Skift MEGA TRENDS

LOOKING AHEAD
TO 2025

Skift

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TRAVEL'S NEW CADENCE **IS MORE DELIBERATE, INTROSPECTIVE AND SOULFUL**

By Dennis Schaal

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

With prospects for winning the planet's climate change confrontation after the horrific pandemic not appearing appreciably improved in 2025, the travel industry and travelers rethink their operations and the way they wander the globe, respectively. Fear is a fantastic motivator.

“SOME TRAVEL BUSINESSES AND DESTINATIONS HAVE FOUND A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE AMONG TRAVELERS EAGER TO VISIT PREVIOUSLY UNHERALDED LOCATIONS.”

***Editor’s Note:** When mulling how to approach Skift’s annual Megatrends exercise, which traditionally looks at the upcoming year, we figured that 2021 could be another tumultuous period given uncertainties about the uneven global distribution and effectiveness of the vaccines, and the prospects of ongoing spikes and dips in coronavirus outbreaks. At the least, even under the most optimum circumstances, it would be a year of recovery and wound-licking for much of the travel industry that outlasted 2020.*

We therefore decided to write our best Megatrends forecasts of what travel would look like in 2025, five years from now, when perhaps a sense of a new normalcy would have a chance to settle in.

Although we realize that given climate change variables, political strife, the chance of fresh pandemics, and economic dislocations, there’s no guarantee that 2025 will bring stability. In reflecting about the likely shape of 2025, we even speculated about deals that might happen if that particular Megatrend is solid. Given the variables, for many of our individual Megatrends within this publication, we also included a counterpoint argument, just in case our prognostications turn out a different way.

After all, each of these will be debated back and forth, and we hope you participate in that dialogue with Skift about the future of travel. So for the sake of this year’s Megatrends, imagine you are waking up and reading them in 2025.

MEGATREND: Battered by years of a stubborn pandemic, harsher hurricanes, more severe typhoons, sporadic wildfires, and escalating global temperatures that have melted glaciers, flooded coastal zones, and parched entire geographic expanses, the travel industry — and travelers — have been shocked into a new consciousness in 2025.

The oldest millennials are approaching 40 years old now, and have spawned the more globally spirited Generation Alpha. Millennials, along with their younger Generation Z counterparts, with the oldest among the latter group now in their late-20s, were renowned before Covid-19 as being price-conscious, experience-seeking, and destination-indecisive. Find them a deal and a potentially memorable experience, and boom — the vacation was on.

But in 2025, many members of these maturing generations have turned things around, and become destination-decisive.

That means that a growing segment of travelers — not everyone, for sure — is now mulling the relative impact their trips may have if they opt for Botswana instead of Barcelona, or choose to ride the rails closer to home instead of flying an Airbus A380 to a congested airport outside a teeming metropolis. This more-conscious decision was already happening among Millennial and Gen Z travelers years earlier as seen in the chart on the next page.

The seeds of the change were already simmering in the midst of the pandemic in 2020. In a Booking.com global survey of travelers that summer, 60 percent of respondents said they would use an app or website that recommended itineraries where tours would have a positive impact on locals. At the same time, 51 percent claimed they would change their chosen travel destination and head instead to a less-popular one if that decision would have less of an adverse environmental impact.

As G Adventures founder Bruce Poon Tip described it five years ago in 2020 at a Skift conference, conscientiousness in personal decision-making is essential for changing the world, and diminishing any deleterious impact of travel.

TRAVELING WITHOUT WRECKING THE PLANET

“Asking questions” is important, Poon Tip advised. “Deciding between hotels, and between cruise ships. There are better ones, and between luxury hotels. Deciding between operators, I mean, finding out where your money is going because you have so much power when you decide to travel and spend money in another economy."

All of this doesn't mean making the travel experience less exciting, but it becomes in some instances a less flashy way of viewing and traveling the world — or your own region or country — with an emphasis on safety, sustainability, and profound experiences while getting from point A to B without wrecking the climate and local quality of life in the process.

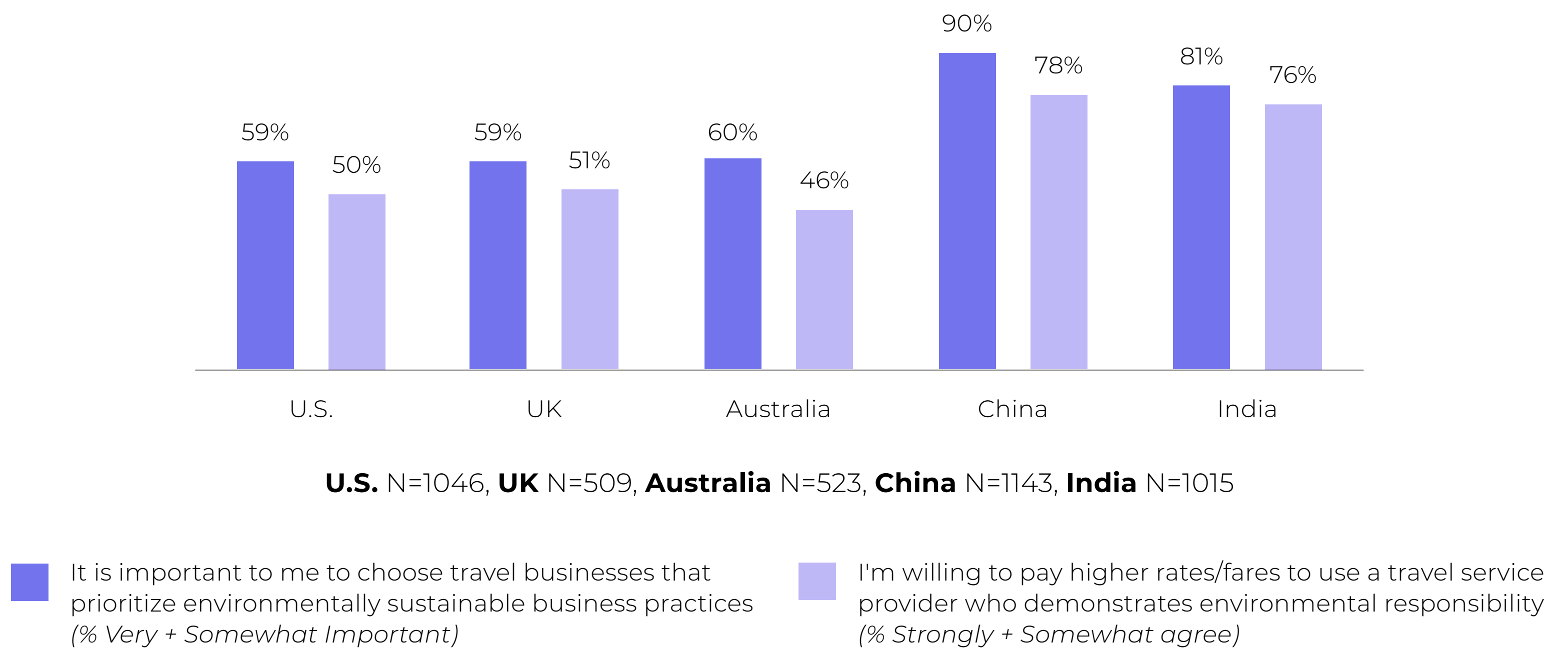
A somewhat leaner and more consolidated travel industry, wracked by the coronavirus contagion and the extended period of economic dislocation and pain that ensued, in 2025 simultaneously influences and gets shaped by this Megatrend, which embodies a newly empowered destination-decisiveness and purposefulness. As part of this new decisiveness, visitors are embracing the slow travel movement, soaking in fewer attractions in their wanderings and getting more out of each. They'd rather make stops along the way, and take an unanticipated turn toward a small village that just came into view, instead of speeding 80 miles per hour along a highway to add another tourist magnet to their refrigerator collections.

Overwrought destinations have increased limits on big-cruise ship arrivals, capped or banned Airbnb and other short-term rentals, and invested in marketing under-visited but enticing cities, towns and villages that aren't tourism magnets. Lisbon incentivized short-term rental owners to rent their properties to the municipality to use for affordable housing instead of tourist stays, and more than a handful of major cities in 2025 have followed the Portuguese capital's lead. That has helped tamp down real estate speculation in major urban centers, and quieted some of the neighborhood convulsions that came with the daily spasms of tourist arrivals and out-of-control house parties.

Some travel businesses and destinations have found a receptive audience among travelers eager to visit previously unheralded locations. Although voluntourism before the pandemic tended to be a niche affair, the incessant spikes of global climate calamities that put peoples and nations under duress, have spurred an intensified traveler desire in 2025 to depart a destination only after contributing to making it a better place rather leaving it as a mountain village or urban neighborhood more beaten down.

It didn't take technological wizardry, but many online travel agencies and tour operators now offer bookers the option of dedicating a day or two of their trips to helping construct a local water purification system, plant trees along shorelines devastated by hurricanes, or immersing themselves in local languages and cultures.

Importance of Environmental Responsibility for Millennial and Gen Z Travelers



Source: Skift Research, Millennial and Gen Z Traveler Survey 2019

THE SPLINTERING EFFECT

However, the new world order in 2025 is certainly not a Utopian patchwork of tolerance and feel-good vibrations. Far from it. In many ways, a surge in hyper-nationalism, xenophobia and neo-fascism within some countries toward its own citizens, and outwardly toward refugees, foreigners, and other nations has rendered travel more splintered, and the globe more fragmented, turbulent, and disconnected.

Travel bubbles, or trip corridors, that some countries inaugurated in 2020, 2021, or 2022 out of pandemic concerns have morphed in 2025 into semi-permanent tunnels of intolerance, restricting admittance to the privileged, or to favored nationalities, ethnicities, and religions. Intermittent political tensions have turned regions and countries into "go" or "no-go-zones." Visa restrictions have become so tight and onerous in some destinations that would-be international travelers don't even bother to consider certain visits, and opt instead for less-exotic regional or domestic destinations, which have increased in popularity post-pandemic regardless.

All of this fragmentation has occurred despite the fact that the profile of the global middle class looks considerably different now in 2025 when compared with a half-decade earlier. Travelers' relative buying power has shifted even further eastward toward China and India now, but Russia and Brazil played catch-up, as well. For example, gross domestic product per capita rose nearly nine times to roughly $25,300 in China over the five-year span, five-fold to $9,560 in India, and it would more than triple to $33,850 in Russia, as a Bloomberg analysis of the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook had pointed to. Brazil's gross domestic product per capita doubled, but slightly trailed the comparable growth rate in per-capita GDP in the United States.

When China doesn't ban certain travel destinations, such as it did with South Korea way back in 2017 in a dispute over stationing U.S. missile defense systems there, and when other countries don't carry out similar prohibitions, the balance of power among the globe's most popular travel destinations has shifted in 2025. The anti-foreigner rhetoric that blunted U.S. visitations during the Trump era has abated five years later because of the change of presidential administrations. Due to the increased spending power of the Chinese and Indian middle classes, in particular, their travelers have rewritten the global most-visited countries' list based on their own most-favored nations.

> **OVERWROUGHT DESTINATIONS HAVE INCREASED LIMITS ON BIG-CRUISE SHIP ARRIVALS, CAPPED OR BANNED AIRBNB AND OTHER SHORT-TERM RENTALS, AND INVESTED IN MARKETING UNDER-VISITED BUT ENTICING CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES THAT AREN'T TOURISM MAGNETS.**

Many observers have pointed out that innovation almost reflexively follows crises. The Roaring 20s in the United States followed the Spanish flu of 1918. Likewise, the Covid-19 pandemic of 2019 and 2020, with its extended lockdowns, dislocations, death and general feelings of malaise, not only gave way to an enhanced appreciation for family, friends, relationships, everyday normalcy, and the right to travel in 2025, but it also led to a period of innovation, just as the 1920s did with its wave of autos and automation.

Digital services from food delivery to the Alibaba and Amazon retail platforms, and work-from- anywhere freedoms, became ingrained in 2025, as did livestream marketing, an expanded assortment of virtual experiences, and self-driving cars on well-worn and less-complicated routes. A humbled global travel industry that was shorn of innumerable weaker companies, and battered during an era of Covid-19 and overlapping and intensifying climate calamities, seized opportunities to fill market gaps, and got more imaginative and creative about new ways to capture the 2025 loyalties of the new self-directed traveler. Yes, many travelers in 2025 seek a more intimate, meaningful, and soulful trip experience.

COUNTERPOINT: On the other hand, despite the post-coronavirus hangover and climate change imperatives, many argue that major travel brands, whether it be Trip.com Group in China, Accor in Europe, Delta Air Lines in the United States, or Emirates in Dubai, are still overwhelmingly concerned in 2025 with profits, the stock market valuations in the case of public companies, and meeting analysts' and shareholders' quarterly expectations..

The bottom line is still the bottom line, and nothing is more important to corporations than profit and the prospect of unrelenting growth. Sure, many airlines want to transition to cleaner fuels, but that will take additional years. So despite the incessant heat of climate change, American Airlines, Ryanair, Tam and Ethiopia airlines don't turn away passengers in the name of a smaller carbon footprint. Booking.com doesn't limit the number of tourists it sends to headquarters city Amsterdam just because locals are fed up with overtourism.

Tripadvisor CEO Steve Kaufer was correct in 2020 when he predicted that the future of travel would more closely resemble its past profile than be subject to a complete makeover. The traveler of 2020 is not experiencing much culture shock when experiencing the travel habits of 2025.


Photo credit: Person standing on beach. Riccardo Pitzalis/ Unsplash, https://unsplash.com/photos/hdSel1YeUfs

"In terms of — at the biggest macro level from a traveler perspective, how do I think things are going to change in travel in a two-, three -year time frame?," Kaufer said in 2020 in a call with financial analysts. "I got to say not much. People love to travel. It's more and more of the younger generation who is growing up, looking for experiences in travel, always rate super highly on what people want to do. So the demand, I believe, will be there."

In other words, in 2025, despite the fact that the short-term rental recovery eclipsed that of the traditional hotel industry coming out of the pandemic, hotels are back — although somewhat transformed. The growth of business travel has slowed, and hotels that formerly dedicated themselves to road warriors have tilted toward vacationers, but make no mistake that hotels are back.

SHORT MEMORIES

Coronavirus vaccines not only turned back a deadly virus, but they also seemed to have erased many travelers' memories in 2025 about the days five years earlier when they were fearful of flying alongside a potentially contagious seatmate, or the years when they refused to enter packed hotel elevators.

In 2020, Expedia Group CEO Peter Kern scoffed at the notion that residents and travelers would abandon big cities because of coronavirus, and in 2025 we can say he spoke the truth.. Kern said Expedia hadn't found anything to indicate "there's a long-term behavioral change" that would grow out of Covid-19. He recalled that after 9/11, pundits predicted that travel would change "forever," and New Yorkers would abandon New York City in droves, but that never materialized.

"I am not one to believe that anything about what we're going through will be permanent," Kern said.

At the same time, while local drive vacations as an alternative to long-haul flights, and trips to more isolated destinations and properties where travelers could exert more sanitary controls surged during the 2020 coronavirus outbreak, the hotel industry and mass tourism picked up where they left off by 2025.

Barcelona is as crowded with travelers as ever although wildfires in Napa Valley, California meant tourism never recovered there. Mass tourism, though, tends to have a very short memory. ◆

BACKYARD TOURISM **IS ON A PEDESTAL BUT FAR-FLUNG EXPLORATION RECOVERS**

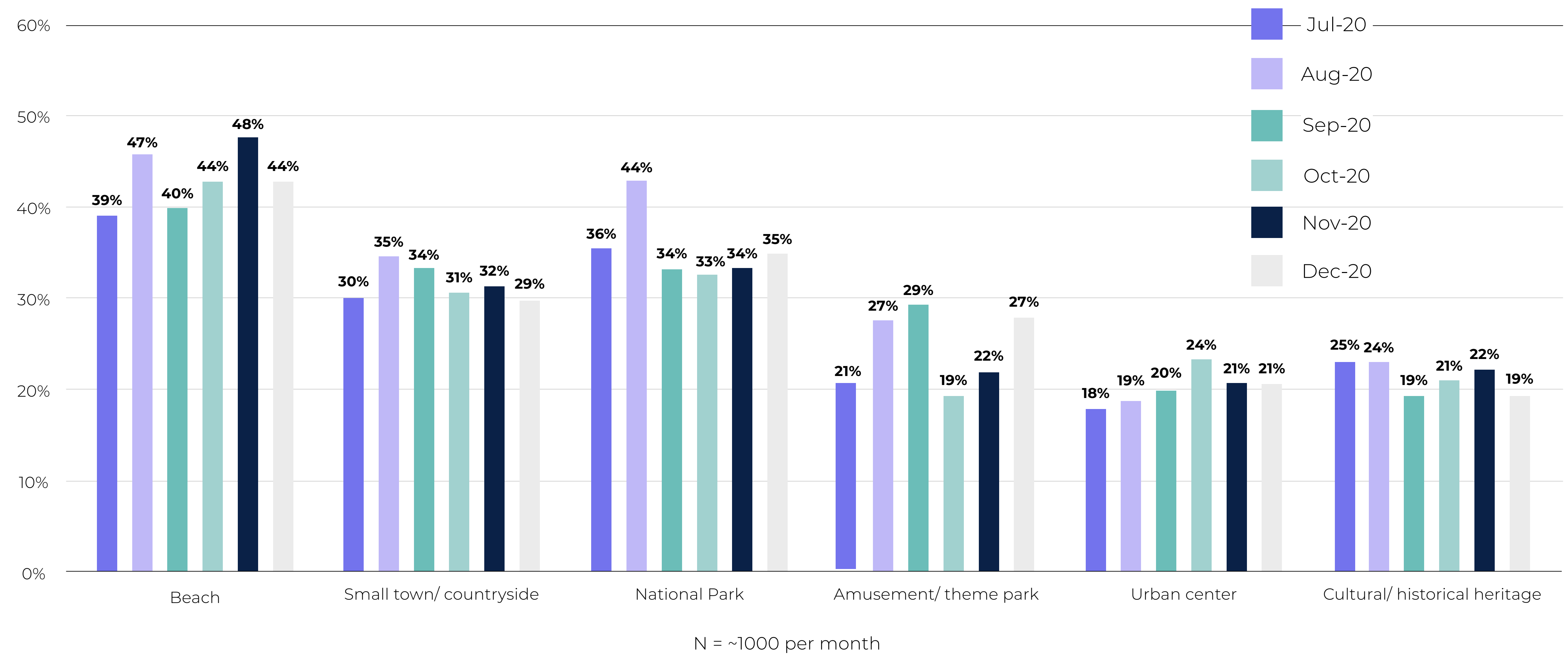
By Lebawit Lily Girma

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

Domestic trips catapulted to a whole new level after Covid, a trend that remains solid as the world exits a four-year downturn in 2025. But international travel is like a stubborn flame because bucket lists are alive and well, albeit reimagined. Demand for long-term stays emerges from the rising crop of conscious travelers.

Preferred Destination Types Post COVID-19 by U.S. Consumers, Jul – Dec 2020



Source: Skift Research, U.S. Travel Tracker

MEGATREND: Leisure travel as a whole in 2025 is close to surpassing historic 2019 levels. However, the global and regional patchwork responses in public health protocols and border restrictions back in Covid times means that this peak remains uneven across the world. It's true that domestic tourism has taken on a sexier allure for the past five years, as travelers continue to invest part of their vacation time in backyard tourism. Less-stringent health requirements, such as the absence of domestic vaccine mandates or digital health passes, help push this local travel demand.

Travelers seek out coastal drive-to destinations, as well as wellness and outdoor-oriented rural areas, and bespoke cultural experiences within 100 miles of home. Domestic tourism isn't a new concept for regions such as Europe, Asia and Australia, but it sits on a more solid pedestal there, as well.

In the United States, tourism offices have built a more collaborative relationship with local communities as a result of having to seek revenue sources beyond international tourists. As seen in the chart on the left, trips to beaches and national parks were sought-after domestic destinations coming out of the Covid crisis.

Political instabilities around the world ranging from racial-justice protests to trade tensions further cement this domestic leisure travel trend. The ravages of climate change in coastal areas have also contributed to dissuade international travel. Not least among factors is the heightened sense of community that emerged from pandemic times. Many travelers are more conscious of buying locally and splurging in their own backyards to support small businesses, which continue to recoup from an historic four-year downturn.

COUNTERPOINT: Foreign cities in far-flung destinations have not lost their allure. If anything, the pent-up global travel demand from years of Covid backyard confinement continues to manifest itself, even surpassing domestic travel demand. That's a relief to many destinations because domestic travel often lacks the power of international tourism to generate revenue.

Cities, in particular, bounced back in 2025 quicker than what many predicted. Public health concerns pushed some cities to rethink mobility while tackling pollution and climate issues. They lured new travelers and enticed residents to return with enhanced urban living spaces, improved air quality, and technology innovations.

For example, Paris decided to eliminate 75,000 parking spaces and convert them into public recreational spaces. Milan's Open Streets Plan prioritized cyclists and pedestrians, as did Bogotá and London, among others. Addis Ababa engineered a green turnaround with a slew of outdoors parks that double as entertainment venues.

Way back in 2020 at the Skift Short-Term Rental and Outdoor Summit, Sonder Chief Financial Officer Sanjay Banker predicted rightly that "urban travel is going to bounce back in a big way and that the demise of the city argument is overrated." Indeed, as Banker pointed out, "cities have been hubs of activities for thousands of years."

Skyscanner's search results immediately following the multiple Covid vaccine announcements in late 2020 and Skift's Recovery Index at the close of that Covid-laced year were predictive as well, pointing to big international city searches such as Munich, Madrid, Paris, and Amsterdam, and showing an early rebound in travel to United Arab Emirates and Latin American destinations, respectively.

Those who crave far-flung outdoor adventures, the arts, food, and local flavor know that cities are hotbeds of cultural exchange, and give their countries distinct attributes. Cities in 2025 recaptured many former residents who had escaped to the suburbs or less-populated areas after Covid, but were eager to experience all the amenities that only cities offer.

> **THE FACT THAT WE SAW PEOPLE BEING UNRULY IN THEIR DESIRE TO TRAVEL [DURING COVID] — BECAUSE PEOPLE WERE ACTUALLY TAKING RISKS IN ORDER TO TRAVEL — THAT TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT THE NATURE OF TRAVEL NOW.**
>
> **-SIMÓN SUÁREZ,** HEAD OF INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS, GRUPO PUNTACANA

Photo credit: Kaaterskill Falls in upstate New York. Getty Images/Sharan Singh.

Flexible refund policies and a wide availability of travel specials fed globe-trotters' urge to return home with epic memories of the Maldives or South Africa. That couldn't easily be snuffed out. Nor could the hunger for offbeat experiences to look back on later in life. "The fact that we saw people being unruly in their desire to travel [during Covid] — because people were actually taking risks in order to travel — that tells us something about the nature of travel now," said Simón Suárez, former president of the Caribbean Hotel Tourism Association and head of institutional relations at Grupo Puntacana.

What has changed when it comes to international bucket lists, however, is the desire to stay longer and explore slower than in the past. The slow travel movement comes with an increase in consciousness about climate change and environmental impact from both the travel industry and travelers, in addition to continued vigilance about health and safety precautions.

Long-haul travel has become more seamless as airports continue to go contactless. Technology advances in immigration processing run the gamut from facial recognition to e-visas, including in regions that were once technologically challenged, such as the Caribbean. ◆

HOTELS ARE BACK **WITH BIG UPSIDES FOR OWNERS WHO STUCK OUT THE HARD TIMES**

By Cameron Sperance

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

Corporate travel planners and event bookers hold the key to the financial fate for much of the hotel industry. But struggling hotel owners who made it to the other side of the pandemic were likely to see greater profits because of supply constraints and many weaker competitors succumbed.

MEGATREND: The hotel industry is back in 2025, but it looks considerably different than it did five years earlier. There is no doubt the pandemic brutally ravaged the sector. Hotel portfolios in large, urban centers or those focused on meetings and events may not have shuttered for good — but they certainly traded hands. Owners and investors who lacked the resources or had no stomach for the turbulence of an extended recovery period, got out early in 2020 and 2021, but those who persisted were in store for a significant upside.

“There’s going to be an opportunistic play for someone willing to carry those hotels for the next year or two,” Acres Capital CEO Mark Fogel told Skift in 2020.

As seen in the chart on the right, U.S. hotel occupancy and average daily rates were severely impacted in 2020. But on the owner side, the recovery’s slog paid off for some. Years of cost cuts, including streamlining operations and reducing employee rosters, delivered an industry with significantly higher profit margins in many cases compared even to those seen in record-setting performance years leading up to the first coronavirus case.

While convention hotels still operate, they are no longer built at the same rate as they were pre-pandemic. Instead, owners of these spaces rely on alternative-use arrangements like work-from-hotel programs to generate revenue between the occasional major event.

Companies that decided to reduce their office footprint during the pandemic rely more on these surviving convention hotels to conduct quarterly meetings, which is an upside to the properties that made it. Some of these businesses even use the work-from-hotel model in select cases as a way to provide a reliable, private office space in lieu of longer arrangements with coworking entities such as WeWork.

But this is still a fairly limited revenue stream and works best when the hotel works in partnership with a coworking company such as the way Proper Hospitality partnered with Industrious.

HOTEL SERVICES ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

Despite the pandemic pain, some hoteliers salivated and took advantage of the pandemic-driven ability to accelerate cost-cutting initiatives that were unthinkable in pre-pandemic times, especially in U.S. and European cities with an organized labor presence.

Hoteliers marketed contactless features like mobile check-in and checkout as safety initiatives to limit potentially unsafe interactions between staff and guests. But post-pandemic, these are as common to the hotel industry as mobile boarding passes are to the airlines. Hotels cut labor costs tied to heavily staffed front desks.

The most severe cuts came to housekeeping, which was the biggest labor expense for many hotel owners. Hotel companies quickly eliminated daily room cleanings at most properties during the pandemic as an alleged safety precaution. Labor unions, such as Unite Here, balked at that decision, and claimed it was simply a way to cut costs rather than promote safety.

“That’s complete malarkey,” Unite Here International President D. Taylor told Skift in 2020 in commenting on the hotel industry’s safety argument. “It’s an economic move. Anybody who portrays it any other way isn’t telling the truth.”

Although governments and health authorities widely distributed Covid vaccines, and the pandemic is in the rearview mirror, daily room cleanings still aren’t a common occurrence in 2025 — unless guests are willing to pay extra for them.

U.S. Hotel Occupancy Was Slow to Recover

Key Performance Indicators
2019 — 2020F — 2021F

Metric	2019 Actual	2020 Forecast	2021 Forecast
Occupancy*	66.0%	42.2%	52.2%
Average Daily Rate	$131.22	$103.65	$109.21
Revenue Per Available Room*	$86.67	$43.76	$57.03

** This assumes no temporary hotel closings*
Source: STR/CoStar Realty Information

In a trend that started years before the pandemic, the hotel industry again took a page from the airline sector's playbook in rebuilding after the pandemic. Services that were once included in the room rate are now unbundled and charged on an a la carte basis, especially in economy-scale hotels.

Sure, guests grumble about the way things were, but they still flock to these properties for loyalty perks. That's because competitors are likewise charging the new fees, and many guests believe that hotels make for a safer stay than unwieldy short-term rentals when it comes to cleaning and health.

COUNTERPOINT: The hotel industry comeback would rely on corporate travel and major events to kick back into gear, but that hasn't happened so far.

Sure, vaccines were widely distributed and the pandemic for the most part is a thing of the past. But leisure travel still dominates in an environment where many companies and event planners recognize the cost savings inherent in virtual meetings and remote gatherings. People still fly in for vital business meetings or due diligence trips — but at nowhere near the frequency seen in 2019. That has greatly hampered occupancy rate recovery, especially in urban hotels.

Vacation travelers are back in full force, sometimes even more than pre-pandemic levels, due to pent-up demand and lingering memories of 2020 shutdowns. But those travelers aren't booking stays in hotels like they once did. Hotel companies banked on travelers craving the familiarity of a major brand coming out of the pandemic. Instead, travelers migrated toward having the control of an entire home or condo through a short-term rental.

Photo credit: A hotel front desk. Courtesy of Pixabay/yayayang1619

> **THERE'S GOING TO BE AN OPPORTUNISTIC PLAY FOR SOMEONE WILLING TO CARRY THOSE HOTELS FOR THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO.**
>
> **-MARK FOGEL,** CEO, ACRES CAPITAL

In a manner similar to hotels, companies like Airbnb also rolled out stringent health and safety standards during the pandemic to allay fears of the virus. That, along with the convenience of driving to a vacation home distant from pandemic-spiking cities, rapidly accelerated the brand's appeal to new customers during the year, 2020, when it became a public company. Short-term rentals from Airbnb, Expedia's Vrbo and others became a viable hotel alternative for both vacationers and even business travelers.

Hotel companies recognized the changing consumer appetite, and many joined the short-term rental fray. Marriott's Homes & Villas is no longer just a "very small part" of the company, as leaders at the world's largest hotel company repeatedly said during its launch in 2019. Luxury brands like Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts have their own spin on short-term rentals, placing them as residences within the chain's resorts, and other global hotel chains expanded into short-term rentals especially as a way to tap into markets where a traditional hotel wouldn't work.

This push for to focus on leisure travel, or vacationers, further tanked the hotel industry as room rates plummeted. Hotel analysts warned hotel owners to hold the line on rates, even during the pandemic era of low occupancy, since it is so hard to build up daily rates consumers got accustomed to steep discounts.

But with the cash cow of business travel not returning to pre-pandemic levels, hotel owners had little choice but to reduce rates to woo leisure travelers.

This prolonged period of poor performance sparked a wave of hotel loan defaults and property closures. Major urban areas that once generated substantial corporate travel saw owners begin to convert underutilized hotels into apartment or condo developments, and that alleviated housing shortages across many markets.◆

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES **OF LIFESTYLE FOR THE NEW ERA OF TRAVEL**

ACCOR

Skift Take

Successful brands demonstrate high levels of resilience during economic and business cycles. With fewer barriers, limitations, and investments in brand-wide standardizations, lifestyle hospitality brands are able to pivot more quickly in the face of today's challenges.

Photo credit: Mama Shelter Los Angeles

PARTNER CONTENT

Gaurav Bhushan
CEO, Lifestyle
Accor

Sharan Pasricha
Founder & CEO
Ennismore

ACCOR recently doubled down on the idea that lifestyle hotels, which evolved from the millennial trends of boutique and design-led independent hotels, will continue to fuel growth in the hospitality sector over the next three to five years.

Lifestyle currently accounts for roughly 5 percent of Accor's annual revenue, its current development pipeline is weighted much more heavily towards lifestyle properties, representing 25 percent of its pipeline by value. Spearheading this path forward, Accor recently announced that it's in exclusive discussion to join forces in 2021 with Ennismore, which includes brands like The Hoxton, Gleneagles, and Working From_.

SkiftX invited Gaurav Bhushan, CEO lifestyle, Accor, and Sharan Pasricha, founder and CEO, Ennismore, to debate the definition of lifestyle, how it will evolve over the next five years, and how current industry trends might impact that long-term strategy.

SkiftX: How do you define "lifestyle" now, and how do you hope it is viewed by 2025?

Gaurav Bhushan: We define the lifestyle sector as properties that combine the best of both worlds: the individuality of an independent hotel combined with the smooth delivery of global hospitality expertise. Our lifestyle hotels, such as Tribe, Mama Shelter, and Mondrian, are known for standout design, dramatic F&B venues, unconventional living and gathering spaces, and an innate sense of creativity.

Over the next five years, we expect guests to continue to embrace our lifestyle brands as they gravitate to new ways of living and working, as well as wanting hotel experiences that are in tune with their own specific interests and tastes.

Sharan Pasricha: 'Lifestyle' has become a bit of a buzzword, like 'boutique hotels' once was. To me, it means honing in on brand experiences and curating how brands make you feel – just as we have done so far with The Hoxton and Gleneagles. They're destinations that offer experiences that start well before you check-in, such as the digital journey and social media.

Just as important, lifestyle hospitality means crafting spaces that make you feel at home and welcomed – places you actually want to hang out in. They're often multi-functional, with a mix of dining, workspaces, entertainment, and retail, sometimes all under one roof. Lifestyle hotels are authentic reflections of the destinations they're in, and work as an ecosystem, striving to support and embrace the communities around them.

SkiftX: What is your overall strategy for the lifestyle sector over the next five years?

Bhushan: Our strategy is to provide the support and resources our lifestyle brands need to achieve a more global presence. It's critically important that we do this without diluting the attributes that made these brands successful in the first place. Our diverse lifestyle portfolio presents tremendous potential for future growth and expansion, so we want to help them grow in a way that fosters their unique character and features.

Pasricha: Ennismore is on a mission to be the most exciting hospitality company out there, and this new partnership means our five-year strategy already looks exciting, with over 110 hotels in the pipeline. In a post-pandemic world, people won't be just seeking out bargain beds for the night. More than ever, they'll be looking for experiences they can remember and cherish,


Photo credit: Jo&Joe Paris Nation

like our Camp Hox pop-up this summer in Oxfordshire, which took the best bits of The Hoxton to the countryside.

SkiftX: What consumer or industry trends are you most closely monitoring that would impact your strategy?

Bhushan: The pandemic is the biggest issue to impact the hospitality industry in modern history, and its effects will ripple on for years. Not only are we seeing changes in how people choose to congregate and how we might need to rethink our communal and public spaces, but we also expect to see a long-term shift to more blurred boundaries between work and play, or blended social time, family time, and business time.

Pasricha: This past year has proven the scope of remote working, and there's no doubt agile ways of working will continue to reign. This is something we've always supported with our open-door lobbies at The Hoxton and since evolved into our dedicated coworking brand, Working From_, which we look forward to building on.

Flexibility within hospitality has proved indispensable this year. We had already challenged the age-old mold of rigid check-in and check-out times with the introduction of Flexy Time at The Hoxton, for example. This is something we look forward to continuing to build on. As we navigate a post-pandemic world and adapt to new demands and new desires, lifestyle hospitality brands must continue to push boundaries, challenge expectations, and tell new stories.

This content was created collaboratively by Accor Group and Skift's branded content studio SkiftX.

ACCOR

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WORK FROM ANYWHERE **SPURS A NEW TYPE OF BUSINESS TRAVEL**

By Matthew Parsons

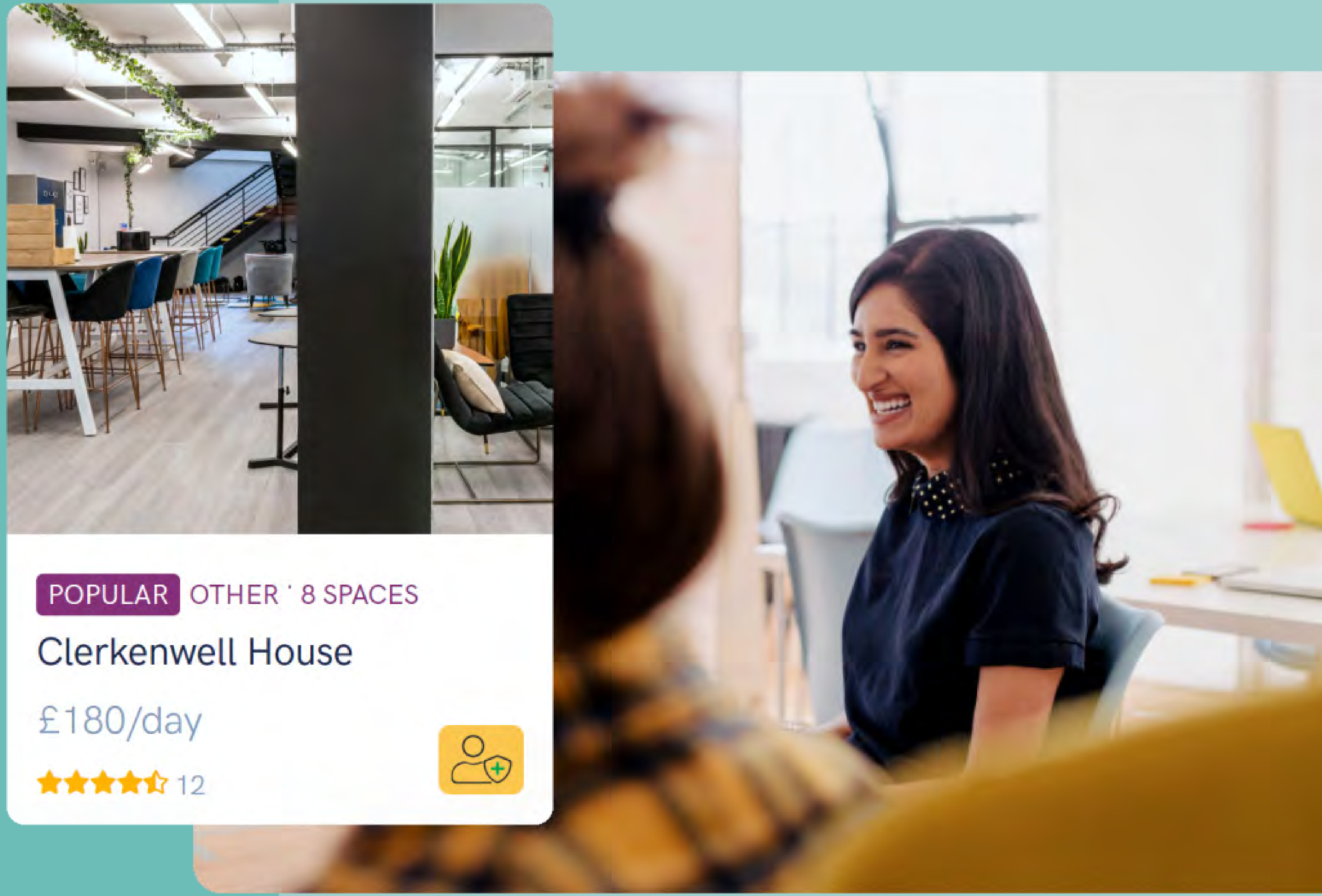


Photo credit: Meetingsbooker.com launched a remote workspaces solution to facilitate the booking of local workspaces for teams working from home.

Skift Take

By 2025, it turned out employees were happy to give up the office, but they wholeheartedly fought to keep some kind of physical interaction with coworkers.

Photo credit: Man working in coffee shop, Štefan Štefančík/ Unsplash, https://unsplash.com/photos/pzA7QWNCIYg

MEGATREND: The abrupt digitalization of the workplace and office culture in 2020 led to a surprise boom in a somewhat new form of "corporate travel" in the following years. Remote employees around the world were increasingly required to attend in-person company-wide meetings for team-building and collaboration. This helped offset those billion dollar losses many feared would hit due to video conferencing.

Some of the early signals came from short-term rental providers, which saw their average length of stay driven upwards by on-the-move workers.

After the pandemic thrust workforces to stay at home, remote working took hold and employees didn't just prove they were as efficient as before, they exceeded expectations. Productivity soared.

Some organizations nostalgically held on to their city headquarters, while others opted for impromptu satellite offices in other urban areas, centered around colleagues' needs.

WORK TRIPS REDEFINED

Remote working became big business. External meetings successfully moved online, boosted by advancements in virtual reality platforms. Then remote employees around the world were increasingly required to attend regular company-wide in-person meetings. In some countries it even became mandated by law in attempts to address employee morale, company cohesiveness, mental health concerns, and even physical wellbeing for a new generation that never knew what it was like to commute to an office everyday.

By 2025, the volume of these work trips by all employees — and not just the salespeople and executives — rivaled the record highs of 2019. All employees were now business travelers.

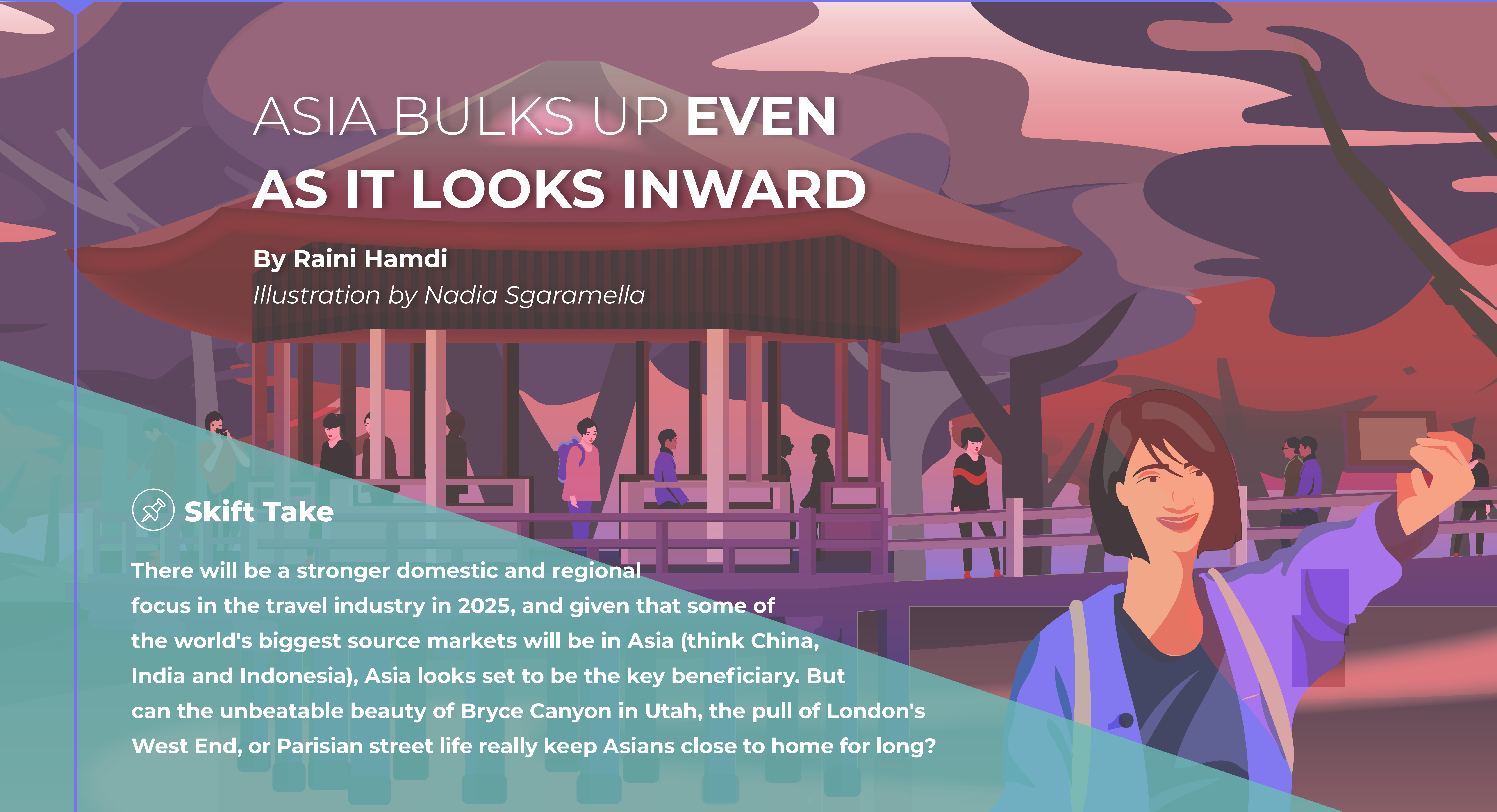
Hotels initially picked up a lot of the post-pandemic slack, diversifying into new brands to accommodate company-takeovers at their properties, and perfecting co-working spaces and subscription packages, competing against the likes of Citizen M and Mint House.

Airlines stepped up, too. A thriving charter market took hold, while international carriers launched subsidiaries to meet the requirements for discerning clients and higher standards.

In the old days of 2020, remote-working specialists like Ethos and Outsite operated on the fringes, and attracted digital nomads. Corporations would occasionally bring in these specialists for team-building getaways, or an annual get-together.

Not anymore. In 2025, a new breed of tour operator emerged, building exclusive retreats in remote destinations for organizations that would leverage them in the battle to land the best talent.

These offsite program perks became everything for a talent pool that now reached every corner of the planet. ◆



ASIA BULKS UP **EVEN AS IT LOOKS INWARD**

By Raini Hamdi

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

There will be a stronger domestic and regional focus in the travel industry in 2025, and given that some of the world's biggest source markets will be in Asia (think China, India and Indonesia), Asia looks set to be the key beneficiary. But can the unbeatable beauty of Bryce Canyon in Utah, the pull of London's West End, or Parisian street life really keep Asians close to home for long?

MEGATREND: It's 2025 and all the talk about Asia continuing to be the travel powerhouse has not only come true, but it has busted expectations.

Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, tourism regions that generated the highest arrivals' growth in 2019, and welcomed 364 million and 64 million visitors, respectively, are well on the way to exceeding those levels by the end of 2025.

Recovery started in 2021, with China as the driving force. The Lunar New Year holiday that year turned out to be a golden week for mainland Chinese traveling overseas, just as National Day in October 2020 was a milestone for the recovery of domestic travel in China. Pent-up demand broke through its restraints thanks to vaccine availability and Covid-19 containment in key Asian destinations.

Around 100 million mainland Chinese traveled overseas in 2021 as the China Outbound Tourism Research Institute had predicted in November 2020. By 2022, that number had been forecast to reach 180 million, surpassing 2019's mark of 170 million, as seen in the chart below.

Other big Asian outbound markets such as South Korea, Japan, India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand also started bouncing back from 2021, albeit at a bit of a slower pace than China.

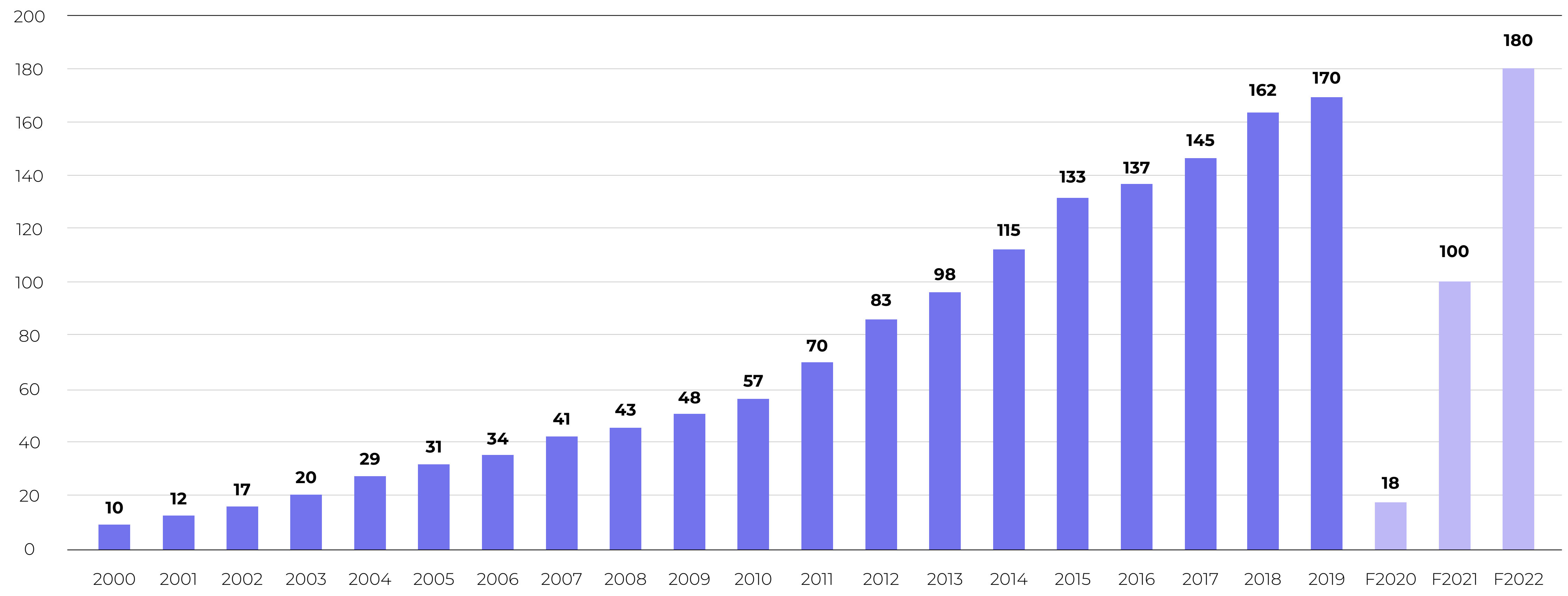
The biggest change is that Asian outbound travelers have become less global-thinking. To compensate for the reduced number of foreign trips in 2019 and 2020, and the tendency to vacation domestically, Asian travelers from many countries are taking more trips annually, which helps to stretch budgets, to rather than splurging on one or two long-haul journeys.

AIRLINES AND TOUR OPERATORS THINK DOMESTIC

Asia's low-cost carriers wear their badge of agility more earnestly than ever, launching services and adding frequencies, which drive Asians to rediscover local destinations and countries closer to home, where they can spend time with friends and family.

To a degree, travelers are prizing familiarity over novelty. Moreover, most Asian countries, having learned the perils of depending too much on overseas demand, are continuing to exhort the virtues of vacationing at home, and helping local businesses grow. Governments are continuing to incentivize domestic travelers with vouchers. Hotels and tour operators are also keeping pace, creating unique local experiences to satisfy a market that knows its backyard well. That's something Covid-19 has forced tour operators and hotels to learn, and they are taking advantage of the trend..

Border Crossings from Mainland China in Millions



Source: COTRI ANALYTICS

At the same time, massive investment in local roads, highways and railways throughout Asia is improving the infrastructure, a boon for regional and domestic travel. This takes place as Asians in many markets have found a new love for road trips and train journeys, spurred by the pandemic.

All this has led to a continuing weakening of the power of Western-focused travel companies while destinations from Indonesia to Dubai are grabbing market share.

COUNTERPOINT: Many travelers from Asian countries have returned to Beverly Hills and the Grand Canyon, as well as Harrods and Buckingham Palace. London Partners and Brand USA are doing just fine, thank you.

No other continent had more countries impose lockdowns, mask-wearing and social distancing than Asia in the immediate wake of the pandemic.. But this isolation created a feeling of psychological imprisonment and with it, the deepest longing for "space"—meaning the outdoors, nature, and fresh air.

But China and India, the two most populous countries in Asia, are also its most polluted, while rapid urbanization in the region leads to excessive traffic snarls and a sense of crowdedness, especially in overburdened cities.

Pollution and congestion were factors that led to European countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands becoming the fastest-growing nations for Chinese travelers pre-pandemic. Post-pandemic, the yearning for "space" has only intensified.
So the attributes that made Europe the second largest destination for Chinese tourists after Asia pre-pandemic because of the outdoors, nature, fresh air, culture, and even shopping, have made the continent only more attractive after Covid-19 as Asians go about fulfilling their appetites for freshness, space, different cultures, and new adventures worldwide.

Looking back from our 2025 lens, we can say Booking.com was right in its October 2020 report on the future of travel when it predicted that travelers would not write-off their love of long-haul getaways. Its survey found that 21 percent of respondents "intend to travel to the other side of the world by the end of 2021, compared to only 6 percent by the end of 2020."

THE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTOR

Demographics play into the resurgence of long-haul travel from the region. In many parts of Asia, the average age is 28 years old, compared with 38 in the U.S., and older than 40 in Europe. Young, mobile and digitally accomplished, many Asians readily embrace contactless travel and

Photo Credit: Chinese tourists in Switzerland. Courtesy of Switzerland Tourism

are fearless about flying post-pandemic. While Asia has lots to offer, cosmopolitan cities such as New York or Paris have not lost their luster. Asians, whether Chinese or Singaporeans, prize the novelty of visiting new destinations, be it Saudi Arabia or Brazil, over familiar vacation spots in the region.

Do you remember, almost five years ago now, the sensational numbers that came out of China's National Day Golden Week of October 2020? Members of post-1990s and post-2000s' generations accounted for more than 60 percent of travelers, according to Trip.com Group.

Destination marketing organizations, from Brand USA to Switzerland Tourism and Abu Dhabi Tourism, having grasped new ways to inspire travelers during Covid-19, and are now more inventive as they use computer-generated imagery and other marketing tactics that speak to younger, tech-savvy Asian travelers.

And lastly, at times, it's geopolitics in Asia-Pacific that tilts the balance toward the West. Before Covid-19, China used its giant outbound travel market as a card to strengthen its political positions, be it with South Korea, Palau, or others. In 2025, some Asian governments have become comfortable with imposing travel restrictions — and it's not always based on health and safety needs. ◆

TRAVEL SECTORS **GET SCRAMBLED, DEFINITIONS BLUR**

By Sean O'Neill

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

Expect most travel sectors to shed their defined borders, with convergence running wild. But a handful of companies will choose to focus instead on their core services as an elixir for growth.

MEGATREND: Looking back from 2025, we see that the pandemic catalyzed and sped up a sector convergence that had been simmering for years. Fierce competition from superapps like Grab, WeChat, Line, and Rappi fueled the cross-selling spurt.

Another factor: Making the most of marketing money. Many companies ran direct booking campaigns to optimize their marketing expenditures. So corporate investors pushed the brands to add more products and services, hoping to boost the average number of transactions per customer.

Asset-light businesses, such as hotel groups and online booking services, found the shift straightforward to make. Showcasing the trend, Accor entered the ski resort and operation business via acquisition with a deal it saw fitting into its Live Limitlessly campaign. Marriott, for its part, acquired a significant fitness and spa franchisor to increase how often consumers interact with its brands. Even before the pandemic, as seen in the chart on the right, the accommodations sector had expanded way beyond traditional hotels.

Online travel sellers fattened up. After Facebook spun out WhatsApp in response to trust-busting regulators, Booking.com acquired it as part of "its mission to make it easier for everyone to experience the world." Trip.com Group snapped up a major tour bus operator and began running tours where its customers can use the Trip.com mobile app to listen to the voice of a recorded guide in their native language. Indonesia-based online travel agency Traveloka's first move after going public on the stock market was to buy a cruise line from Genting, given the surging interest among China's seniors in gambling-themed cruises.

For years, the travel sector locked itself into siloed thinking, with executives from, say, hotels, living in a bubble and not adapting an expansive mental framework to see related opportunities elsewhere. But a wave of developments in computer programming has made it easier to aggregate products. This trend can make it shrewd for a brand like Hilton Worldwide, which has millions of loyalists, to use its heft to upsell guests on vacation homes, experiences like a diving excursion, or perhaps even glamping. It's better to flex your brand's muscle than wait and watch as some platform players like Amazon, Google, or Alibaba sweep in, and steal your customers with some travel offering.

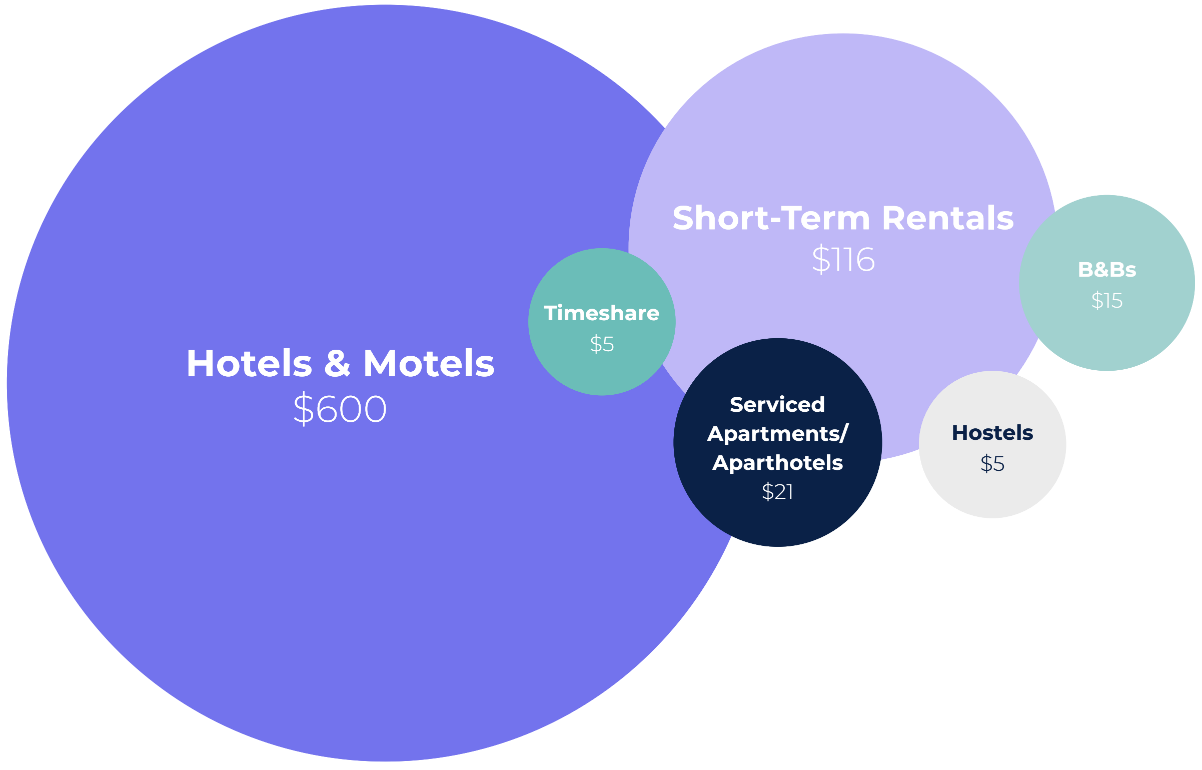
COUNTERPOINT: In 2025, corporations rethought mission creep and portfolio sprawl, which had been reflexive reactions among some growing out of the revenue crisis five years earlier. Executives were reassured that in the midst of the Covid crisis, Airbnb's hot initial public offering validated its choice to focus on its lodging and experiences.. Airbnb had abandoned its pre-pandemic ambitions of becoming an all-in-one travel booking provider by adding flights and more. Other companies in 2025 rehabbed their way to simplicity, jettisoning distracting business lines.
Asia embraced the conglomerate model more than much of the world did. Yet pre-pandemic wind-downs at HNA and post-crisis financial at heavily peers tarnished the model's reputation.

Leveraging a brand by adding more offerings and types of operations can sound good in theory. But it often created a complex beast that was hard to manage in practice in 2025. Managers found it too hard to comprehend the drivers of operational excellence or fully grasp the levers that affect marketing performance when an enterprise became diversified into multiple business models. Consolidation of traditional competitors to strengthen or hold market share often proved a safer bet.

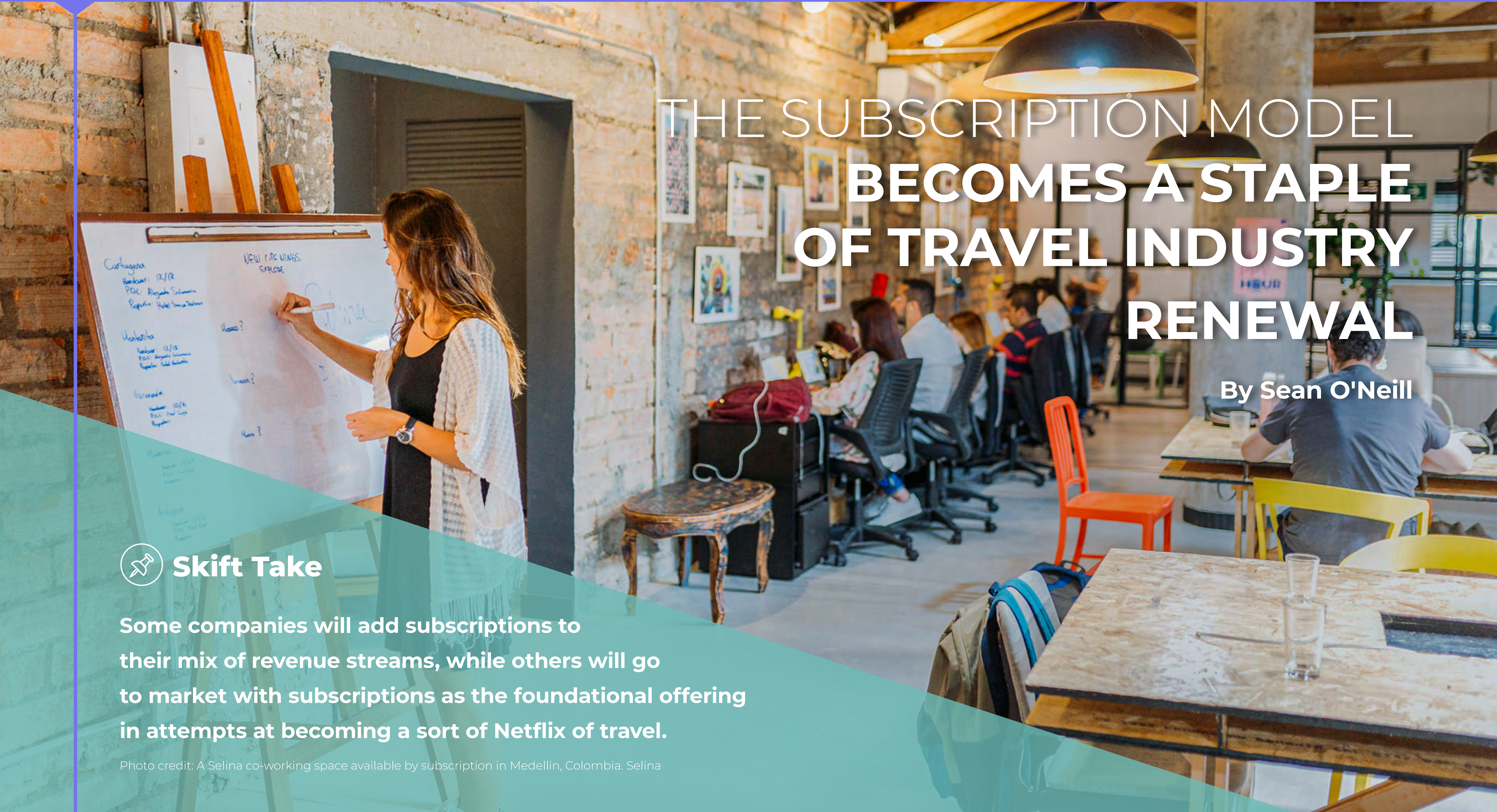
Five years after the unprecedented revenue crisis of 2020, perhaps one of the lasting lessons was it is difficult to make an elephant dance. Better to be a lynx. ◆

Convergence of Accommodation Sectors

Global Market Size ($B) of Travel Accommodations Sectors 2019



Source: Skift Research estimates. All values are gross bookings (value paid by customer) in $ billion for full-year 2019.



THE SUBSCRIPTION MODEL **BECOMES A STAPLE OF TRAVEL INDUSTRY RENEWAL**

By Sean O'Neill

Skift Take

Some companies will add subscriptions to their mix of revenue streams, while others will go to market with subscriptions as the foundational offering in attempts at becoming a sort of Netflix of travel.

Photo credit: A Selina co-working space available by subscription in Medellin, Colombia. Selina

MEGATREND: In 2025, the subscription model, with its recurring payments, is a mainstream business model option for many travel companies. The vast promise of monthly or annual payments as an alternative to one-off purchases has been gaining traction.

In the past five years, lodging brands Selina, Oasis, and CitizenM each debuted a plan that lets remote workers hopscotch from property to property for monthly fees. You can expect other brands across travel sectors to sign-on to the concept, too. Some will seek steadily paying customers with subscription solutions that provide surprises to wow customers. Businesses may stack perks on top of their new mainstay subscription offering. And the subscription model may enhance the environmental sustainability that a chunk of travelers are now demanding.

SURPRISES

Like the beer-of-the-month club that spotlights rare brews instead of merely shipping big-name booze brands, the best leisure travel subscriptions in 2025 unearth delightfully surprising experiences, and not only offer trips.

"Say you're staying at a vacation rental and the chef comes to the house and prepares a gourmet dinner for your extended family," said Amy Konary, chair of The Subscribed Institute, a think tank about the subscription economy that's run by tech firm Zuora. "That's the surprise and delight you crave as a traveler."

A case in point is Inspirato Pass, which lets travelers book serial stays at many of the hotels and vacation homes that are part of Inspirato's luxury hospitality club. The startup offers properties with desirable designs and locations. But more importantly, it also provides perks that vary by situation, such as champagne on arrival or the suites with panoramic views.

STACKING PERKS

The travel sector already had many membership services that aimed to smooth out the pain points of business travel. But membership needed more privileges.

Consider how, in retail, Amazon for years benefitted not only from its Prime program's monthly fees, but also from the extra visits to its site that the subscription loyalty plan generated. The additional visits translated into more shopping. Similarly, travel brands used subscription-based membership services in 2025 to boost overall customer interactions by adding benefits.

By 2025, many travel brands were likely enhancing their paid membership programs by stacking many more perks on top of basic offerings. Airport lounge membership programs, for example, could add benefits such as vouchers for short-term parking at airports, access to speedier airport security lanes powered by biometric identity companies such as Clear, or meeting space booked through services such as Peerspace.

SUSTAINABILITY

Many travel companies wanted to up their environmental games. But they often used vendors that were wasteful. Happily, subscription schemes can overturn old business models that relied on service contracts based on planned obsolescence to make a profit.

Exhibit A for this dynamic is Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, which switched from using cheap light fixtures that created waste because of the need to frequently replace them, to a subscription-based lighting service. The airport's vendor can now afford to install light fixtures with longer lifespans, which are better for the environment, thanks to the guarantee and cash flow of a recurring contract.

Some companies will add subscriptions to their mix of revenue streams, while others will use subscriptions as the main offering, like a Netflix for travel. An example of the latter is London-based BeRightBack, where travelers pay a monthly fee in exchange for three package holidays, where their destinations, flights, and hotels are essentially chosen for them. Bratislava, Slovakia has been among those choices.

Konary was prescient about the coronavirus postscript.

"Subscriptions can help incentivize more sustainable practices," Konary said. "That's important because once the travel sector gets out of the coronavirus crisis, it will face the climate crisis." ◆

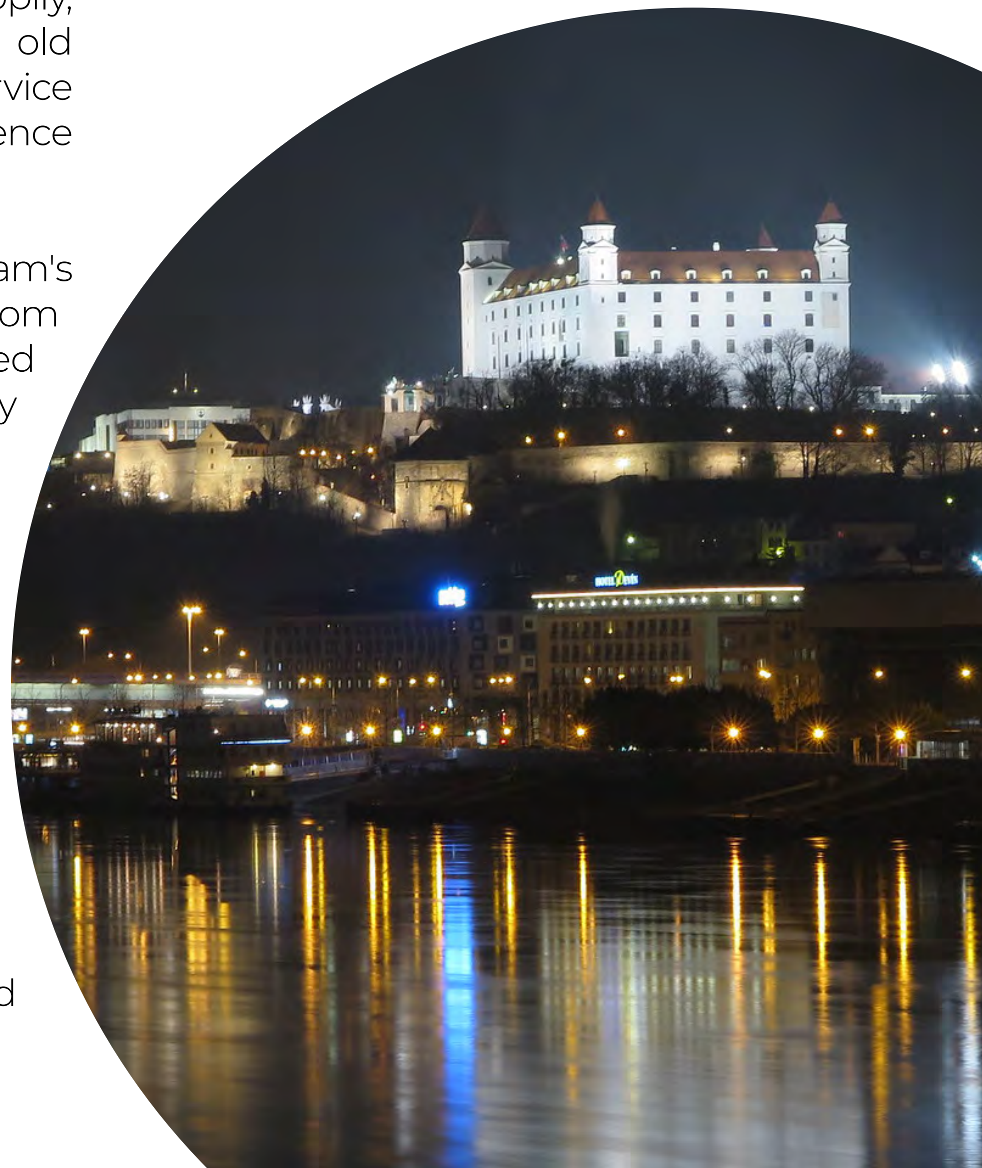


Photo credit: London-based BeRightBack offers stays in Bratislava, Slovakia as an option in its subscription plan. Bratislava as seen on February 9, 2019. Flickr/Patrick Müller, https://bit.ly/38cpKDR

BRANDS THAT EMBRACE AGILITY **AND FLEXIBILITY WILL BE EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL**

Skift Take

The Covid-19 pandemic proved that brands that are able to quickly evolve their offerings to meet the shifting needs of customers are the ones that will not only survive, but come out stronger through their ability to adapt. The importance of embracing agility is one lesson brands can take into 2021 and beyond.

PARTNER CONTENT

Audrey Hendley
President, Global Travel & Lifestyle Services

WHEN Covid-19 paused travel last year, American Express Travel acted quickly to revamp its offerings to meet the new realities of its Card Members around the world. The move showed the need for brands to innovate and adapt on the fly – something that will undoubtedly continue to be necessary when travel begins to rebound.

SkiftX spoke to Audrey Hendley, president of American Express Travel, about the company's outlook for travel's return, how the company pivoted its offerings during Covid-19, and its expectations for traveler habits going forward.

SkiftX: What's your outlook on where travel will be, looking toward 2025?

Audrey Hendley: The future of travel is strong, and we believe it will eventually return to the level it was at in 2019. There is pent up demand for travel right now. In our October 2020 Amex Trendex survey of consumers across the U.S., U.K., Mexico, Canada, Australia, Japan, and India, 84 percent of people said that traveling is one of the top activities they missed most. Consumers are also saving up points and miles for future trips. Our November 2020 Amex Trendex survey found that over one-third of U.S. consumers are planning to use their credit card rewards points for flights.

It's going to take some time for both leisure and business travel to recover. But we're investing for the long term and using this time to address the immediate needs of our customers while helping them prepare for the future.

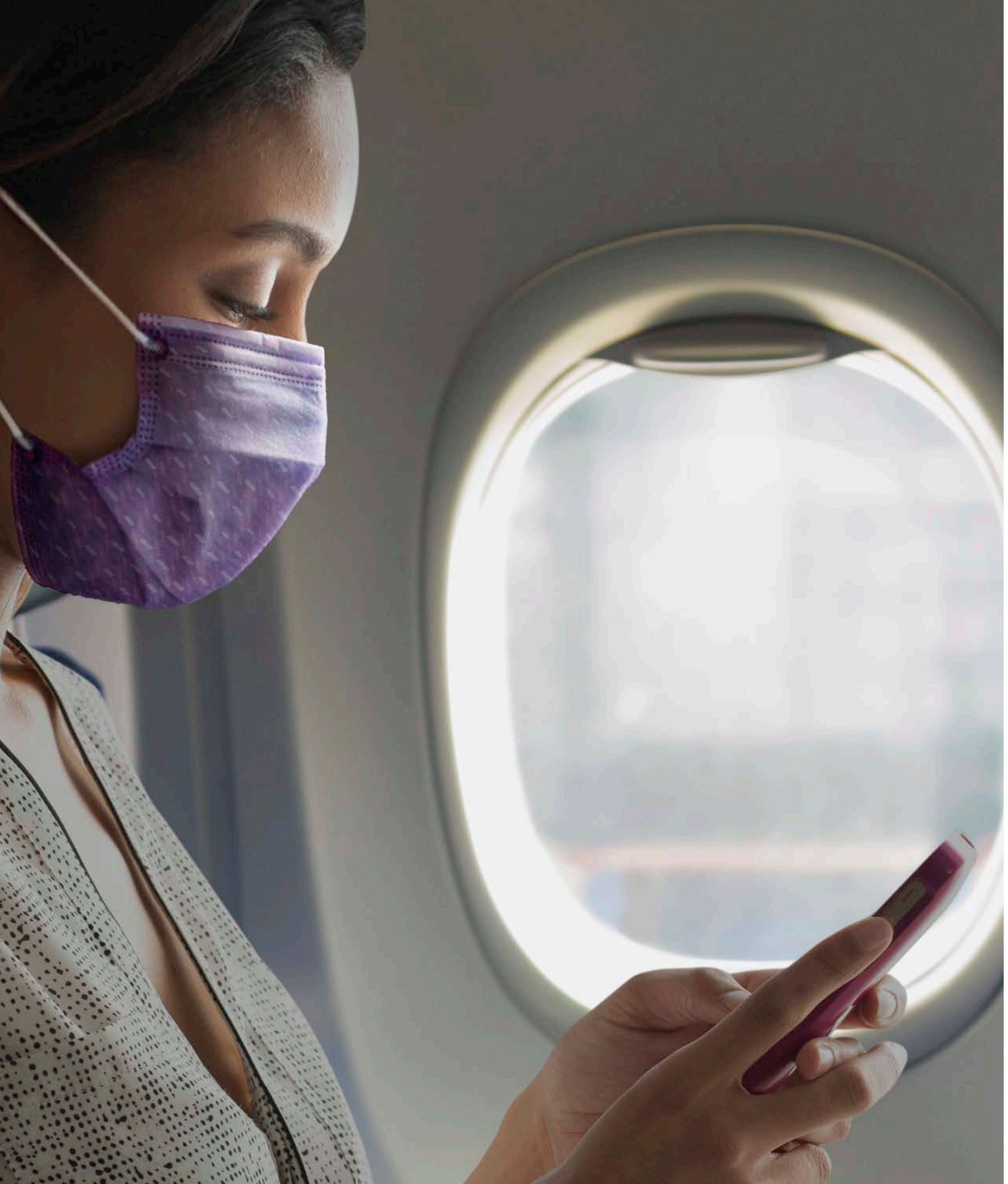
SkiftX: What needs to happen for travel to bounce back?

Hendley: Health and safety, flexibility, and customer service will continue to be important to travelers. Our travel partners have done great work to partner with experts and establish new cleanliness standards, such as Delta Clean, Hilton CleanStay, Marriott Commitment to Clean, and the Healthy Sail Panel. Similarly, before we reopened our Centurion Lounges, we introduced the "Centurion Lounge Commitment," which outlined additional safety and cleanliness procedures to ensure our lounges are safe, clean, and welcoming for Card Members as they start traveling again.

Travel advisors will also play an increasingly important role to help customers navigate an evolving travel environment. In response, we're investing in new digital tools to continue to uplift our high-tech meets high-touch servicing and provide a more personalized experience for our Card Members. Beyond that, Covid-19 testing and widespread distribution of the vaccine will bring increased comfortability with traveling.

SkiftX: How would you define American Express Travel's strategy during this time?

Hendley: When Covid-19 put travel on hold, we quickly pivoted to add value to the areas that mattered most to our Card Members, such as limited-time statement credits for online shopping and streaming and wireless services; enhanced rewards for essentials like dining and grocery spending; new Uber Eats benefits; and new discounts to small businesses to help offset tool and technology costs. And, for customers who are ready to travel, we're adding more value with offers across domestic hotels, air, and car rentals. We'll continue to channel the agility and speed we leveraged in 2020 into how we adapt to what lies ahead.



SkiftX: How do you expect the new consumer habits, behaviors, and business innovations we saw in 2020 to evolve in the long term?

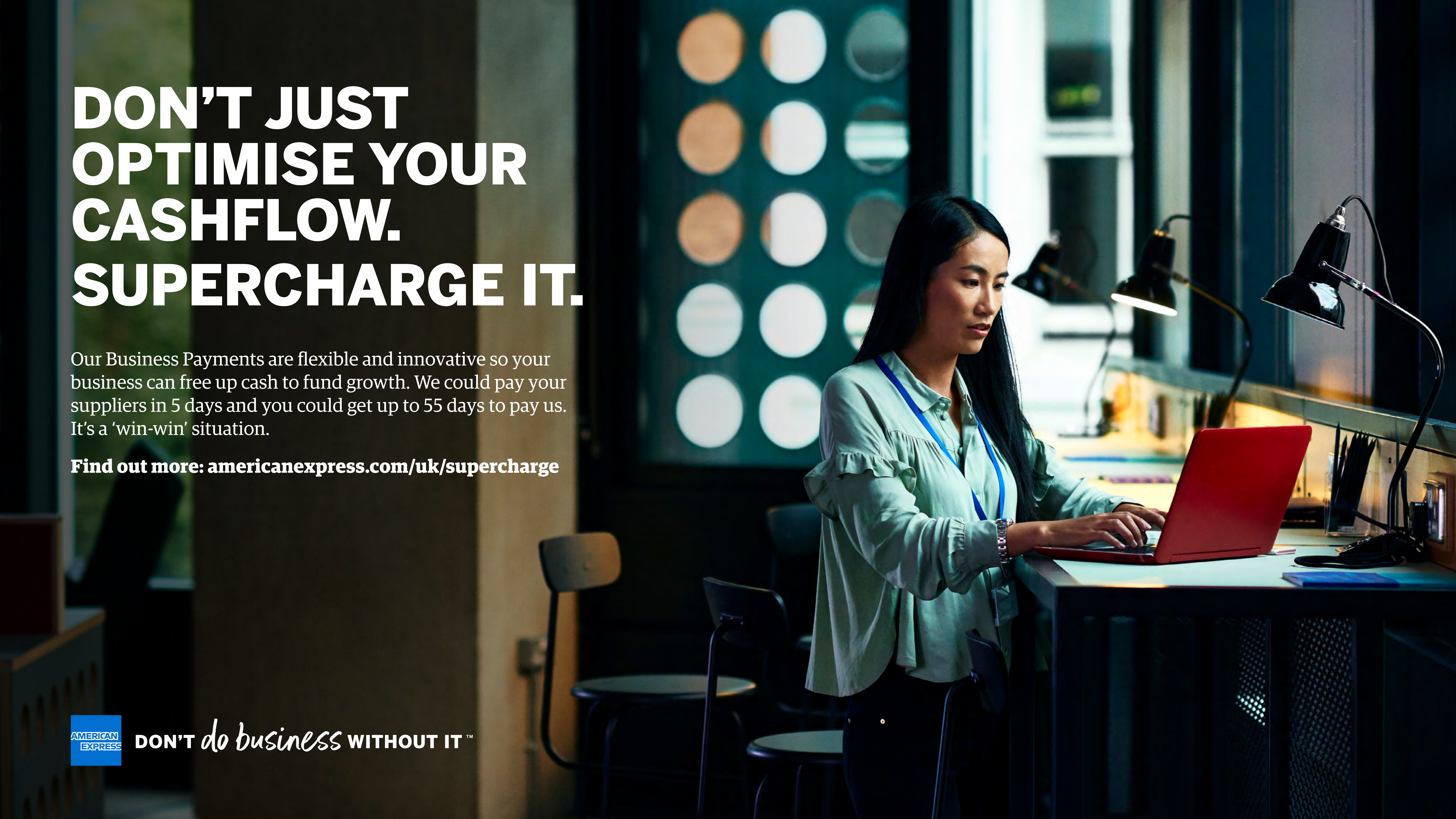
Hendley: In 2020, e-commerce boomed, contactless payments became mainstream, and new retail experiences emerged, such as curbside pickup and mobile ordering. These trends will continue into 2021 and beyond.

Contactless payments are here to stay. In the August 2020 Amex Digital Payments Trendex, 70 percent of U.S. merchants said their customers have requested contactless payments more since the start of the outbreak, and 81 percent of merchants said they intend to make contactless payments a permanent option for their customers. As consumers spend more time at home, they are also spending more on online shopping: 79 percent of consumers surveyed in December 2020 said they have spent significantly more time shopping online in the past 12 months than ever before, and 53 percent said they plan to spend more on online purchases in 2021 than in the past.

Digital and mobile commerce spending will continue to grow rapidly – we're seeing this with our own channels. In August 2020, we saw an 11 percent year-over-year increase in daily active American Express mobile app users globally. This was even higher for our millennial and Gen Z Card Members.

While 2020 was challenging for small businesses, it also showed their resilience. As the business landscape evolves, we're focused on designing offers and solutions that give small businesses around the world the continued support they need — including the ability to earn member rewards points and cash back on purchases — to navigate these uncertain times and come out stronger.

This content was created collaboratively by American Express and Skift's branded content studio SkiftX. ◆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HUMBLED AIRLINES **BACK AWAY FROM ANY BRASH NEW VENTURES**

By Ruthy Muñoz

Skift Take

The global pandemic abruptly changed the world's economy, and in a rush to revitalize their revenue streams, airlines are forgetting or neglecting people who run small businesses in the suburbs far away from any hubs. Is that wise or wishful thinking that it won't matter?

Photo credit: Salt Lake City International Airport

"FIVE YEARS OUT, MANY OF THE MAJOR AIRLINES BECAME GUN-SHY ON CAPACITY EXPANSIONS, DESPITE STARTING TO SEE INCREASED REVENUE."

MEGATREND: Five years after the worst pandemic in modern day history crippled the airline industry in 2020, social distancing and masks seem a distant memory as companies reopened their offices, and business and leisure travelers are once again flying.

While business conditions have improved in 2025, not everything has changed. Commercial airlines are still feeling the effects of the pandemic, which led to historic furloughs and route reductions, as airlines questioned their very survival.

Five years out, many of the major airlines became gun-shy on capacity expansions, despite starting to see increased revenue.

Airlines focused recovery efforts on their largest hubs, often at the expense of smaller cities. This resulted in millions of travelers in areas no longer served or under-served being forced to drive sometimes hours one way to the nearest hub for a flight.

Many are finding traveling with fewer flight connections a fragmented, unpleasant, and rather cumbersome experience.

With any market gap, disruptors move in to take advantage. For the wealthy, private jets saw an uptick in business to service travelers who lost connections or even airports. For the budget-minded, Surf Air Mobility and competitors began flying Uber-priced hybrid-electric flights in short hops to small cities that major airlines abandoned.

With the addition of fully electric flying taxis and vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, urban air mobility passenger travel to and from the smaller hubs became somewhat democratized. Underserved communities at least had more options to avoid the tediousness of congested roadways on the ground.

Out of sheer necessity, 2020 also brought about a plethora of technological advances and other innovations to help companies, communities and individuals cope with the isolation and be able to work cohesively from home. Video conferencing became the go-to technology, supplanting the need for much business travel.

The pandemic also forced airlines to focus on efficiency, and by extension, sustainability. In some countries, the government forced this issue; in others, market forces did. But the upshot is airlines began to take such new technologies such as hybrid-electric propulsion more seriously, breathing new life into ideas that were once seen as far-fetched or the domain of a far-off future. ◆

CRUISE LINES PARTNER, PRUNE AND TAKE REFUGE IN THEIR PRIVATE ISLANDS

By Lebawit Lily Girma

Skift Take

Covid's multiyear blow has pushed the world's major cruise lines into effeciency overdrive — pruning ships, reducing ports of call, and expanding offshore islands to boost onboard revenue. But mounting global environmental pushback stifles the growth of mass cruise tourism.

Photo credit: Windstar Cruises crew source vegetables at a market in Mallorca, Spain. Windstar Cruises.

Photo credit: Royal Caribbean's Harmony of the Seas docked at the line's private island, Labadee, in Haiti as seen on November 30, 2018. Flickr/Thank You, https://bit.ly/2X8Z8gy

MEGATREND: Years after overtourism became a pressing issue, followed by the cruise-shaming trend that emerged post-Covid, crowds are back on megaships in 2025, and cruise lines returned to generating billion-dollar earnings. But the nature of the cruise industry's business model had to undergo major shifts to make that happen.

The world's biggest cruise companies have been recouping their extensive losses up until this point by merging with other lines for greater efficiency. The result? Big ships offer roller coasters on their decks and additional outsized activities continue to surface to help drive up onboard revenue. Ports of call are fewer, as cruise lines reduce their dependence on them, and instead focus on the growth of their private islands, particularly in the Caribbean.

Why offer shore excursions when one can sail to one's own private beaches while keeping 100 percent of the revenue in cruise coffers? Besides, the lines still lure cruisers with the promise of safety bubbles on these private islands, and many prefer staying put at sea rather than venturing into multiple ports.

Destinations that were once heavily dependent on big ships are dealing with fewer port calls, and focusing on niche offerings from smaller lines. These niche cruise players emerged from the cheap post-Covid divestiture and sale of older ships that debuted in the 2000s. "It's a repeat of what we saw in the 1990s, when there were some upstarts bringing on vintage ships and offering niche kinds of products," said Ross Klein, a veteran cruise industry expert and professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The travel bucket list isn't going anywhere — port cities that faced overtourism pre-Covid continue to face the conundrum of whether to reject tourist crowds in 2025 after suffering a debilitating multiyear downturn. They're using innovative ways to control the crowds, such as higher day-tripper fees like the ones Venice approved back in 2020.

THE GREEN YEARS

What's for sure? 2025 is greener. "More people are willing to be sensitive to environmental issues and not rebel at the notion that perhaps there's something wrong with cruising and it has a negative effect on the environment," said Jim Walker, a Florida-based maritime attorney who runs Cruise Law News. One of the biggest environmental fights that cruise lines continue to face in 2025 is their use of scrubbers, long found to cause cancer-linked discharge in ports, pollute waters, and otherwise negatively impact marine life.

Port citizens in North America and Europe, in particular, with localized movements and solid political partnerships, are making more headway in the passing of environmental legislation banning scrubbers. But the influence of broad-based coalitions such as the Global Cruise Activist Network, born during Covid, remains uncertain.

"If past history is an insight, the activism will continue losing some of its potency," Klein said, explaining the power of the cruise industry to push back against these efforts. After all, Key West, Florida's big win against mass cruising back in 2020 resulted from decades of militant activism that began in 2003.

Meanwhile, 2025's headlines report that the cruise industry's major players are making financial gains. Those funds will come in handy for the heap of looming environmental bans and regulations, potentially signaling the beginning of the end of megaships. ◆

THE RISE OF GLOBAL MOBILE WALLETS UPENDS TRAVEL PAYMENTS

By Matthew Parsons

Skift Take

The pandemic kickstarted a second payment revolution, and by 2025 travelers were in even more control of how they booked their trips and spent their money during their wanderings.

Photo credit: A consumer using Alipay.

MEGATREND: Superapps, social media and cryptocurrencies collided in 2025, with established travel technology players and a new wave of payment service integrators nearly stripping out the last remnants of friction for many consumers.

The superapp concept spread well beyond Asia. Large swathes of the population were stuck in their homes during the 2020 pandemic, and that necessity of shopping online, and ordering takeaways, caused mobile payments to soar.

Inspired by WeChat Pay, more social media firms designed their own currencies. Facebook's Diem cryptocurrency spurred a new market of Instagram influencers selling directly on the platform, boosted by livestream marketing.

Smartphone makers and operating systems grew in the payments field, too. Apple Pay accounted for 5 percent of all card transactions worldwide in 2020, and doubled that over the next five years. Also working in the smartphone's favor was biometric recognition, with features like retina scanning giving mobile wallets heightened levels of authentication.

Another pandemic byproduct was the growth in contactless payments. A Skift and Oracle Hospitality survey back during the pandemic found that contactless payments, followed by digital room keys, and then digital messaging services were the top factors making travelers feel more comfortable when staying in a hotel, as they allowed for easier social distancing.

For the business travel sector, the combination of virtual payment cards and mobile wallets gained further ground in 2025.

> **"FIFTEEN TO 20 PERCENT OF CUSTOMERS WILL LEAVE THE BOOKING EXPERIENCE IF THEIR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD IS NOT ACCEPTED."**
>
> **-KRISTIAN GJERDING,** CEO, CELLPOINT DIGITAL

As a result, these changes pressed the travel industry into accepting a range of emerging mobile wallet payments. And brands that tapped into this prospered.

Global distribution systems stepped up. As airlines took more control of their own direct retailing, the distribution systems built upon their technology and experience to rapidly grow their presence in financial services.

Airlines and hotels also came up against the demand for mobile payments. "Fifteen to 20 percent of customers will leave the booking experience if their preferred payment method is not accepted, whether it's credit cards or alternative forms of payment," said Kristian Gjerding, CEO of CellPoint Digital, back when helping to integrate Apple Pay into Southwest Airlines' services.

It was only going to go one way, as foretold five years earlier. The year 2020 "is the year that alternative payments will surpass cash and cards for travel industry transactions," said Bart Tompkins, managing director of payments at Amadeus.

By 2025, travel companies had upped their game to accept a level of alternative payments, via mobile wallets, they'd never imagined in 2020. ◆

HOW ABU DHABI **IS ADAPTING ITS EVENTS STRATEGY**

Abu Dhabi CONVENTION & EXHIBITION BUREAU

Skift Take

In order to approach the same level of quality and engagement as in-person experiences, virtual and hybrid events need to be designed with safety and innovation as guiding principles. Event planners need an agile, forward-thinking destination partner to deliver on ever-changing attendee expectations.

PARTNER CONTENT

Abu Dhabi CONVENTION & EXHIBITION BUREAU

Ali Hassan Al Shaiba
Executive Director of Tourism & Marketing

DESTINATION organizations around the world are grappling with the reality that the events business has changed. While some are pushing back and wishing for pre-2020 normalcy to return, the Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) Abu Dhabi is leaning in, rethinking its meetings offering and experimenting with new tools and solutions to empower event planners to level up their knowledge and skillsets.

On December 24, 2020, Abu Dhabi reopened to international travelers and continues to implement rigorous health and safety measures, including a quarantine period of 10 days.

SkiftX spoke with Ali Hassan Al Shaiba, executive director of tourism and marketing, to learn how DCT Abu Dhabi is strategically adapting during these times and how it is working to create the conditions needed for success in the next five years.

SkiftX: What is Abu Dhabi doing to create a foundation for safety and wellbeing that can restore traveler confidence?

Ali Hassan Al Shaiba: Abu Dhabi has received global recognition for its highly successful efforts in containing the spread of Covid-19, and the emirate continues to achieve positive outcomes as a result of the combined initiatives and regulations introduced to minimize the spread of the virus amongst residents and visitors.

The Go Safe Certification program was developed to standardize the level of health and safety across all tourism and hospitality establishments in Abu Dhabi through a set of rigorous measures, such as temperature checkpoints, regular sanitization of public spaces, and social distancing courses. This has helped uplift the confidence of consumers and enliven the tourism sector. Within Abu Dhabi, 100 percent of hotels and most major tourist attractions and shopping centers are now certified.

Additionally, to ease payments for travelers from China, a key source market for Abu Dhabi, card company UnionPay International recently partnered with Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank to implement contactless payment transactions on the bank's 15,000 near-field communications terminals in the UAE.

SkiftX: What role does technology play in helping Abu Dhabi boost audience engagement for virtual and hybrid events?

Al Shaiba: Naturally, the pandemic has transformed the way events are delivered. Our partners and stakeholders are increasingly using digital and contactless solutions to create innovative virtual and hybrid events that connect both on-ground and online attendees.

For example, this year's Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference was held completely virtually. The organizer, dmg events, deployed AI-based matchmaking services to allow delegates to network with their peers before and during the event. Delegates were also able to access the live and video-on-demand stream on their device of choice. With Q&As and industry polls during the live sessions, delegates and attendees were able to interact seamlessly.

SkiftX: What steps can event planners take to succeed in the virtual and hybrid event space?

Al Shaiba: The first step toward successfully delivering a virtual event is ensuring we have the right knowledge and insights to understand how the event can be brought to life with the same – or a higher level of – quality as an on-site event experience.

The next step is making sure we have the proper tools and skillsets to make the event

as engaging as possible. And then, most importantly, we need the right support so we can organize and deliver these events. We're seeing a bigger appetite for innovative solutions and advanced technology that engages attendees in various ways, whether they're attending in-person or virtually.

SkiftX: How is Abu Dhabi rethinking incentives, training, and segment marketing for 2021 and beyond?

Al Shaiba: Our strategies for successfully delivering events revolve around having multifaceted venues and skilled manpower. In line with the Abu Dhabi government's digital transformation vision, DCT Abu Dhabi is fulfilling its role as regulator and industry champion by reviewing incentive schemes to assist venues, including hotels, to upgrade their technological infrastructures and service offerings to remain competitive and support different event formats.

We encourage those working within the meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) sector to retrain their teams to manage new event requirements. One of DCT Abu Dhabi's functions is to support upskilling for MICE sector teams by reviewing incentives and co-funding the necessary training. In addition, with venues being underutilized, DCT Abu Dhabi works with venue owners to attract additional segments, such as sporting events and destination weddings, to fill the gaps.

As this year has so vividly shown, predicting future trends or shifts can be difficult, so adaptability and agility are key to success in the events space.

This content was created collaboratively by DCT Abu Dhabi and Skift's branded content studio SkiftX. ◆

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THE ROBOTS YOU SEE **AND THE ONES YOU DON'T ACCELERATE AUTOMATION**

By Sean O'Neill

Skift Take

The pace and extent of computerization varied in 2025. In countries that permitted it, some corporations automated their employees out of jobs without much hesitation. Workers needed to hone new skills as artificial intelligence threatened their livelihoods while others firms invested in retraining their staffs.

Photo credit: Excelland's third-generation robot for use in hotels. Excelland

MEGATREND: The year 2025 hasn't seen widespread adoption of Jetsons-like, humanoid robots. Yet many travel sector workers are trembling as they see various technologies pick up the pace at which they automate some work tasks.

The 2020 pandemic prompted many companies to computerize many processes to cope with reduced staffing. The crisis accelerated the digitization of customer interactions by about three years, according to McKinsey & Co.

Yet during the recovery, many companies often saw little need to add back human labor. Chinese hotel groups Huazhu and BTG Homeinns went so far as to invest in 2020 in ExcelLand, a Shenzhen-based manufacturer that makes the robots they use to deliver food by room service.

Formulaic or highly structured physical activities are seeing the most upheaval. After authorities approved the use of autonomous vehicles in controlled settings, self-driving mobility scooters in airport terminals reduced the need for workers to push physically impaired passengers in wheelchairs. Meanwhile, drones and robots slashed the security forces needed to patrol airport perimeters. As seen in the chart below, coming out of the pandemic hoteliers were implementing or considering installing a variety of contactless tech services.

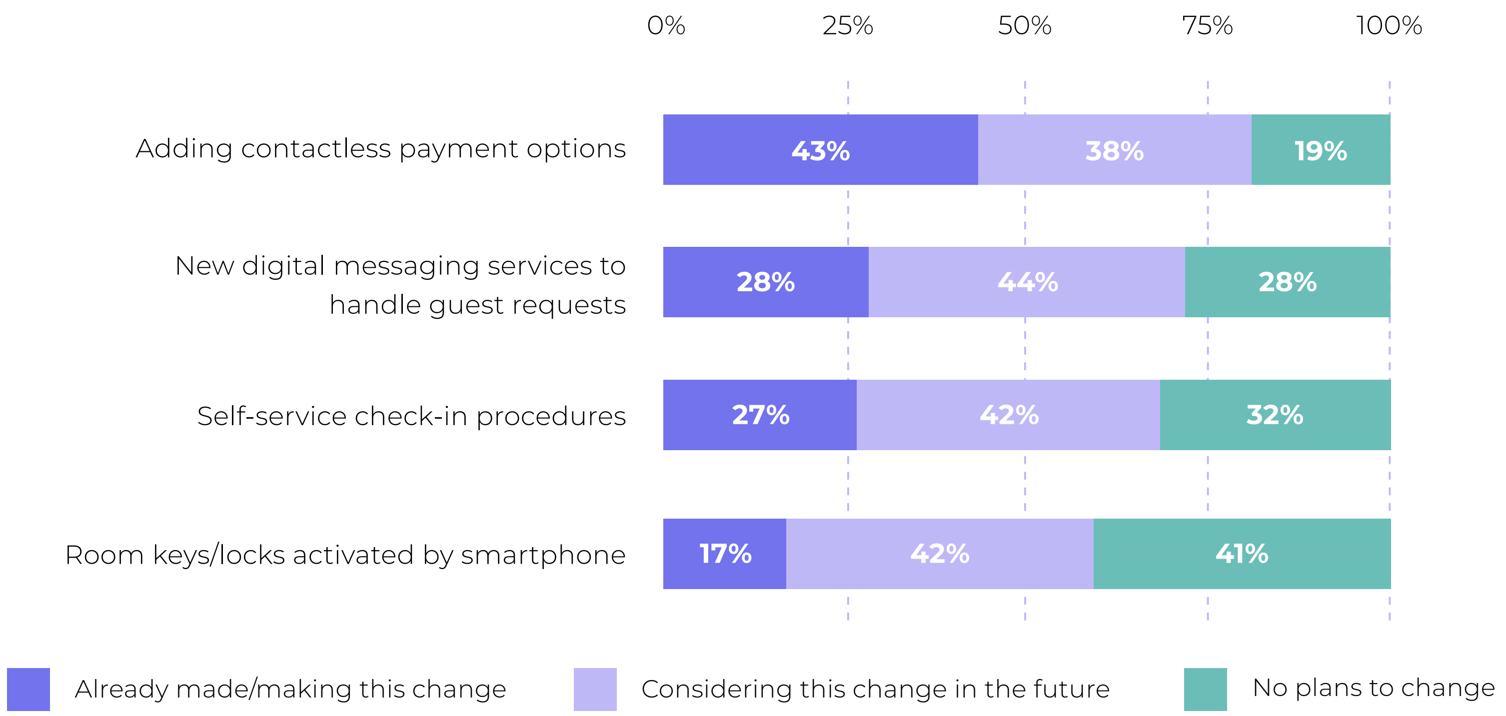
The "robots" you don't see, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, can be just as disruptive as the ones you do. Jobs involved in collecting and processing data likewise are taking a hit from automation. Many hotel groups that slashed their revenue management teams in 2020 opted to use software for setting rates and managing room inventory as the crisis ebbed. While not perfect, the software came out ahead more often than not when performing certain revenue management functions.

Some travel companies reacted to the rising level of automation by investing in better training and education for their workforces. The pandemic accelerated a trend of more education happening online. Some companies supported efforts by organizations such as Typsy and Hosco to help enhance the capabilities of workers using a mix of gamified and mobile-first video tutoring, and virtual and augmented reality to create simulations for practicing skills.

The multi-decade trend in automation has at least one upside for workers.

"Automation drives productivity increases that raise total income in the economy," noted an MIT report in 2020. Some of that additional money will be spent on more frequent and distant travel, benefiting the sector, and the employees who serve it. ◆

Adoption of Contactless Technologies in Hotels



Source: 2020 Hospitality Recovery Survey, Skift and Oracle Hospitality. N=731

Photo credit: Animatronic images of robot dinosaurs at the front desk of Henn-na Hotel in Urayasu, Japan. H.I.S. Co.

MORE MAINSTREAM SHORT-TERM RENTALS COPE WITH NEW HEADWINDS

By Dennis Schaal

Skift Take

In a push-and-pull scenario, short-term rentals are even more of a mainstream option in 2025 despite cities around the world increasingly regulating their growth.

Photo credit: A rendering of a Four Seasons Private Residences property in Bangkok, Thailand at Chao Phraya River, Four Seasons Private Residences

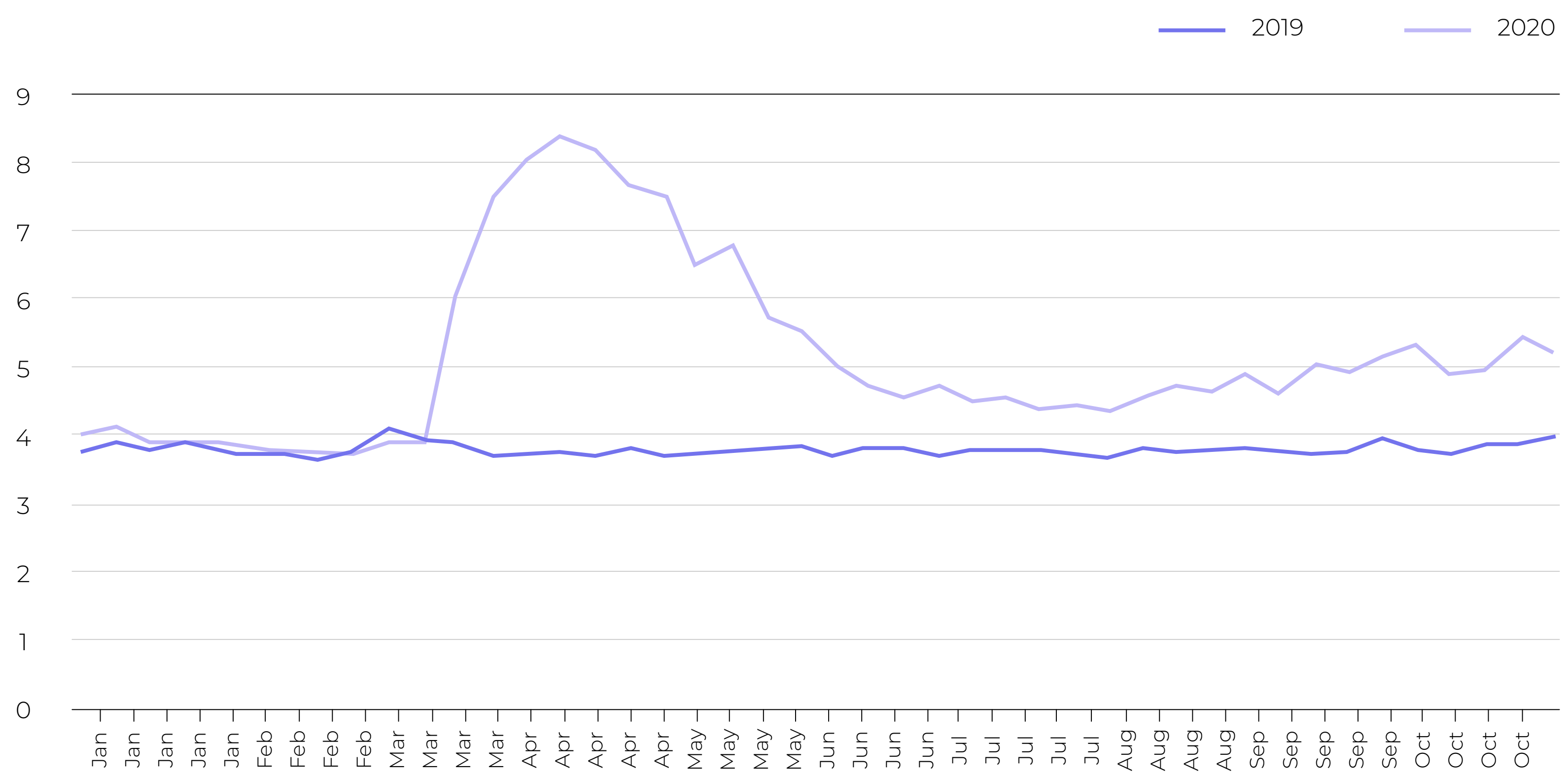
MEGATREND: The term "alternative accommodations," already a near-anachronism in 2020, loses all meaning five years later. Most major booking sites have long ceased listing separate categories for hotels, homes or apartments, and favored "stays" as a catch-all bucket because accommodation types were melding together.

After all, in 2025 Airbnb is offering short-term apartment and vacation rentals, has revived its boutique hotel business, and is booking rooms for a scattered number of property owners at larger chains. Airbnb, Expedia and Alibaba were also among the booking sites marketing hotels and other stays under their own brands.

Four Seasons had portions of several of its resorts dedicated to private residences. Hilton follows Marriott's lead and dabbles in vacation rentals while Hyatt revives its on-again and off-again participation in the sector.

The blockbuster Airbnb initial public offering of late 2020 took the company and short-term rentals even more mainstream in the following years. As seen in the chart, a surge began in March and April 2020 when the average length of stay in vacation rentals doubled to more than eight days around the world. But that had lost its urgency in

Global Average Length of Stay in Vacation Rentals



Source: Transparent. Data as of December 10, 2020

2025, when traditional hotels, with more vigorous health and safety standards in place, reasserted themselves, although short-term rentals gained much ground in the interim.

There are competing dynamics at work that influence the short-term rental sector's trajectory.

Professional vacation rental managers and quasi-hotel companies become more influential, and their rentals tend to dominate the listings' space and revenue streams of platforms like Airbnb, and those of emerging competitors. This was good for business travelers and other guests in terms of getting a standardized experience, albeit one with less local spice or contact with individual hosts.

If professionalization led to iPads at properties pointing guests to a nearby Chili's Bar & Grill instead of host Juanita herding her guests to the Ear Inn in a landmark building in lower Manhattan for drinks and a poetry reading, the guests arrive anyway if the rental price was right.

So-called mom-and-pop hosts, namely people who owned just a property or two, feel the squeeze and try to fend for themselves. Some turn their properties into yearly rentals or office space when market conditions allow. Several startups emerge that tried to bring the "local" back into short-term rentals, offering only listings from individual hosts. It is a niche strategy, though, with well-funded corporate hosts having the upper hand.

While the majority of travelers in many parts of the world in 2025 regularly consider a broad array of accommodations' choices, including hotels and short-term rentals, cities that bounced back post-pandemic increasingly put limitations on the growth of short-term rentals. Many cities, seeking to reclaim their affordable housing stock or to curb house parties and other forms of disruption, either ban short-term rentals outright, or severely crimp the number of lawful registrations.

Increased regulation of short-term rentals led Airbnb to more closely resemble Booking.com, Trip.com Group, and Expedia as Airbnb opt to build its hotel portfolio, get into the flights business, and go more mainstream with its previously curated and money-losing tours and activities' business.

After all, the growth has to come from somewhere. ◆

PRODUCT MEDIOCRITY **SEEDS A NEW ERA OF TRAVEL INDUSTRY DISRUPTION**

By Cameron Sperance

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

If airlines and hotels end up cutting back too much, they would risk providing plenty of opportunities for new companies to emerge, fill gaps, and gobble up market share. But a faster recovery in corporate travel would make this issue moot for a lot of companies.

Photo credit: Wikimedia/Robert Couse-Baker. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Traveling_in_airport_terminal.jpg

MEGATREND: While some hotels and airlines hobbled through to the other side of the crisis, leaving many corporate casualties behind them, in 2025 they look very different than they did before. In fact, there is a wave of mediocrity that characterizes product and service levels throughout portions of the travel experience.

The hotel lobby experience is less personal than it was pre-pandemic due to the industry migrating toward contactless features, including mobile check-in and check-out functions from smartphone apps. Hotels sliced labor costs, especially for housekeeping. Daily cleaning and various room services are no longer standard across all segments of the market, especially more affordable brands geared toward leisure travelers and drive-to markets.

Legacy airlines gutted point-to-point routes over the last five years in favor of sending most flights through their hubs in 2025. Airlines had parked nearly entire sub-fleets of aircraft like the Airbus A380 or Boeing 777, even those upgraded with new business class products, due to catastrophic declines five years earlier in corporate travel that have yet to fully recover.

Major airlines dialed back in-flight services and capital expenditure projects at airports as a way to shore up cash during the worst of the pandemic. The less-than-robust return of business travelers who expected these array of services meant many of these offerings never came back to their former quality levels after the pandemic.

OPPORTUNITY BECKONS

But the cost-cutting has also presented an opportunity for niche carriers and hotel brands to come in and disrupt a travel industry marked by increasing mediocrity from its biggest companies.

Airlines like David Neeleman's Breeze, similar to JetBlue before it, offer point-to-point travel and improved onboard services to meet demand from flyers turned off by service and product declines. Companies like Dallas-based airline JSX also made strides, offering active business travelers the high-end service they expect without the headache of traipsing through airports crammed with leisure travelers simply looking for the most affordable fares.

Many hotels have retreated to offering daily housekeeping and high-touch features at only upper-tier properties. Some of the soft brands tied to big chains do offer some levels of pre-pandemic services. But there is disruption afoot from a growing roster of boutique brands that global chains like Marriott or Accor have somehow yet to acquire. They are filling gaps with concierge-like services, and counteracting the contactless push among many brands with traditional hospitality services.

COUNTERPOINT: Although the pandemic was a brutal time and cratered business travel demand, the travel industry has fully returned in 2025 to pre-pandemic performance levels.

Business travel may look slightly different with fewer quick trips, but large companies conduct quarterly meetings, making convention hotels as popular as ever. These replaced daily commutes to the office, which many companies did away with entirely.

Loyalty programs are packed with new members as more employees are on the road or at least checking into a hotel for a few nights per quarter to get up to speed on happenings at work at periodic company-wide meetings. This has led to a blitz of major brands trying to differentiate their products to attract more corporate customers.

Airlines similarly ramped up their services in the years right after the pandemic to appeal to the limited number business customers there were flying in the early stages of the recovery. With more business travelers back on the road and in the air in 2025, airlines are once again trying to outdo one another with private suites in business class and higher tier qualifications in their loyalty programs.

Yes, major airline CEOs in the United States have kept their word on not reintroducing change fees, but airlines are also playing it conservative in some ways: The days of Etihad-style apartments in the sky are an anachronism.

There are always opportunities for disruption, but those windows are often limited to niche players in select geographies or market segments. Few are truly going head-to-head with legacy airlines or the biggest hotel companies. ◆

RENEWED STRENGTH
MATTERS IN 2025

By Dennis Schaal

Illustration by Nadia Sgaramella

Skift Take

Liquidity was the lifeline for the strongest travel companies coming out of the pandemic, and the best managements could financially engineer their ways through the crisis. Weaker companies with fewer resources sold assets at steep discounts, and dropped out.

MEGATREND: There are winners and losers coming out of any crisis, and by 2025, many of these are evident. But it isn't always a yes or no, clearly defined thing because there are nuances, too.

More generally, In the online travel competitive sweepstakes in 2025, the clear winners are Booking Holdings, Airbnb, and China's Trip.com Group, formerly known as Ctrip. In these instances, the strong clearly get stronger.

These companies emerge from the pandemic with ample cash, and leap-frog competitors, carried by a wave of consolidation, and the failures of and liquidation sales at smaller online travel agencies like BookIt.com and short-term rental firms like Stay Alfred. Both of these booking sites — like countless others in every travel sector — fell by the wayside in the early stages of the pandemic like forgotten footnotes in a college term paper.

Many of the big online travel players are still competing vociferously among themselves in 2025 while also partnering with one another in typical frenemy fashion, although these relationships ebb and flow. For example, given Trip.com Group's joint venture in China with Tripadvisor and other factors, the long-time ties between Trip.com Group and Booking Holdings loosen.

DRAFTING ON A DIGITAL-FIRST MINDSET

Asia had already been gaining strength in travel over the last decade. Trip.com Group, which controls Chinese short-term rental business Tujia and India's MakeMyTrip in everything but the official paperwork, and fellow Chinese hotel-booking and delivery company Meituan gain market share by 2025. Given that the vast majority of travel-selling was still offline in China in 2020, these two companies deftly position themselves to take advantage of the pandemic-induced digital buying spree. In China, this turned into increased online adoption, meaning people booking more travel from smartphone screens rather than calling or stopping by a travel agency.

The backyard travel Megatrend, which found travelers taking more frequent trips and feeling more comfortable about vacationing domestically and regionally, strengthens Asia's, and particularly China's, global market share in travel.

On the losing end of things, despite their status as industry leaders, Airbnb and Booking.com, as well as Google, Facebook and Alibaba, become subject to more stringent regulations and restrictions on their growth in many parts of the world.

Despite regulatory focus on Google, which had the largest travel business among big tech coming out of the Covid crisis, you couldn't say that the travel industry has clearly emerged triumphant over Google in 2025. Yes, there is some relief from Google blatantly favoring its own travel products over those of competitors, and regulators pressured Google into giving travel search results more free daylight on its pages. But antitrust regulators are more focused on reversing big tech's acquisitions and alleged political bias than on democratizing Google's travel business specifically. And Google's army of lawyers and lobbyists found ways to maneuver, and dilute the potentially harshest consequences.

Hotels chains had leaned into online travel agency distribution in 2021 because many consumers were still feeling city-averse, and favored the relative solitude of short-term rentals in bucolic locales. But these impulses fade as vaccine needles penetrated billions of arms, and the Marriotts, HIltons, Accors, and InterContinentals recaptured direct bookings, and do much to regain profitability in 2025.

Alternative accommodations are even more mainstream as a vacation option in the five years since Covid-19 arrived. But the short-term rental versus hotel market imbalance in the early days of pandemic recovery revert toward the hotels' favor.

And let's not forget issues of diversity and inclusion. The Black Lives Matter protests that accelerated globally in 2020 led over the next few years to a healthy uptick of people of color and women ascending in travel's corporate board rooms. Even airlines, long a bastion of old boys clubs, see a smattering of women CEOs ordering new aircraft, and making capacity and route network decisions. But the challenge for diversity and inclusion activists within travel businesses — and the movement at large — is to keep up the pressure year after year, and to acknowledge that the mere appointment of diverse C-Suite executives and mid-level leadership is only an initial win.

COUNTERPOINT: Business travel roared back much quicker than most people had imagined starting in late 2021, as vaccines breathed confidence into most parts of the world, and cities recovered. Commercial real estate brokers in urban centers around the world signed deals to reopen huge office campuses and remote and scattered workers returned to their desks and cubicles.

This meant that airlines, hotels that catered to business travelers, and travel management companies pick up where they left off in the heady days of 2019, and elite flyers resume their mileage-runs anew just because they could.

Covid-19 had been stopped in its tracks, and although there was always concern, so far there has been no such thing as Covid-25. ◆

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