

**TRAVEL'S BRIGHT
FUTURE:**
A REPORT FROM THE
TRAVEL + LEISURE &
ILTM RISING STARS
ROUNDTABLE

ILTM + TRAVEL+
LEISURE

**RISING
STARS**

RISING STARS

THE BLUEPRINT FOR A NEW GENERATION

Each year, a select group of emerging travel advisors is chosen to attend the **Rising Stars** Lunch at [ILTM](#) in Cannes, the largest luxury travel forum in the world.

These agents — hand-picked for their impressive clientele of affluent young travelers — are then flown to the Côte d'Azur to share their insights at an exclusive lunch with Nathan Lump, Editor in Chief of Travel + Leisure and Editorial Director of Meredith Corporation's Luxury and Lifestyle Group, and Jay Meyer, Senior Vice President of Travel Category Sales and Luxury Brand Development at Meredith Corporation.

Also in attendance: 50 senior executives from key travel agencies, cruise lines, independent luxury properties and global luxury hotel groups.

Over the course of a two-hour discussion, these rising star agents discuss the state of the market today, thereby helping hotels and cruise lines identify what some of the biggest challenges may be for their brands in the next five years. The agents also help these companies

gain a fresh perspective on staying relevant to this new breed of travelers. **64** **Rising Stars** have been through the program in the past five years. The following whitepaper is your roadmap to 2017's dynamic conversation.



THE GUEST LIST



Rising Star: Colleen Aaberg



Rising Star: David Scaff



Rising Star: Victoria Strubbe



Rising Star: Molly Meldon



Rising Star: Jayme Hood



Rising Star: Courtney Sheeley



Rising Star: Rhona Wendler



Rising Star: Kristiana Capati Choquet



Rising Star: Megan Peri



Rising Star: Stacy Hart



Rising Star: Jessyca Georgison



Rising Star: Ane Lowe



Rising Star: Jacqueline Morgan



Rising Star: Rob Karp



AUTHENTIC AND TRANSFORMATIVE: THE TRAVEL BUZZ WORDS

The desire for authenticity was a major shift in the zeitgeist that began decades ago, driven by a major boom in global travel that made our consumers, particularly at the high end of the market, better traveled than ever before. As they became worldlier, they became more comfortable with difference, and more comfortable with stepping out of their comfort zone. **What they wanted was the opportunity to get closer to what was real.** We live in a time when all sorts of issues—from the fragility of our planet to the crudeness of public discourse to the pressures created by intensive workplace cultures and always-on technology—have us thinking a great deal about the importance of wellbeing and deeper meaning in our lives.

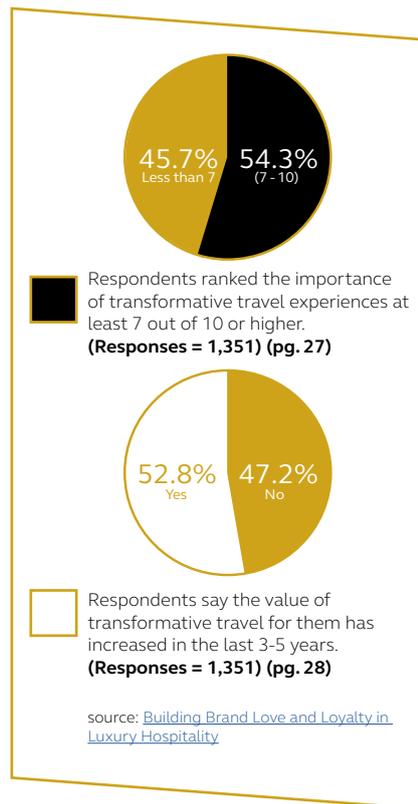
We asked the Rising Stars:

Is “transformative” travel the new “authentic” travel? And is it here to stay, or is it just hype?

“That word seems to be more important to us than it is to our clients. If I asked a client, “do you want to be transformed?” they would wonder why I was asking such a question. We put pressure on ourselves to offer a transformative experience to our clients because you never know when it’s going to occur. It could be a family beach vacation, and everyone is playing a board game together and just having a wonderful, simple time. That could be transformative, it doesn’t have to be a pilgrimage or a trip to the Galápagos.”
Rhona Wendler, McCabe World Travel

“If a travel experience is authentic, most of the time it is transformational—I don’t think that it is the new authentic. I think that they are both here to stay because the more people have those authentic experiences and are transformed, the more they’ll want to do more things like that in the future.”
Molly Meldon, FROSCH

“Transformational travel is a completely personal thing. If it happened on every single trip then we wouldn’t appreciate the times when it happened. So while we try to hold true to the cliché of giving every customer that one opportunity for transformation on each trip, we can use ‘transformational travel’ this year, and next year, another word can come across.”
David Scaff, American Express Travel & Lifestyle Services



“Exposure to different cultures shapes your personal life by allowing you to connect more easily with other people. Taking this into consideration, I think it is a misnomer to say that clients seek transformational experiences, as this was a cool buzz word last year. As we dig deeper, I think they want meaningful experiences – and if that meaningful experience is transformational, then a travel advisor has well exceeded their initial intention.”
Kristiana Capati Choquet, Ovation Vacations

“Humans naturally set expectations for the experiences they have in life – often influenced by the media and external sources. More often than not, the expectations aren’t accurate. I thought Brazil would feel a lot less safe when I visited. Wrong. I thought it was going to feel a lot more like a party. Wrong. I had no idea that Sao Paulo was a melting pot of international culture. I think transformation of perspective is largely tied to those expectations. Experiences transform perspective, and the more of these experiences you have, the greater the transformation.”
Megan Peri, Plaza Travel

“To be transformed by travel, you should have an experience that changes your perspective on the bigger picture in your life and then bring that perspective home with you. In a sense, all travel is transformative because we learn with each trip we take.”
Jacqueline Morgan, Travelink American Express



GEO-POLITICS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON LEISURE TRAVEL

The world doesn't always make sense, economic utopia isn't always handed to us on a plate, and when you work in travel, it's imperative to pay attention to the way that geo-political events are affecting the decisions of our customers. In times like these, business leaders navigate their way through by realizing what can be super stressful **can also be enlivening** — because what we are doing really matters. One of the key challenges is identifying how important factors like privacy and security really are to this new breed of traveler.

We asked the
Rising Stars:

Call to action, or cause for hesitation: will geo-political events change the way we travel?

“Often rationality isn't part of the media conversation, so it's about having that connection with your clients. That's one of the benefits of travel advisors, that we can have those conversations human to human.”

Megan Peri, Plaza Travel

“Clients are seeing political unrest, global warming and modernization as a “call to travel” to visit destinations before they are changed forever. Destinations include: Cuba, The Great Barrier Reef, and the Galápagos. I find there is a sense of urgency from many clients to travel to locations that currently are untouched by globalization or humanity or that are on the brink of permanent change.”

Rhona Wendler, McCabe World Travel

“Regarding politics and global events, clients are concerned more and more about situations that make an impact on world events, as they seem to happen more often. Because of this, there is a concern about having to make upfront or

advance payments which may lock them into penalties.”

Ane Lowe, Strong Travel Services

“Politics and global events are making travelers more aware and cautious. While they are not cutting out travel, they are choosing different destinations based upon recent events. Some may even change their means of travel if they are concerned – such as private tours instead of group tours, chauffeur transfers instead of the subway or trains.”

Jacqueline Morgan, Travelink American Express

“I find it to be quite polarizing. It either leads people to stay home or stay domestic, or it pushes them to seek out the most wild and extravagant of experiences because people don't know what tomorrow will bring.”

Rob Karp, Valerie Wilson Travel

36% of luxury travelers are either extremely or very concerned by political unrest in the US.

source: [YouGov](#), [The State of the Affluent Mindset](#)

The number of trips to the US fell by 4% in 2017

source: [UN World Tourism Organization](#), [UNWTO](#)



“People seem to be more cautious about going to certain areas for environmental and political reasons. The initial reaction may be to stay at home, but that seems to have faded. People are, instead, going to different destinations – South America instead of Mexico, New Zealand instead of Europe, etc.” *Molly Meldon, FROSCH*

“Travelers are becoming more resilient. Travelers and citizens in general are consistently staying aware and educated on political situations. The difference is that, in today’s world, the new normal is that there is no normal. The acceptance of that is ultimately causing less influence on the travel industry. Last minute bookings (30-60 days in advance) are also becoming the new normal in our industry and something I do not anticipate changing anytime soon.”
Jayne Hood, Huffman Travel Ltd

“From a Canadian perspective, I don’t think the political events have as large of an impact on our clients’ travel plans, but they do have an indirect impact, as the upcoming popular destinations in recent years tend to be destinations removed from negative global events, such as Iceland or Portugal.”
Jessyca Georgison, Renshaw Travel

“It is certainly a fact that politics and global events are major considerations when planning travel; however, I would venture to say that the affluent traveler has not been as widely affected as other demographics. The price tag of luxury allows travelers to have a level of security inherently built in to the itinerary.”
David Scaff, American Express Travel & Lifestyle Services ■

85% of luxury growth fueled by Gen Y & Z in 2017

72% of Chinese Millennials used a travel advisor last year

30% of the luxury market already Millennials

sources: [Bain & Co Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study](#) & [The Chinese Luxury Traveller 2017](#)

BRIDGING THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

Some travel brands see their clientele as exclusively Boomers, others say they find it distasteful to even segment their market by age. Regardless, Millennials entered the market with clear tastes and behaviors that have influenced and shaped other generations' preferences. **Brands that were successful in reaching them developed tailor-made strategies and upgraded value propositions.** In recent years, Millennials have only amplified their spending, giving them perhaps the biggest imprint in the multigenerational landscape of today's luxury travel market place.



We asked the
Rising Stars:

What are the differences that we need to pay attention to between **Boomers**, **Gen Xers** and **Millennials**? And how should those variations influence the way that travel brands market themselves to their clients?

“I don’t distinguish how I market myself in any way. I market myself as being customer obsessed, what they want they get. I hear them, I deliver on that, and make sure I understand exactly what they desire. I also think that you sell where you are in life, right now I’m the mother of a 15 and a 19-year-old so I get that parents are busy and they just want a break and a pause, so I don’t differentiate. I’ve sold to Millennials and Boomers alike and I kind of live in that Gen X space.”

Colleen Aaberg, Acendas

“I have clients who are Boomers but probably act more like Millennials or even Gen Z, so I tend to not put them in a box. I also find the same person can act more like a Boomer on one trip and more like a Millennial on another type of trip, so a very wise friend of mine told me that I need to play judo instead of karate. In judo you react to the moves of the other person instead of being on the offensive, so depending on the trip and depending on the conversation I act accordingly”.

Rhona Wendler, McCabe World Travel

“For Boomers, traditional luxury still reigns supreme. Formalities and routine are incredibly important. If service is missed or expectations aren’t met, it makes a serious impact on the experience. Recommendations and reassurance (of safety, luxury, and quality) are usually needed from a trusted source (friend, travel agent, or child) to make a purchase decision on a new destination or experience.”

Megan Peri, Plaza Travel

“Generation Xers and Millennials are ok with going to Paris and never seeing the Eiffel Tower. I believe they are a strong driver in the growth of boutique hotels, particularly in brands like Pendry. This demographic enjoys visiting secondary cities where they can enjoy an approachable experience and see the destination like a local. Five years ago, how many people were excited to go to Porto? How about today? In 2017, smaller cities such as Porto, and even Seville, made the T+L Top 15 cities in Europe list.”

Jayme Hood, Huffman Travel Ltd.

“Millennials are most interested in snapping the best photo. They can be challenging clients and often obsess over social posts versus appreciating the beauty of a far-flung destination. On the other hand, Boomers want to relax and enjoy the moment. Gen X have the means for more luxurious travel and are more focused on trips with their families.”

Courtney Sheeley, Jet Set World Travel, Inc.

“Unlike their parents. Millennials are very interested in a more modern luxury – hotels like The Edition instead of The Ritz like their parents and grandparents.”

Jessyca Georgison, Renshaw Travel

“Millennials will opt for economy air and a 4-star hotel to spend more money on once-in-a-lifetime experiences. In this sense, they’re lower maintenance than Baby Boomers. They often take quick weekend trips and are comfortable traveling solo. They travel more frequently than Boomers did at their age. They view travel as a necessity, not a privilege.”

Molly Meldon, FROSCH ■

HOTTEST DESTINATIONS 2018

“The beauty of a hot destination is almost no one sees it coming.”

David Scaff, American Express Travel & Lifestyle Services

Except, perhaps, the travel advisors who field the first requests. This year’s crop of Rising Stars left us in no doubt about where their hip clients are coveting by reporting an overwhelming uplift in interest in the Adriatic Coast and Balkan Nations. Slovenia, in particular, is on the rise, ‘a small country by any comparison, it boasts snow-capped Alpine mountains, grandiose castles, mysterious caves and a picturesque shoreline.’ At the same time, Ana Ros, star chef on the Netflix series “Chef’s Table,” has drawn international attention to Slovenian cuisine, creating a growing buzz to visit among many travelers. South America is also having a moment, and interest in Iceland, Japan and Antarctica continues to dominate, for obvious reasons. A notable absence is Myanmar, a regular feature on these lists in recent times but currently experiencing a withdrawal of support following the headlines about recent unrest.

MOST DESIRABLE NEW DESTINATIONS 2018



SCOTLAND
CROATIA PERU BORNEO
MALDIVES
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
IRELAND PORTUGAL **ICELAND** CUBA
RWANDA **SLOVENIA**
BUDAPEST
MONTENEGRO JAPAN ARCTIC CANADA
NICARAGUA
NEW ZEALAND **ITALY**
SRI LANKA
ECUADOR **ANTARCTICA**
BHUTAN **COLOMBIA** SOUTH AFRICA
CHILE

A recent study showed that nearly 30% of Millennials would be more likely to book a hotel if it took measures to protect the environment. But they aren’t the only purifying foot soldiers of capitalism. When you speak to hotel brand executives, they all agree that they’ve noticed a real shift in attitude, even among their older guests.

We asked the
Rising Stars:

Does the travel industry have a special responsibility to try to mitigate the impact of global warming? Is there a generational difference, when it comes to a traveler's **social awareness** and **consciousness**? And are social awareness and sustainability finally sexy?



66% of consumers are willing to spend more on a product if it comes from a sustainable brand

73% of surveyed Millennials indicating a similar preference

81% of Millennials even expect their favorite companies to make public declarations of their corporate citizenship

source: [Global Corporate Sustainability Report, Nielsen](#)

“The older generations tend not to think about it so much, regardless of their political affiliations. And because of that, you don’t feel high-end luxury leading the charge on sustainability. At lifestyle hotels that cater to Millennials, you feel it everywhere – from the type of take-away plates and items they provide, to the plastic water bottles replaced by reusable bottles and filling stations... I think more travelers would actually like to give their time philanthropically when they travel – beach clean-up or building houses etc., they just don’t know where to find those offerings.”

Megan Peri, Plaza Travel

“Millennials are more typically aware of the environment and sustainability. The new 1 Hotel brand completely evokes the marriage of luxury and environmentally friendly practices. But as conscious as they are, it is more of a novelty and goodwill play. I have yet to see someone not go somewhere because they clean their sheets every day. People want environmentally friendly without sacrificing their creature comforts.”

Kristiana Capati Choquet, Ovation Vacations

“Truthfully, for personal vacation travel, people are going to go where they most desire, in the best manner possible, and spend their money where they want. While most may be socially aware and ecologically minded, it does not always play into how some spend their dollars on vacation, especially for experienced travelers. They want the companies they stay with to all be as eco-friendly as possible as an expectation of being a good corporate, global citizen. However, their experience shouldn’t feel less luxe just to be green.”

Jacqueline Morgan, Travelink American Express

“The impact tourism has had on our environment can’t be ignored. As the global population increases it’s getting worse; however, travel innovators are addressing the issue. In areas where conservation and sustainability is priority, both financial and societal resources are gaining speed, as seen in Africa with wildlife and landscape conservation. Conversely, in Bangladesh and India—areas of dense population and pollution—it’s challenging to even grasp where to start.”

Courtney Sheeley, Jet Set World Travel, Inc.

“Luxury resorts are paying more attention. For example, The Brando (a T+L World’s Best Award Winner) has applied extraordinary efforts to become completely self-sustaining. Although this is a prominent trend of today’s world, it’s important to realize while clients appreciate and admire these efforts, I don’t feel they are basing their travel decisions completely around these factors.”

Jayme Hood, Huffman Travel Ltd.

“If a property or destination has great environmental practices, this is something that clients will use to validate a decision to stay somewhere, after they’ve already decided, rather than it be a driving factor in their decision making.”

Jessyca Georgison, Renshaw Travel

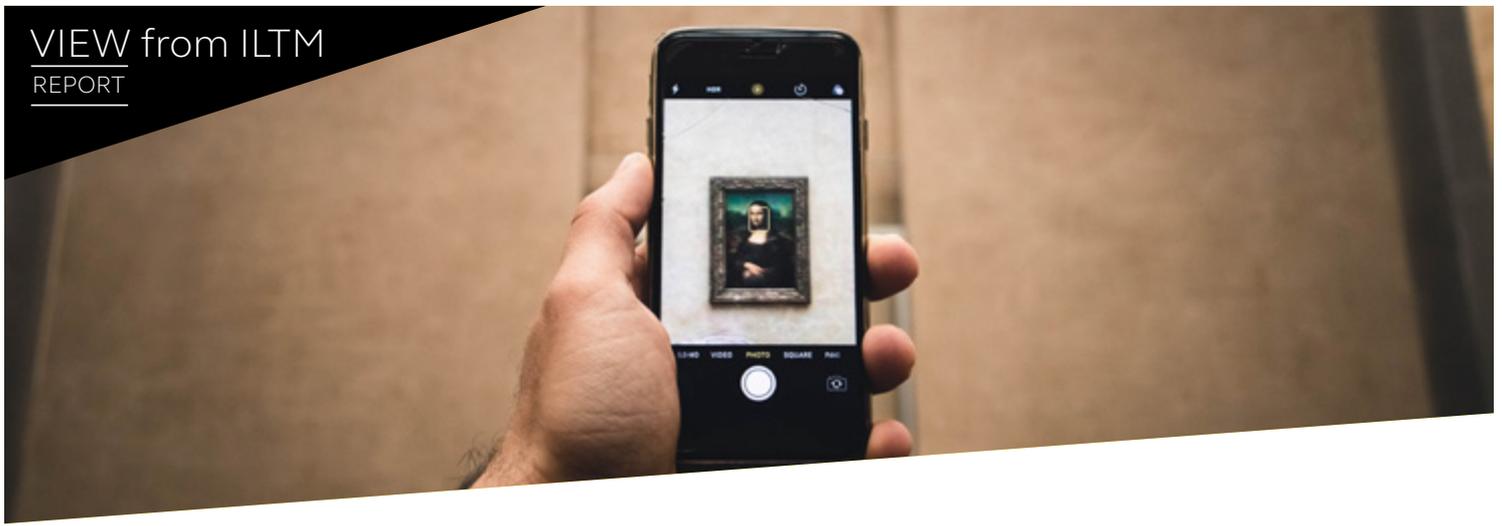
“I believe we all want to be and are in support of helping our local communities and world resources. However, I have not personally felt that this is a primary area that comes up in questioning or is spoken about when making a decision. I feel that there are many that are more socially aware, and perhaps it is our part as advisors to help be advocates as this is the future of our planet. I think most clients are pleased to see this once they are there but do not seek this out.”

Victoria Strubbe, Camelback Odyssey Travel ■

“What started as a movement of individuals has evolved into an awareness by the travel industry. The industry itself is now leading the education of many in terms of sustainability.”

says David Scaff, American Express Travel & Lifestyle Services





THE TRAVEL ADVISOR'S MONDAY MORNING AGENDA

Collectively, 2017's Rising Stars identified what the biggest challenges for travel advisors will be over the next 5 years, including how to stay relevant and better market their services; how to target Millennial travelers; deal with competition from OTA's; and improve their product knowledge.

We asked the
Rising Stars:

What are advisors doing to prepare to meet these challenges?

"The Travel Advisor's biggest challenge over the next five years is to stay relevant. We need to continue to seek ways to add value to our clients that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Google, Trip Advisor, etc. are great tools but not a replacement for an actual experienced professional who can talk about experiences and knows them first hand. A computer cannot replace an advisor's personal knowledge of the room with the best view at a hotel on Lake Como. A computer cannot help and sooth a distressed client whose flight has just been canceled. We are not transaction based, we are collaborators and creators of memories."

Rhona Wendler, McCabe World Travel

"The biggest question for me is will my associations with my consortia or agency be the best in the market place, or will we all be marginalized. Tapping into the Millennial generation as they age and have more purchasing power will be a challenge as well, since it's a generation that is more self-sufficient when it comes to booking travel, and more likely to price compare."

Ane Lowe, Strong Travel Services

"Being proactive in counsel is another challenge advisors must overcome. Computers and technology will always be a challenge but as long as an advisor gives their clients insight and advice, that sets them apart, so we must really know and understand our client's needs to marry them to the right destination, experiences, hotels, cruise lines, airlines, and guides."

Jacqueline Morgan, Travelink American Express

"The ease of online booking will continue to be the biggest challenge for travel advisors. The Internet offers endless free travel intel—both true and false—right at curious travelers' fingertips. We live in a society of instant gratification. Many travelers will prefer this form of booking, yet successful agencies and agents will find a way to leverage invaluable boots-on-the-ground knowledge and experience."

Courtney Sheeley, Jet Set World Travel, Inc.

"The travel advisor's highest challenge is matching OTA pricing as well as many brands' new campaigns of book direct. Showing the advisor's value to clients is always the challenge but after overcoming this hurdle, clients never look back."

Kristiana Capati Choquet, Ovation Vacations

“Our real competition comes from the internet, not our fellow advisors. To combat this, we must educate the public on the fact that we do still exist and what our value is. We need to stay current and continue strengthening our relationships to ensure we can get our clients the best deals.”

Molly Meldon, FROSCH

“The biggest challenge our industry faces moving forward is how we compliment technology rather than how we get phased out by it. Travelers have more access to information and more tools to be able to book but their time remains their most precious commodity. A travel advisor with a passion for service and knowledge that capitalizes on the efficiency improvements of technology will certainly be able to thrive.”

David Scaff, American Express Travel & Lifestyle Services

“People are starting to have an “I want to do it all” mentality, given the need to do more with less time. To differentiate ourselves as travel advisors, we will need to deliver on that notion. Perhaps that means incorporating passion activities such as arranging a fly-fishing adventure at Lake Como while traveling across Europe, or maybe adding a philanthropic element to a multi-gen trip to the tropics to make a positive lasting impact as a family. The way that we deliver on these desires makes our partnerships with local experts critical to our future business—and relevance in this industry.”

Colleen Aaberg, Acendas

“In the world of travel, just as in every other aspect of life, human interaction cannot and will never be replaceable. Nothing can compete with what travel advisors bring to the table – the level of service, quick thinking and capability of getting to know clients’ needs and preferences – no matter how advanced technology becomes.”

Stacy Hart, Protravel International ■



TRAVEL + LEISURE & ILTM: 2017 RISING STARS WHITEPAPER

Travel +Leisure

Travel + Leisure is the world's leading travel content brand, dedicated to inspiring and empowering the most curious and passionate travelers to travel more and travel better. Its flagship print edition is the largest-circulation and only monthly consumer travel magazine in the United States, with an audience of 6.3 million. Its website, TravelandLeisure.com, has approximately 10 million unique visitors monthly, and the brand's social media footprint across all major channels encompasses more than 12.5 million followers. Travel + Leisure currently has four international editions—in China, India, Southeast Asia, and Mexico—as well as a suite of newsletters, clubs, retail stores, and partnerships, including, most recently, Travel + Leisure Great Adventures by Butterfield & Robinson.

ILTM

ILTM (International Luxury Travel Market) is a collection of global, local and specialist luxury travel events taking place in some of the world's most fascinating destinations—Cannes, Cape Town, Dubai, the Riviera Maya, São Paulo, Singapore, and Shanghai. Each event introduces an unrivalled selection of luxury travel brands to ILTM's network of handpicked luxury travel advisors, through bespoke appointment programmes and networking sessions. As invitation-only events, dedicated teams in London and São Paulo vet all attendees. For the leaders in the world of luxury travel, attending ILTM events is a must, if they are lucky enough to be selected.

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