

Redesigning The Hospitality Industry Post Pandemic

By [Michelle Leotaud](#), Managing Director, Apple & Iron Concepts Ltd. | November 20, 2022



The pandemic which sent the world into seclusion changed much about the way we now operate today and perhaps way into the future.

However, most significant of these changes was the outlook that we all now have on the deeper existential questions and the way we intend to live our lives moving forward.

Suddenly we have realized that flexibility in our work environment, whether it take the form of a hybrid work environment or not, can be achieved.

Supercharging the technology to enable such flexibility, the pandemic certainly has changed the footprint of corporate life. Having been confined for months and some for years, to the boundaries of our individual countries of residence, so too, has

our attitude towards travel, the importance of family time and the most crucial aspect of our mental well-being. We have learned that interaction is crucial to our well being and so is our connection to the world as a whole. We crave nature and value its importance to our mental health.

These patterns in collective thought and action have been reflected in the hospitality industry, who are seemingly amplifying these aspect within their properties but who had proactively turned to these considerations pre-pandemic, but for whom the post pandemic mindset has meant that the aspect of incorporating these design elements have now become crucial to their central role as an escape, an opportunity for people to renew and be revitalized but most importantly re-connect.



Well-Being Integration in Hospitality Design

Well-being programs have long been integrated into the design of resorts worldwide. This trend, started within the luxury boutique hotel industry, has now become full fledged mainstream within the wider mass resort chains, permeating every aspect of the functionality. From integrating extensive spa experiences to providing aromatherapy experiences within guest rooms and meditation spaces sprinkled throughout resorts, the importance and growth of the well-being industry is still no more emphasized than in the luxury boutique hotel experience. The O2 Beach Club and Spa is a prime example of the importance of this, with nature being brought in direct contact with interior spaces. The biophilic design movement has grown widely and the expression of our need to connect with nature in order to achieve balance and renewal is a tangible manifestation of the values which the O2 Beach Club has built itself upon.

How Social Distancing Has Impacted the Way We Design

A huge part of our pandemic world was the concept of "social distancing". Though the extreme social distancing that we experienced through this pandemic left many secluded, the value in the post pandemic world to create spaces which allow for some distancing, in order to create a comfort level which became our new norm, as we are reintroduced to the world, has also affected the way in which post pandemic hospitality is achieved. O2 Beach Club and Spa, allows for a variety of pod like seating arrangements, from the pool areas to the beach and restaurant spaces, smaller clusters of varied seating arrangements for social interaction within intimate groups, is now pervasive, whereas before they may have been limited in number.

This intimacy level, where we can socialize within our "bubble" certainly affects layout designs, where opportunities for these clusters are created at every opportunity. Layouts now take advantage of semi-private spaces where small groups can cluster. The need for social interaction, however is more important than ever and communal spaces are prime opportunities for these types of interactions to occur, thus communal experiences are still important.



The Personalized Experience

Much has been talked about "personalization" in the hospitality industry, a movement which took its roots pre-pandemic, however with increased awareness as to the prioritizing of travel, the need to provide varied experiences has certainly become a prime concern. Guests at O2 Beach Club and Spa enjoy transformed experiences within the same dining space between breakfast, lunch, and dinner seating. Interior design elements are switched out in terms of place setting arrangements and other details. A variety of seating arrangements are also included, so that the guest may enjoy varied experiences when dining. However, the detail to which personalization has been integrated into the design goes far beyond..." God truly is in the detail" after all.

No two adjoining guest rooms at O2 Beach Club and Spa are the same. In fact, the vastly different, yet on theme, designs allow for a truly transformative experience, allowing frequent or returning guests to level up their experience with every visit. Post pandemic, the world as a collective, has recognized the need to value the uniqueness of each moment, and this has not been lost on the hospitality industry.

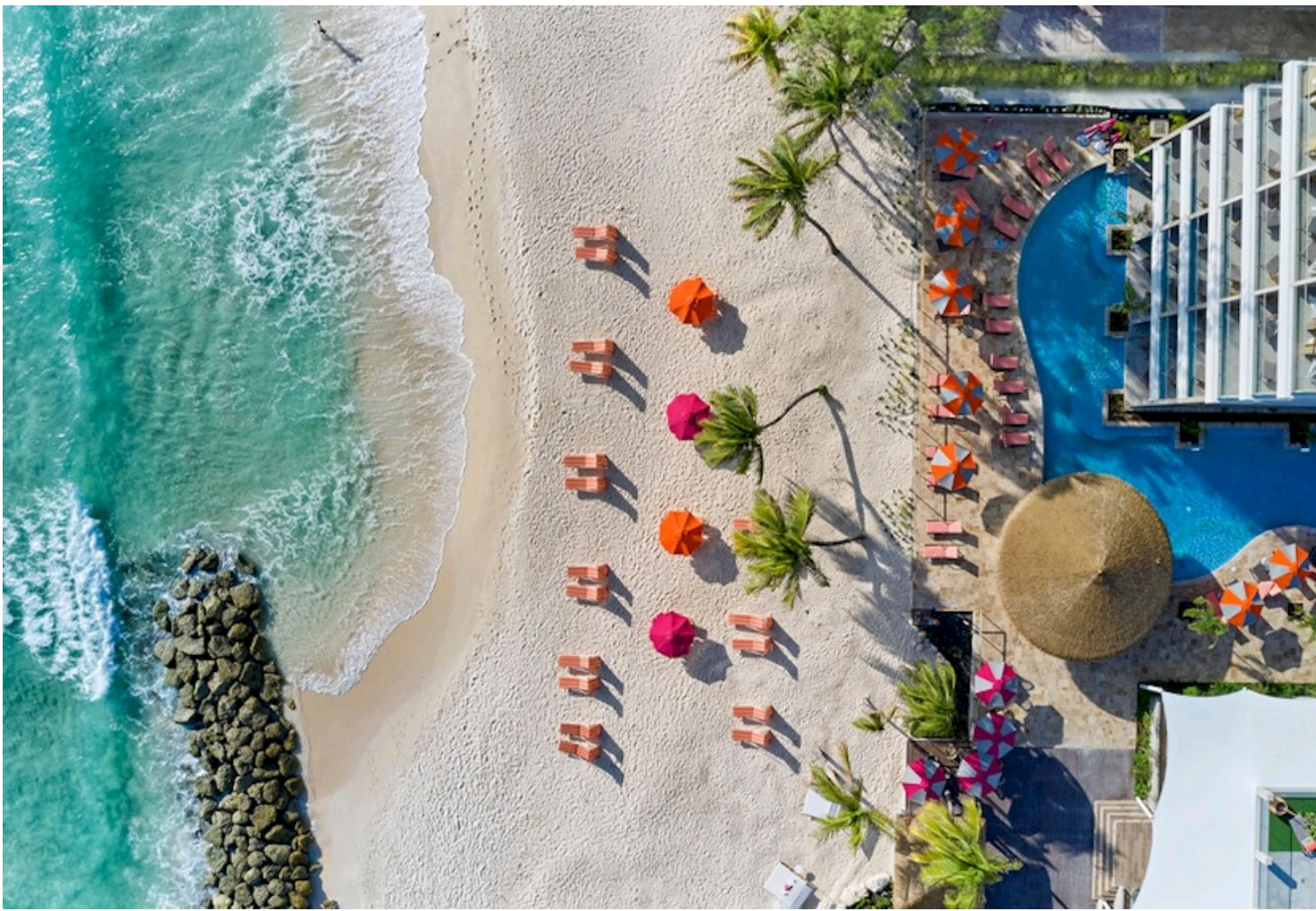
The need to recognize the unique personalities of each guest is done through a curated experience which takes advantage, in many cases of data on the guest gathered pre-visit and post visit for returning customers. Here guests are asked about their likes and dislikes, preferences with respect to everything from room amenities to dining preferences all in a quest to personalize the experience to the point where the guest truly feels at home and pampered.



Authenticity is the Secret Sauce

Most vitally, visitors today place extreme emphasis on authenticity. They crave a connection with the culture of the place and O2 has made an extreme effort to make this critical to its existence. Programs of local art have been set up throughout the resort, making for a fascinating dive into the Bajan culture and the visual art scene. These pieces are not only curated within public spaces but guest rooms and are available for sale within its retail store, where a guest can be delighted by an offering of what Bajan culture has to offer.

The culinary experiences along with the entire aesthetic concept of the resort is based on projecting the local landscape and culture as authentically as possible by using those who live the culture, the local artists and designers, drawing on the immense talent of the region to develop a truly unique experience. References are constantly made through the interior details to the surrounding landscape, through color, material and pattern choices, while a carefully arranged composition of views throughout the property allows the guest to immerse themselves into the uniqueness of the site. Authenticity can only truly be achieved through a sincere approach to cultural awareness and immersion, and this truly is what O2 Beach Club and Spa has achieved.



The Work / Life Paradigm For the Hospitality Industry

During the pandemic, work life changed drastically for us all. We were all sent home and work life changed forever. Technology quickly adapted to our need to keep our economies going from our homes and many corporations, hesitant to introduce hybrid work environments prior to the pandemic, soon realized that productivity did not decrease because their employees were working from home and that actually they could still be productive, allowing corporations to adopt hybrid work environments officially and to reduce their corporate office footprints.

For many, we realized that, we could work from anywhere in the world and so the hotel industry stepped up to the plate, acknowledging the need for "office" amenities within their hotels, allowing for guests to print, scan and perform other functions, while on vacation. The guest room too has been altered to allow the guests to work from their holiday spot, by prioritizing the desk and lounge space within the guest rooms. Of course, nomadic lifestyles are too on the rise, with thousands of people choosing to live completely nomadic lifestyles, spending extended periods of time at vacation hotspots, requiring a home away from home environment.

Material choices too have been impacted by the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, the hospitality industry already understood the need for hygiene and durability in terms of its material choices but post pandemic this conversation has been brought front and center. The need to create an environment which can be easily and efficiently sanitized to reduce the spread of illness has become crucial in the quest for the hospitality industry to reopen post covid lock down restrictions. The Cruise ship industry has particularly had to take this into account, though pre-pandemic they would already require constant sanitizing, understanding the existence of an environment that could possibly spread illness at rapid rates. In many instances, here the pandemic accelerated an already existing trend towards material choices that could be easily sanitized and durable enough to stand to repeated sanitization.



As traditional reception desks are replaced by digital check in options, lounge spaces are being increased. The lobby now becomes an opportunity to lounge, interact in groups or simply on your own. In the Caribbean, we are blessed with the option to have year-round open-air lobbies being designed into hospitality properties. The need to expand natural fresh air ventilation within public spaces to minimize the spread of a contagion has worked well in the Caribbean and is a design trend which is no longer just about allowing the guest to interact with the outdoors but is a practical approach towards disease control. Reception space have become a symbolic transition into a more flexible, laid-back approach to resort design, helping ease the guest into a haven, a place to restore and renew post pandemic.

We as a collective people, members of this planet Earth, have been changed by our experiences over the last few years and so, as we redesign the world to accommodate what clearly have been transformative times, the hospitality industry has functioned to provide for us the means to not only accept the new terms of our existence, but to embrace and flourish for the better. Led by intuition of evolving times but impacted by the accelerated need for our introspection, the hospitality industry has brilliantly accommodated our renewed needs for self-care, connection, and mindful living in a way that not many industries have done so willingly, proactively and nimbly.



Ms. Leotaud

Michelle Leotaud brings to Apple & Iron an array of design experience in architecture and interior design. With a focused skill set of collaboration and inter-connectedness, she supports the firm with her knowledge of both exterior and interior design. Ms Leotaud has a Masters degree in sustainable architecture. Her environmental design and planning experience focus on responsible architecture in tropical climates. Both her design aesthetic and project management experience show an impressive array of mixed-use schemes, high-rise buildings, commercial interiors and hospitality design. After almost a decade at OBMI - a renowned resort development firm; she now leads Apple & Iron which is founded on her unique and holistic design approach. Ms. Leotaud can be contacted at +1868 868-684-9453 or mleotaud@appleandiron.com

[Extended Biography](#)

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