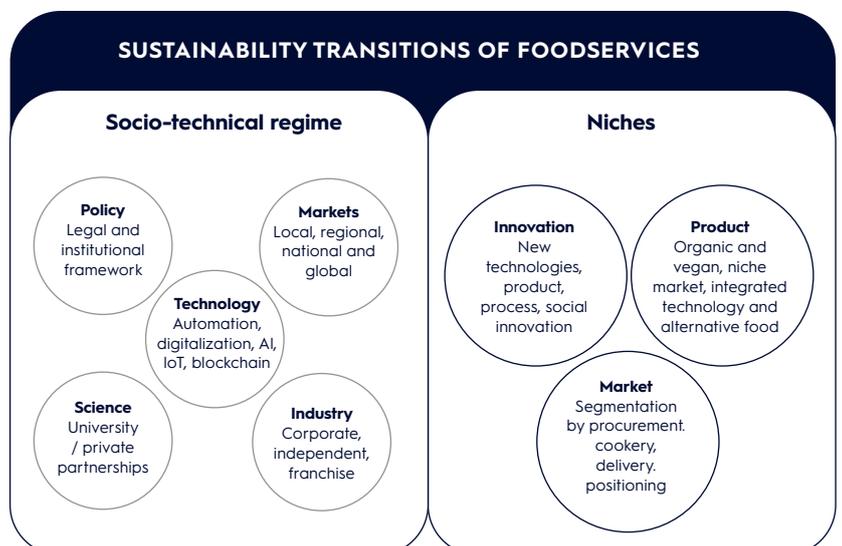
## SUSTAINABILITY IN THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY

The foodservice industry is playing a particularly pivotal role in this movement, notably by balancing rising sustainability expectations with the need to remain

profitable and adaptable. A recent study from EHL, *Sustainability Transitions in the Swiss Foodservice: Re-imagining foodservice for a world never imagined (STRest)*, examines how Swiss foodservice businesses are addressing this challenge by moving beyond incremental improvements toward fundamental reinvention.

Focusing on sustainability transitions and sustainable business model innovations, the project surveyed over 500 restaurants, hotels, caterers, and cafés on practices, barriers, and enablers across sourcing, waste, energy, and digitalization. The full results will be published and distributed globally through EHL's communications channels to industry, policymakers, and the wider public.

The research highlights the significant potential of foodservice businesses to drive systemic change across the food value chain, given their central role in shaping consumer habits, reducing food waste, and influencing sourcing practices. By combining ST theory with sustainable business model innovation (SBMI), the study explores how the sector can move toward more resilient and environmentally responsible practices.



The findings emphasize that small foodservice enterprises can adopt sustainability innovations ranging from waste reduction and circular practices (such as composting and closed-loop supply chains) to digital solutions for energy and resource efficiency. “Our findings show that sustainability innovations cut environmental impact and strengthen competitiveness, opening new revenue streams, improving efficiency, and winning sustainability-minded customers,” says EHL Professor and author of the study Dr Carlos Martin-Rios. “To turn pilot schemes into everyday practice, businesses need three practical enablers: small-ticket finance for kitchen retrofits, procurement rules that reward waste and energy cuts, and supplier agreements for take-back and data-sharing,” he adds.

For the industry, the key conclusion is clear: sustainability will become an increasingly decisive factor in business success. While the adoption of sustainable practices can be complex for smaller players, their role is vital for achieving broader climate and food system goals. “The study underscores the need for a balance between immediate operational needs and long-term environmental objectives, positioning sustainability not only as a moral imperative but also as a driver of competitiveness and resilience in the evolving foodservice landscape,” says Dr Martin-Rios. He also emphasizes that food sustainability must move beyond being an elitist concept. “Sustainability should be widely accessible and affordable, not confined to premium

segments,” he says. “Real progress happens when mainstream, high-volume operators build it into core operations, not as a niche add-on. When a chain-scale operator improves, impact multiplies across millions of meals. Fine dining, meanwhile, pilots ideas and shapes norms. We need both the scale and the spark.”

## RECONNECTING PEOPLE WITH HOW THEIR FOOD IS PRODUCED

Within the sustainability considerations, significant changes are also underway in how it is produced. Over the past four decades, consumers in industrialized countries have become increasingly detached from the origins of what they eat. Most food today is industrially manufactured, with numerous intermediaries standing between production and consumption. While industrialization has brought many benefits, such as improved life expectancy and reliable access to three meals a day, it has also created distance – both physical and psychological – between people and their food. Consequently, many feel a growing need to reconnect with food production. This desire for reconnection also reflects an increasing longing for authenticity, transparency, and more sustainable practices.

The conversation around production also highlights the growing rejection of processed foods: consumers are moving away from overly processed, industrial products and



**Dr Carlos Martin-Rios**  
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Sustainability, Innovation and  
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**Dr Inès Blal**  
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**Antonin Soussan**  
EHL Lecturer and Project  
Manager of the Institute for  
Nutrition R&D

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*Our approach really shows how cross-disciplinary research can deliver healthier, more natural products that still meet the needs of today’s markets.*  
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toward healthier, more authentic, cleaner, and sustainable options, as a report from the [Global Wellness Institute](#) shows. While the rise of plant-based foods remains important, demand is declining for heavily engineered alternatives packed with additives, sugar, or artificial flavors. Instead, there is increasing interest in functional foods, fermentation, and cooking methods that preserve both nutrients and taste.

With this in mind, the EHL Institute of Nutrition Research & Development has made it its mission to create delicious, sustainable, and nutritious food and beverage products. “We see that there are a lot of challenges in the current food system, and by leveraging our unique EHL expertise and know-how on gastronomy and business, we are helping to develop products that are healthy, sustainable, and tasty,” says Dr Inès Blal, EHL Professor and Co-director of the Institute for Nutrition R&D.

Together with industry partners, scientists, experts, and chefs, the institute works to reduce additives, replace artificial ingredients, and use advanced cooking and preservation methods, innovative techniques such as precise-temperature cooking, and processes that extend shelf life without chemical preservatives. “Our approach really shows how cross-disciplinary research can deliver healthier, more natural products that still meet the needs of today’s markets,” says Dr Inès Blal.

## HOW TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING FOOD PRODUCTION

Another successful result of cross-disciplinary research is the RoboCake project. Along with scientists from EPFL (the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne) and the Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia (IIT-Italian Institute of Technology), EHL pastry chefs and food scientists have created an edible robotic cake. “Though it is not a mainstream product, in the future edible robots could be used to deliver medicines in innovative ways to people who have difficulty swallowing or to deliver food to endangered areas,” explains Antonin Soussan, EHL Lecturer and Project Manager of the EHL Institute for Nutrition R&D.



RoboCake is just one – albeit niche – example of how advancements in technology are significantly transforming food production. Another is blockchain, which is proving particularly useful for quality control and traceability. “Blockchain technology offers enhanced transparency and traceability in the food supply chain, so consumers can trace back the ingredients to their source,” explains EHL Professor Dr Marc Stierand. By providing immutable records of each transaction, blockchain enables consumers and businesses to verify the origin, movement, and quality of food products in real-time. “This not only ensures food safety but also builds consumer trust by confirming the authenticity and sustainability of food items,”

says Dr Stierand, who for many years was a member of the executive board of the Swiss Food and Nutrition Valley.

The study [Blockchain-Driven Food Supply Chains: A Systematic Review for Unexplored Opportunities](#) from the University of Otago examined the diverse applications of blockchain technology in the food supply chain and identified further areas of innovation where it could be used in

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*I don't believe technology should ever replace the human touch. Food, at its core, is about people – their skill, intuition, and passion.*  
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the future, such as food donation and redistribution, supply chain financing, animal welfare, and food waste management. What is more, the industry report [State of Blockchain Transformation: Supply Chain](#) from Settle Mint stated that 86% of supply chain leaders believe that the use of blockchain can offer a competitive advantage.

In parallel, innovative cooking technologies like sous-vide are revolutionizing food preparation methods. “Sous-vide, which involves cooking food in vacuum-sealed bags at precise temperatures, preserves nutrients and enhances flavors,” Dr Stierand says. This technique leads to healthier meals with improved taste and texture, aligning with the growing consumer demand for food that is both nutritious and delicious. In 2025, EHL's Dean of the School of Practical Arts Patrick Ogheard has co-authored the book *La Cuisson à Juste Température* (Hachette Pratique) about this method of cooking and the scientific transmission of taste.

EHL IAB Member Philipp Mosimann, Managing Director of Mosimann's Private Dining Club & Global Events, also sees great potential in linking technology with gastronomy: “Technology plays an increasingly vital and powerful role in shaping the future of food. It is remarkable how it can be applied across the entire journey – from farming, where it helps reduce waste and water use while improving crop yields, to the kitchen, where AI-driven menu planning enables chefs to optimize ingredients and significantly reduce food waste.” However, Mosimann notes that it should never be used as a replacement for people: “Technology should never replace the human touch. Food, at its core, is about people – their skill, intuition, and passion. The real opportunity lies in using technology to enhance that craftsmanship, allowing chefs and producers to focus on flavor, experience, and storytelling, while technology quietly manages the logistics and sustainability data behind the scenes.”

As these findings show, huge changes in food systems are already underway, driven by sustainability imperatives, consumer demand for authenticity, and the rise of new technologies. For the hospitality and foodservice industry, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity.

By embracing these shifts the industry can be part of the transformation of not only what we eat, but of how food is sourced, prepared, and experienced. It is a collective journey in which every stakeholder – from farmers to chefs to consumers – plays a vital role in shaping a more sustainable and meaningful future for food.



**Dr Marc Stierand**  
EHL Professor, expert of Culinary Creativity, Business Creativity and Aesthetic Leadership



**Philipp Mosimann**  
EHL IAB Member and Managing Director of Mosimann's Private Dining Club & Global Events

# A New Era of Leadership

A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP



# Human-Centric Leadership as the Future of Work

Human-centricity and emotional intelligence are becoming increasingly important, especially with the rise of AI. With many employees seeking fulfillment and purpose in their jobs, human-centric values are becoming key to ensuring an attractive, healthy, sustainable, and happy workplace.

When placed at the core of hospitality, human-centricity influences not only the guest relationship but also the employee relationship, creating a more modern work environment that helps employers attract and retain talent. With the hospitality industry currently facing extreme challenges due to labor shortages, this shift in leadership style is essential. Particularly because the sector is booming: the hotel and tourism industry is expected to grow immensely in the coming years, with the number of travelers set to increase globally. According to the [World Travel & Tourism Council](#) the sector currently accounts for 10.3% of global GDP. Within the coming years the global hospitality market is expected to reach \$7,011.13 billion, with an estimated compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.3%. While there are presently around 371 million hospitality employees worldwide, the sector is expected to require more than 460 million within the next decade.

However, many surveys and studies show that the industry is facing issues finding employees for vacant positions. For example, a survey by the [American Hotel & Lodging Association \(AHLA\)](#) showed that 65% of hotels report staff shortages. Even though many hotels seem to have improved their incentives – such as offering higher pay and flexible working hours – hotel employment is still nearly 10% below pre-pandemic staffing levels. Of the hoteliers surveyed by AHLA, 47% said that their most frequently used strategy for attracting and retaining workers was offering higher wages, while 20% were offering flexible working hours, 13% reported providing hotel

discounts, and 9% were participating in job fairs and advertising.

With not enough staff, it is difficult to maintain and continue operations as usual, which can result in a decline in service quality, a reduced range of services, and lower revenues. A 2022 survey of the Swiss industry association [HotellerieSuisse](#) showed that due to labor shortages around 60% of the businesses surveyed were having to make adjustments to their offerings, while those experiencing recruitment difficulties reported an average loss of revenue of 4%.

Therefore, in order to ensure sufficient skilled workers for the rapidly growing market in the future, it is essential for the hospitality industry to not only reinvent itself when it comes to more flexible working models – as discussed in [New Working Models: A Blueprint for Professional Well-being through Modernization and Talent Management](#), part of [EHL's Hospitality Outlook 2025](#) report – but also to create a more appealing work environment by nurturing human-centricity in leadership. This approach can inspire a whole new work culture that not only puts the needs of its guests at the center of its operations, but also the needs of its employees.

## QUALITIES OF A HUMAN-CENTRIC LEADER

Emotional intelligence – or so called “soft skills” – builds the foundation of human-centric leadership. Findings from the research and advisory company [Gartner](#) identified three key qualities of a human-centric leader: **authenticity**, which allows for true self-expression and acting with purpose; **empathy**, which means having genuine care for the needs and well-being of workers; and **flexibility**, meaning having the desire to adapt working conditions to meet the needs of employees.

EHL Professor Dr Sébastien Fernandez says that an authentic leader needs to first and foremost know themselves. “Authenticity starts with self-awareness,” he says, adding that the ability to be honest and transparent is also essential. “Communicating mistakes, your own weaknesses and doubts is important when adopting this leadership style.”

In a 2022 survey by the Boston Consulting Group participants noted other characteristics of human-centric leaders, such as consideration, listening skills, team development, self-reflection and transparency.

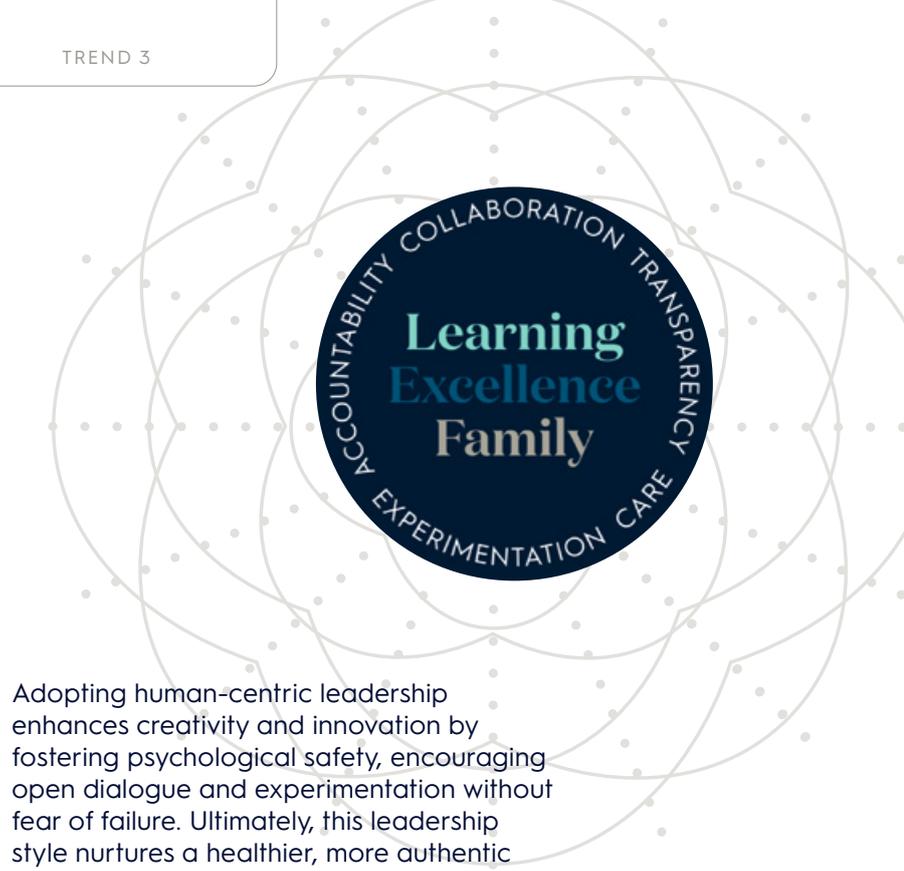
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*Communicating mistakes, your own weaknesses and doubts is important when adopting this leadership style.*

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## A HAPPY WORKFORCE FOR A HEALTHY BUSINESS

In today’s workplace, employees’ priorities have evolved profoundly, accelerated by the pandemic and shaped by the expectations of younger generations who seek purpose, well-being, and ethical leadership over mere stability. As a result, human-centric leadership has become a key differentiator for organizations aiming to attract and retain talent. According to the Gartner research, employees with human-centric leaders are 37% more engaged, and highly engaged teams perform 27% better.

Another study from the [University of Warwick](#) found that happy employees are 12% more productive, showing the direct link between well-being and performance. Data reveals that 83% of employees value well-being as much as salary, while 77% would leave a company that neglects the well-being of their employees.



Adopting human-centric leadership enhances creativity and innovation by fostering psychological safety, encouraging open dialogue and experimentation without fear of failure. Ultimately, this leadership style nurtures a healthier, more authentic workplace culture grounded in trust, empathy, and transparent communication, aligning personal motivation with organizational purpose.

At EHL, a new leadership model was introduced in 2023. Designed by and for the EHL community, the EHL Tempo initiative is built on the three values EHL stands for – Learning, Family and Excellence – and comprises five key leadership principles and behaviors: Transparency, Experimentation, Collaboration, Care and Accountability. As Prof. Markus Venzin, CEO of EHL group, says: “Shaping EHL’s culture means using our Tempo leadership principles to positively impact our working environment and culture, ensuring that we can provide a meaningful experience for the EHL community.”



**Dr Sébastien Fernandez**  
EHL Associate Professor of  
Organizational Behavior



**Prof. Markus Venzin**  
CEO, EHL GROUP

## HUMAN-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP IS A PRIORITY FOR GEN Z

Although human-centricity is essential for people of any age, Gen-Z employees consider it especially important. A [2025 Deloitte Gen Z & Millennial Survey](#) showed that younger generations are redefining success and prioritizing learning, well-being, and purpose over traditional career advancement. Only 6% of respondents see leadership roles as their top ambition, while 70% of Gen Z and 59% of millennials regularly develop new skills outside work. They value soft skills such as empathy and communication more than purely technical expertise. For these generations, human-centric leadership matters: 86% say mentorship, empathy, and purpose-driven management are essential to a positive work experience.

EHL Professor Dr Stefano Borzillo recently conducted research with the University of Applied Sciences HES-SO on the subject [Ensuring a Pipeline of Gen-Z Talent for the Hotel Industry: Contrasting Views of Hoteliers and Future Graduates](#). The study, which investigates the perceptions of hospitality students and hotel general managers regarding the hospitality industry's efforts to attract and retain Gen-Z talent, found that human-centric leadership is an essential topic for Gen-Zers. "The Gen-Z hospitality students we surveyed emphasized the need for flatter hierarchies, transversal collaboration, and project-

based work, while hotel GMs acknowledged the importance of moving away from rigid structures," says Dr Borzillo. "Students also expressed concern over toxic cultures, harassment, and the issue of 'greenwashing', calling instead for authentic leadership and a visible commitment to diversity, inclusion, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)."

Literature shows that recruiters should design jobs for Gen-Zers that emphasize autonomy and achievement while making them feel safe, and that aligning a hotel's CSR initiatives with Gen-Z values fosters a sense of fit and trust, which is crucial for attracting and retaining talent. Furthermore, hospitality students' satisfaction with internships impacts their intention to pursue a career in the industry, with factors such as relationships with colleagues and managers, skills gained, relevance and integration of coursework, quality of guidance and feedback from supervisors, and the structure and organization of the internship playing significant roles.

Transparency and fairness are also key components for retaining Gen-Z talent, according to the EHL and HES-SO study. "They expect clear career progression paths, transparent promotion criteria, and fair reward systems, which they see as essential for building trust," says Dr Borzillo. The study also showed that they value employers who demonstrate care for employee well-being, flexible schedules, and mental health support.



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**Frank Marrenbach**  
EHL IAB Member and CEO of  
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“Hospitality organizations are required to further break down organizational silos to stimulate collaborative exchanges of knowledge and best practices,” Dr Borzillo explains. Also important to Gen-Z is feedback culture and increased interaction across hierarchies, he adds. “Looking back at their internships, the surveyed students regretted their scarce interaction with management. Regular interaction and feedback has a positive impact on employees, especially when starting out in a career.” Nurturing human interaction is, therefore, a key way to make the hotel industry attractive to Gen-Z.

## HUMAN-CENTRICITY AT ANY AGE AND ANY LEVEL

However, adopting a more human-centric leadership culture is not only beneficial for the new and future workforce, but for employees and leaders of any generation. EHL Professor Dr Bertrand Audrin says that the business world and industry should not differentiate too strongly between the specific needs of different generations. “Often times we use generations as stereotypes, and unfortunately, there have been a lot of labels put on Gen-Z in the business world. This is merely due to the fact that the younger generations are challenging the status quo and want to see society progress by creating a better work culture for the future, where purpose and well-being matter.”

Dr Audrin also emphasizes that leadership, at its core, is defined not by titles, but by how it is perceived and received by the team, “because it is the team that ultimately decides whether a leader is successful.”

True leadership, then, depends on building an environment where people feel empowered to share ideas and challenge perspectives. Creating such a team requires intentional effort: choosing the right people, cultivating psychological safety, and maintaining a healthy flow within the group. “A team is an ecosystem that a human-centric leader must nurture continuously.”

In this way, human-centricity is relevant to every employee, no matter their age or profession – and therefore essential for every future leader to master. For Frank Marrenbach, EHL IAB Member and CEO of Althoff Hotels, leadership is one of the most important subjects when it comes to the future

of hospitality. “Leadership is what differentiates good companies from great companies,” he says, adding that human-centricity should be a core competence that is taught early. “The future hospitality leader needs to have the ability to comprehend the human mind, the willingness to dive into the complexity of people, and also the curiosity which is paired with it. And of course, good soft skills. To be able to listen proactively but also form an opinion and at the same time not be opinionated – I see that as a very important skill.”

“*The future hospitality leader needs to have the ability to comprehend the human mind, the willingness to dive into the complexity of people, and also the curiosity which is paired with it.*”

Marrenbach also states resilience and empathy as key competences of a human-centric leader. “Our world is very complex, so our leaders need to be resilient, meaning they can stay strong and maintain the right energy level at all times. Being able to turn things and situations into something positive and productive, all while being empathetic and caring towards other people, is essential.”

In conclusion, human-centricity represents not just a management trend, but a necessary evolution in how organizations approach people, culture, and performance. As the industry faces labor shortages, shifting employee values, and accelerating technological change, it is essential to create work environments that foster well-being, purpose and collaboration and to train people who can lead with empathy, self-awareness, and authenticity. With these values at heart, human-centric leadership can create an attractive workplace for many generations to come, improving the satisfaction of not only its employees, but also its guests and communities.

# Immersive Experience Hospitality



# Hospitality Leading the Immersive Experience Economy

The hospitality industry has been leading the experience economy for decades. After the agricultural and industrial revolution came the development of the service industry, followed by the emergence of a fourth economic driver: the experience economy. Today, the experience economy is evolving, with demand rising for not just memorable experiences but truly immersive ones – a shift that hospitality organizations are uniquely positioned to embrace.

Traditionally, economists have categorized experiences together with services, yet experiences represent a distinct form of economic value. These days, it is clear that experiences stand on their own as a separate offering, driven by consumers' growing desire for memorable, meaningful encounters and by the increased focus of businesses on designing and promoting experiences to meet that demand.

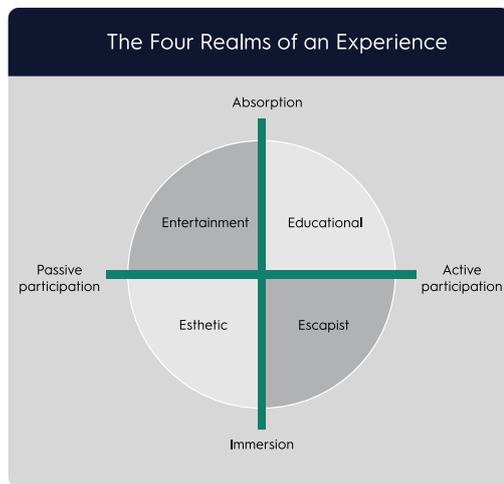
For the hospitality industry this represents huge potential for growth. As studies including the [Julius Baer Lifestyle survey](#) show, people prefer to indulge in experiences rather than products. According to the [Bain Altagamma study](#), experiences showed the strongest spending growth in 2024, as consumers prioritized travel, social events, and wellness-focused activities over traditional consumption.

## THE FOUR REALMS OF THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

As the [Harvard Business Review](#) states, an experience is not an abstract concept, but a tangible economic offering, just like a service, a good, or a commodity. In today's service-driven economy, many companies enhance their traditional products by surrounding them with experiences to make them more appealing. However, to fully capture the value of experiences, businesses

must go beyond that and intentionally design immersive, engaging experiences that customers are willing to pay for.

According to [Pine and Gilmore's "Experience Economy" framework](#), all experiences can be categorized into four realms that interact with two dimensions: the customer's level of participation and the extent of their connection with their surroundings. The first dimension ranges from **passive participation**, where the customer is an observer (as in watching a concert or play), to **active participation**, where the customer directly contributes to the event (such as skiing or performing in a play). The second dimension stretches from **absorption**, where individuals take in an experience from a distance (like viewing a film), to **immersion**, where they become fully enveloped in the environment (as in a virtual reality simulation).



Source: Harvard Business Review

Experiences can then be divided into four realms, each with its own relationship to the two dimensions: **Entertainment** (passive and absorbing), **Education** (active and absorbing), **Escapism** (active and immersive), and **Esthetic** (passive and immersive). The most compelling experiences combine elements of all four, creating a "sweet spot" that fully engages guests on cognitive, emotional, and sensory levels.

As EHL Assistant Professor Dr Valentina Clergue emphasizes, the experience economy is hardly a new concept for hospitality. The industry has, in many ways, embodied it for decades. What is evolving, however, is the shift from passive to transformative experiences. “In the past, guests might have been content with passive enjoyment, such as attending a concert, but now they seek active participation and co-creation, for example by taking part in a cooking class or an immersive dining event. We are moving towards a more holistic form of experiential marketing and consumption, where immersion provides an escape from daily routines and creates emotional connections that last far beyond the moment itself.”

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*We are moving towards a more holistic form of experiential marketing and consumption, where immersion provides an escape from daily routines and creates emotional connections that last far beyond the moment itself.*  
 ”

She adds: “The hospitality industry has been naturally and continuously working to enhance the guest experience. With more offers and services available, the needs and desires of people have also shifted, leading them to seek deeper and more meaningful experiences in which they can fully immerse themselves.”

What makes this so special in the hospitality industry is the human component, explains Dr Clergue. “In hospitality, you have not only the physical environment but also the human connection. In an art gallery, you might not need a person to greet or serve you, but in hospitality, it is about human interaction.”

## HUMAN CONNECTION IS WHAT MAKES HOSPITALITY STAND OUT

With the guest and their needs and desires at the center of an experience, the hospitality industry is uniquely positioned to harness the full potential that lies in the emerging immersive experience economy. “The hospitality industry’s DNA is rooted in hosting, entertaining and, quintessentially, an exchange based on human interaction. It also comes down to the concept of ‘Hospitality Vibes’, which refers to the positive energy created by humans and spaces,” says EHL Associate Professor Dr Meng-Mei Maggie Chen.

This human- and guest-centric focus is also one of the reasons why companies from luxury, healthcare, and other industries are collaborating with hospitality organizations



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in order to upscale guest experiences. For example, Tesla opening a diner with a drive-in theater in Los Angeles, Ralph Lauren launching a café in Kuala Lumpur, and Bulgari opening hotels in cities around the world.

When designing immersive experiences, there are no limits when it comes to creativity. A variety of tools and elements can be used, including gamification, which refers to the application of game-design elements and game principles in non-game contexts – an effective way to enhance guest engagement. Another tool is storytelling, for example embedding products within a narrative and experiential framework.

A prime example of an immersive experience is a pop-up in New York by the French luxury fashion house Hermès, which transformed an event space into an elaborate crime scene, offering guests an intriguing murder mystery experience. “The luxury brand has used gamification and storytelling in order to create a unique, memorable and immersive experience for their customers,” says Dr Chen.

## PLAYING WITH THE SENSES AND THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Brands can also make use of sensory elements that appeal to all five senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste – by using light, scent, texture and sound to deepen emotional connections. Rooted in the concept of sensory marketing, these experiences engage the senses to create memorable and emotionally resonant encounters rather than merely functional services.

“Engaging the senses is key when creating memorable experiences. The more senses an experience stimulates, the deeper and more lasting its impact becomes, because sensory cues enrich the experience beyond the functional act itself and activate multiple senses to evoke emotion and immersion,” says Dr Chen.

For instance, travelers instantly recognize Bombay Sapphire in airport duty-free shops thanks to its signature blue bottle. Even those without a Netflix subscription can identify the platform by its iconic opening sound. Visitors to Japan often remember the comforting warmth of a Japanese toilet seat long after

their trip. Similarly, the familiar scent of Ivory soap or Johnson’s baby shampoo can transport people back to their childhood, evoking deep, nostalgic emotions.

Technology is also accelerating the experience economy in hospitality by enabling new forms of engagement

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and immersion. Examples of immersive restaurants such as Le Petit Chef or Copenhagen’s Alchemist show how projection mapping, storytelling, and sensory design can turn a meal into a multisensory journey.

Virtual and augmented reality are likewise reshaping hospitality experiences. VR lets guests explore hotels and destinations remotely, enhancing the booking process, while AR enriches on-site stays with interactive features such as digital menus or local insights. Restaurants use interactive displays for ordering and engagement, and hotels offer personalized in-room entertainment. Many brands now combine these tools to create immersive, story-driven experiences that make visits more memorable and emotionally engaging.

It is not necessary to have a huge budget to turn an experience into an immersive experience, emphasizes Dr Chen. “There are many niche opportunities for all types of businesses, whether big or small, to help people reconnect to real life and real human interaction by weaving the experiential into the offer. For example, a laundromat in the Netherlands has turned its business into a place for sharing food, meeting people and hosting parties,” she says.

## LIVE EVENTS AND BRANDED LUXURY EVENTS

Live events are increasingly shaping travel decisions, with travelers seeking experiences that go beyond sightseeing. Data shows that people often attend events not just for the act itself, but to enrich their travel memories. Iconic venues like the Sphere in Las Vegas or the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado illustrate this trend. Guests may see a band they have never heard of simply for the thrill of experiencing a concert in a unique setting.

Aside from live events, EHL Assistant Professor Dr Matthias Fuchs also points to a possible rise in branded luxury life events. In recent years the events industry has seen a shift to so-called micro-events, smaller-scale gatherings designed to foster deeper connections and engagement among participants. "Notably there has been an increase in couples opting for smaller weddings with more personalized touches that reflect their unique personalities," Dr Fuchs explains.

For example, Audemars Piguet's AP Houses are luxurious, exclusive spaces that reflect the brand's sophistication and elegance. "These venues in prestigious cities allow VIP customers to celebrate their birthdays, enjoying personalized and memorable experiences in a refined setting." Dr Fuchs believes this could expand even further as customer demand increases. "While not a reality yet, one could also imagine bespoke weddings organized by a luxury brand such as Dior. From custom-designed dresses to branded event decor, Dior, just

like other luxury brands, has the potential to ensure that these milestone celebrations are infused with their vision of luxury, sophistication and personalization, creating an immersive and memorable experience for guests while also enhancing brand loyalty."

A study from [McKinsey](#) shows that customer loyalty is driven less by the product and more by an experience worth paying for. Hospitality brands and travel providers can capitalize on this by curating distinctive, memorable experiences with or without collaborating with neighboring industries such as luxury brands or the healthcare industry. In a landscape of expanding options, restaurants, hotels, and other travel touchpoints can build on this momentum to craft meaningful moments that resonate with travelers and make their stays unforgettable.

"Immersive experiences have become so important and popular because the expectations of our guests and travelers from all over the world have become much more sophisticated in the last few years," says Christoph Hoffmann, EHL IAB Member and Founder of 25hours Hotels and Bikini Island & Mountain Hotels."

Hoffmann has developed individual, tailor-made hotels with personality in cities worldwide. Each 25hours property is unique, with a playful design inspired by its location and influenced by the art, culture, gastronomy, and stories of its surroundings. "We have dived into high-level individual experiences by using storytelling and design. We really built the style of our hotels not with the idea to merely create an aesthetic design, but to create an experience for our guests and asking the important questions of what the added value is when staying at a 25hours hotel.

As the boundaries between hospitality and other industries continue to blur, the immersive experience economy offers boundless opportunities for innovation and growth. By embracing creativity, technology, and personalization, the hospitality industry can continue to lead the way and spearhead the immersive experience economy into its next chapter and beyond.

**Christoph Hoffmann**  
IAB Member and  
Founder of 25 hours  
Hotels and Bikini Island  
& Mountain Hotels



# Regenerative Hospitality



# Embedding People, Place, and Planet

Sustainability has long been an important issue for the hospitality industry. Environmental initiatives, regulations to reduce greenhouse gases, and increasingly scarce resources such as water have provoked a rethink among businesses, guests, and consumers alike. Consumer interest in eco-tourism, sustainable practices, and green travel has grown, while such options have also become more accessible and affordable. A study from the [Business & Economics School ISG in Portugal](#) shows that hotels that are perceived as more sustainable enjoy higher guest loyalty, while a study from the [Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association](#) finds that consumers are even willing to pay a surcharge (~6%) on restaurant bills for carbon emission reduction programs.

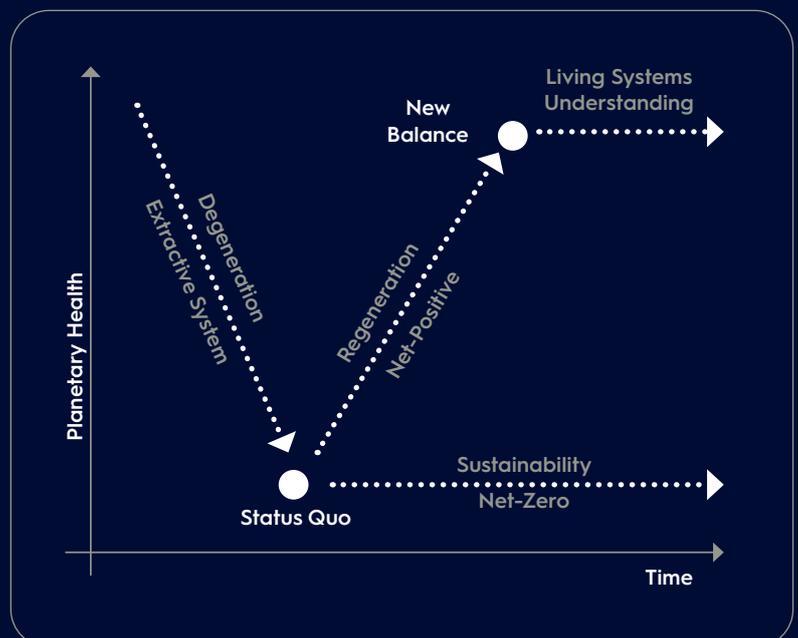
However, whereas for many years striving for a net-zero impact has been the guiding principle in the industry, a growing body of research and practice suggests that “doing less harm” is no longer enough. In fact, studies now show that guests increasingly expect *more* than sustainability.

Enter **regenerative hospitality**, a mindset shift from **net-zero** to **net-positive**, which aims to actively restore ecosystems, strengthen communities, and create net-positive outcomes **for people and places**. Where sustainability measures success by what is reduced or avoided – less carbon, less water, less waste – regeneration, in contrast, focuses on what is given back. Not only that, but at its core, regenerative hospitality applies the logic of **interconnected living systems**: the idea that everything around us can be understood as part of a living system – whether, social, relational, economic or ecological – and that all these different systems are deeply interconnected, meaning that a change in any given system (i.e. the social system) will have an effect on another (i.e. the ecological system). A hotel, for example, is not an isolated business, but is connected to its surroundings, the natural landscape, local food producers, cultural traditions, and the well-being of guests, staff and community.

As EHL Professor Dr Alessandro Inversini, co-author of the study **The Rise of Regenerative Hospitality**, explains, “regenerative economics starts from interconnectedness. Hotels are not single entities; they are embedded in a community and an environment. Regeneration is about making that connection visible, tangible, and positive for all.”

Another recent study, [Assessment of Regenerative Hospitality](#), from the Stenden University of Applied Sciences, identifies seven pillars – regenerative mindset, interconnectedness, place integration, localized impact, well-being, co-creation, and dynamism – as potential drivers of regenerative hospitality.

For some hotels, a regenerative practice could mean developing an ecological restoration program: replanting mangroves, supporting biodiversity, or rewilding land. For others, it could mean social regeneration: creating spaces where local artists can perform, providing training for local groups, or hosting innovation hubs that connect residents. In both cases, the aim is not just to offset harm but to create tangible new value.



## FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND PLACE

Sustainability efforts often focus on environmental concerns and sometimes tend to overlook broader systemic issues such as social inequality, economic structures, and cultural dynamics. Sustainability claims are often prone to greenwashing. The scale of today's global crises, such as climate change, systemic injustice, and geopolitical instability, demands more than localized, incremental solutions – it calls for a coordinated, systemic and structural transformation.

Responding to this need, EHL Hospitality Business School, together with the Swiss university HES-SO Valais, has developed the [\*Regenerative Hospitality Canva: A Transformative Playbook\*](#) to help hoteliers move from net-zero to net-positive and create lasting value for both communities and guests. Developed with key industry partners, the playbook provides hotel managers with a clear methodology to identify net-positive contributions and turn them into concrete actions.

The playbook draws on the two core concepts of regenerative hospitality: the **regenerative mindshift**, which cultivates leaders' awareness of their ecological and social responsibilities, and the **ecosystem approach**, which integrates natural environments and human relationships to drive transformation.

Key elements of this model include **place intelligence**, which addresses the social and natural ecosystems of a location, and **people intelligence**, which focuses on transformative host-guest interactions. This holistic approach is applicable to hospitality businesses of all sizes and types, showing that regeneration is not just an ideal but a financially viable, strategically designed and purpose-driven business model that can lead to long-term, positive impacts.

"Regenerative hospitality embodies a broader responsibility towards the reality and ecosystems, which is both **place-based** and **people-centered**," explains Dr Inversini, who spearheaded the research and has written a book about the subject, *Regenerative Hospitality, Strategies for Transformative Hospitality Leaders*, edited by Edgar Elgar Publishing.

## WHY REGENERATION MATTERS FOR HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is uniquely positioned to lead this shift because of its dependence on both **people** and **place**. Unlike other industries, hotels and resorts cannot "outsource" their environment: a beachfront property is inseparable from the health of its coastline; a mountain lodge from the surrounding ecosystem; a city hotel from its neighborhood's social fabric.

Regeneration can offer operational resilience, prompting hotels to reconsider supply chains, community relations, and environmental dependencies. These shifts can reduce risk, differentiate brands, and open new sources of value that go beyond cost control.

Many concrete examples of regenerative practices in hospitality and tourism have already emerged. For example, the eco-luxury resort Playa Viva in Mexico restores

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*Regenerative hospitality embodies a broader responsibility towards the reality and ecosystems, which is both place-based and people-centered.*  
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**Dr Alessandro Inversini**  
EHL Professor, expert on Digital Communication, Digital Marketing, E-tourism, Digital Transformation, Mobile Marketing and Regenerative Economics

coastal ecosystems and invests in local health and education, the Fogo Island Inn in Canada blends ecological stewardship with guest engagement, and the Brazilian Ibiti Projeto, which was a keynote speaker on regenerative economies at the 2025 [EHL Open Innovation Summit](#), has transformed degraded areas into a 6,000-hectare biodiversity refuge and reintroduced native species into the ecosystem.

In Switzerland, the *Regenerative Hospitality Canva: A Transformative Playbook* has been tested with key industry players including Geneva Marriott Hotel, Hilton Geneva, Six Senses Crans Montana, and Hôtel des Horlogers, each adapting regenerative practices to their unique local contexts and testing out the practicality and adaptability of the approach.

“For us, regenerative hospitality goes beyond sustainability. It is about actively creating a positive impact on our environment, our community, and our guests’ well-being. At Geneva Marriott Hotel, this means rethinking hospitality in a way that restores, nurtures, and regenerates the ecosystem we are part of, while ensuring a meaningful and responsible guest experience,” says Pierre-Henri Perrin, General Manager of Geneva Marriott Hotel. The hotel has implemented several initiatives, including local sourcing and partnerships with regional producers to support surrounding communities and short supply chains, waste reduction programs, and collaborations with impactful locals who share the same vision for a more responsible future. “We believe regenerative hospitality will become a

defining pillar of the hospitality industry,” adds Perrin. “Guests will increasingly expect hotels not only to minimize harm but to actively regenerate local ecosystems and communities. In the future, this will translate into deeper collaborations with local producers, more transparent measurement of impact, and the integration of wellness, culture, and nature into the essence of the guest journey.”

Other pioneers include the Six Senses in Crans Montana, where wellness and regenerative design have been at the core of the brand since its establishment in 1995. “Regenerative hospitality is an ambitious journey, not a destination,” says Dominic Paul Dubois, Sustainability Director of Six Senses Crans Montana.

Long committed to sustainable practices and eco-responsible standards, the Hôtel des Horlogers in the Vallée de Joux has also embraced regeneration as part of its identity. “Regeneration is embedded in our hotel’s DNA. Just like the watchmakers in the region, we do more than we say. The process is complete and holistic. It forces you to think about aspects that otherwise would not have been considered,” says André Cheminade, General Manager at Hôtel des Horlogers.

To further its understanding of the subject, EHL is currently leading a research project in rural Lebanon, together with the Nature Conservation Centre of the American University of Beirut, to better comprehend the role of regenerative hospitality and the use of digital technologies to support natural and social systems regeneration.



**Pierre-Henri Perrin**  
General Manager of Geneva  
Marriott Hotel



**Dominic Paul Dubois**  
Six Senses Crans Montana  
Sustainability Director



**André Cheminade**  
General Manager at Hôtel des  
Horlogers

## THE PATH FORWARD

While regenerative hospitality is still in its early stages, some hoteliers remain cautious. The lack of standardized metrics makes measurement difficult. Several industry and standard-setting bodies – including the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#), [UNESCO's Travel Pledge](#), [World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance](#) or the [Forbes Travel Guide](#) – are now developing clearer frameworks and best practices to ensure sustainability claims become more verifiable. While there are not yet strictly defined metrics for regeneration, many experts agree that real impact is measured at the level of community ecosystems, for example through community well-being, nature restoration, or local culture preservation.

As Professor Dr Inversini says, “Regeneration is not a recipe – it is a process of listening, trying, failing, and learning. Regenerative professionals do not intend to introduce new regenerative metrics or propose specific measurements or scales. There are no checklists to adhere to; there are no standards whatsoever. Rather, the impact of regeneration is visible by the hotel staff and their guests, because regeneration is systemic yet local, and its ripple effect can be seen in the restoration, enhancement and co-evolution of the local ecosystems.”

Another challenge is the contextual nature of regeneration, which means that no two approaches look the same. What works for a city business hotel may not translate to a mountain lodge. Yet these very challenges open space for innovation. By moving beyond top-down prescriptions and instead engaging with local needs, regenerative hospitality can avoid the pitfalls of one-size-fits-all approaches.

Vivian Wei Zhou, EHL International Advisory Board (IAB) Member and Vice President of the tourism and hospitality company Jin Jiang International in Shanghai, believes in the potential of regenerative economics and its importance for the future of humanity. “I believe the approach of regenerative economics goes beyond sustainability, as it reminds us how we should cherish the Earth and all the resources it gives us.” However, it’s important to make it applicable to profit-oriented businesses and to take a collaborative approach, she adds. “It requires coordination from all the stakeholders

as it is a joint effort, taking into account the technological dimension, the business dimension, as well as policies and cross border compliance.”

It is also important to emphasize that regenerative hospitality should not be viewed as a new sustainability standard or a substitute for sustainable practices. Rather, it should be approached as an additional way to align more closely with nature, community and humanity as a whole. “Regenerative hospitality should not be considered a replacement for sustainability, but a paradigm shift,” explains Dr Inversini. At its heart, regenerative hospitality is about people and place – about creating thriving communities, resilient ecosystems, and experiences that enrich both guests and hosts. By aligning business success with ecological and social regeneration, the hospitality industry can create a multi-dimensional, long-term, positive impact.

“  
*I believe the approach of regenerative economics goes beyond sustainability, as it reminds us how we should cherish the Earth and all the resources it gives us.*  
 ”



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 EHL IAB Member and  
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**Open AI** Language Model  
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# EHL at a glance

HOSPITALITY AND BUSINESS EDUCATION GROUP  
THE WORLD LEADER IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION



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**800+**  
staff & faculty members



**20+**  
start-ups in its Innovation Hub



**57**  
start-ups, scale-ups supported



**5**  
research institutes



**1**  
Michelin-star restaurant,  
Le Berceau des Sens

## About EHL:

EHL – originally founded as École hôtelière de Lausanne in 1893 – is a hospitality and business education group, recognized as the global leader in hospitality management. The institution brings together a vibrant community of 4,000 students from over 120 nationalities across three campuses in Switzerland and Singapore. At EHL, we educate hearts, hands, and minds – shaping confident, versatile, and resilient leaders for careers in hospitality and other experience-driven industries.

Learn more about EHL  
→ [ehlgroupp.com](http://ehlgroupp.com)

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