

# The wheel of change

Trend expert **Oliver Leisse** looks ahead to the key changes he believes will affect the hospitality industry

The most important factor when considering the future is understanding the development of the human being. The techniques for this have evolved, and the real revolution of our time is the readiness of people to try new things and identify new opportunities.

Everything around us is changing, even faster and even more radically than before. Each of us has already experienced changes in our daily lives: from ebooks to online banking, from digital pictures to the online booking of flights or holidays. Online trade is booming, and self-driving, intelligent cars are no longer just a vision – they're already being road tested.

The healthcare industry is changing. Incredible amounts of data are being collected that can be used to make precise predictions on future diseases. With increased automation, many will lose their jobs and have to adapt.

The hospitality industry is not spared from this trend. Here, I share some trend insights that can be clearly identified in different parts of the world.

## About the author

Oliver Leisse is a renowned trend researcher and founder of the SEE MORE Institute in Germany. He advises companies such as TUI, Deutsche Bank, REWE, Henkel, Microsoft and more.

## Basic observations

As the digital world undergoes a rapid expansion, complexity increases, and so do people's stress levels. Stress is rising constantly, according to a recent study by travel company TUI, which is looking at the development of new products and services to help tourists relax. Stress can lead to burnout, but also makes people hypersensitive about what is to come. Therefore, stress reduction for customers is high on the list of trends. If the customer has an exceptional experience at a restaurant or hotel, he or she can forget about everyday life and disagreeable things and destress. Special design, a relaxing atmosphere, targeted offers to relax and reboot, or spa and wellness can all contribute to such an experience.

## 'Technicisation'

Technology is widespread in our working environment and daily life. There will certainly be a clientele who want to escape from digital life for a short time. However, this must not be misunderstood as a desire to remove technology completely – it simply moves to the background. I recommend keeping the Wi-Fi switched on. Switching it off will only be accepted as part of a therapeutic digital detox concept. It can be helpful to hide technical equipment. Some of you will remember that in the 1950s TVs were hidden in a small cabinet with the door closed when hosts were entertaining people. That's a concept worth thinking about.

## Relax and reboot

City life can get on our nerves with traffic chaos, honking cars and the buzzing and beeping of smartphones. Noise cancellation is all the rage and headphones are popular. Many individuals seek escape during a quiet lunch break. Not only is the food being served important, but so is the opportunity to calm down and recharge the batteries. Enjoying a delightful lunch and attentive service is better than answering emails. As mentioned previously, I do not mind switching off the Wi-Fi in the restaurant itself, but it should be kept at the bar or in the restrooms.

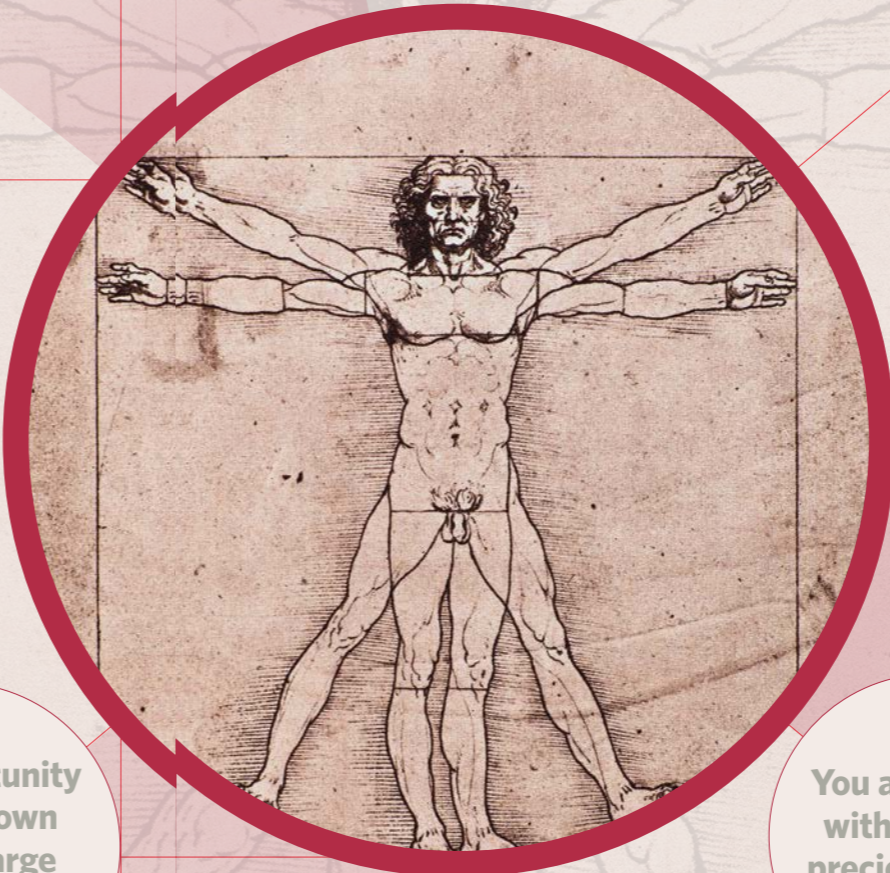
## Soft shapes and natural fabrics

My colleagues and I have observed a renaissance of cosiness and wellbeing, a bit of what we call *gemütlichkeit* in Germany: a roaring fire, gentle, soothing colours and lots of soft cushions for warmth and comfort. The bed is more and more important in a hotel room. No more cool design – instead there's a trend towards the use of natural materials and simple furniture with gentle curves.

Your "stories" will be retold, retweeted and shared

## Time to eat, time to choose

Eating habits are changing. Customers are getting more critical regarding the food being served. They use wearable tech and other gadgets and know the importance of exercise and good quality food. Food must not create problems: lactose- and gluten-free, sugar- or fat-free, GMO-free and food without artificial additives are in demand. Fish or meat should come from happy animals that were raised and treated well. It is like telling your children a bedtime story: you must tell your customer what he can expect, and why. This is the strongest loyalty tool of all. Your "stories" will not only remain in customers' memories, but will be retold, retweeted and shared.



The opportunity to calm down and recharge the batteries is important

You are dealing with the most precious object: your guest

## Luxury of time

For me, the most powerful trend of our generation is time. Therefore, there is expectation of how to spend it – wasted time is not acceptable. This is a serious point. The concierge must answer the phone on the second ring and room service must be ready on the spot to take the order. Queues for check out are unacceptable – this can be handled digitally now with a swipe of the screen. The lunch break or the hotel stay should be perfect – quality time spent in a positive and pleasant atmosphere is the aim.

## A brief conclusion

Today, existing markets, expectations and customer attitudes are rapidly changing. The fusion of analogue and digital worlds is progressing. As hospitality industry professionals, you are dealing with the most precious object: your guest. If you recognise their value, their ambitions and their desires, you are in with a good chance of mastering the world of change. Good luck.