



GLOBAL WELLNESS  
SUMMIT

# GLOBAL WELLNESS TRENDS REPORT



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# 2019 Global Wellness Trends Report

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Beth McGroarty has been the Global Wellness Summit's Director of Research for eight years and oversees the Summit's annual Trends Report as its lead author. She is also the editor of the Global Wellness Institute's "Global Wellness Brief" and its website, WellnessEvidence.com, the first online resource dedicated to the medical evidence for the top wellness approaches. She has a BA from Barnard College and an MA from Stanford University.



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Cassandra Cavanah has been part of the Global Wellness Summit team since inception and, among her many accomplishments, has authored several spa and wellness trends over the years. In addition, Cassandra is the editor of the "Guide to Hydrothermal Spa & Wellness Development Standards" for the Global Wellness Institute's Hydrothermal Initiative (currently available for download from the GWI website). Cassandra also works on PR and marketing initiatives for the Summit and Institute and holds an English degree from UCLA.



### **LAURA POWELL**

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Veteran journalist Laura Powell has reported on the travel and wellness industries for more than two decades. She started her career at CNN, where she developed the network's travel programming. Laura then went on to cover travel for CNN for five years. Her work has been seen in outlets ranging from The Washington Post and USA Today to National Geographic Traveler and CNN.com. Currently, she appears on television programs across the country as a travel trend spotter. Laura is also a regular contributor to Skift, where she reports on luxury and wellness travel. More of her work can be found at [www.dailysuitcase.com](http://www.dailysuitcase.com).



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Throughout her 16 years in brand development, research and marketing communications, Jenny has worked with some of the most renowned brands in hospitality, wellness and luxury lifestyle. A forward-thinking professional, Jenny leads CatchOn's proprietary research projects and market studies and works with international brands to launch and develop their presence in China. Driven by curiosity and an appetite for travel, Jenny travels the world to run marathons and immerse herself in nature while soul searching.

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Jennifer Walsh is on a mission to get more people outdoors to understand the power of walking in nature and the impact and importance of green spaces. She is bridging the gap between brain health and nature. Jennifer is a true architect of the beauty, retail and wellness landscape. Creating the very first omnichannel beauty brand in the US in 1998, she changed the way people shopped for beauty with the creation of Beauty Bar which she eventually sold to Amazon. Jennifer intuitively knew that her connection to the beauty industry was deep-rooted in nature and how we connect with our surroundings. Jennifer creates Wellness Walk programs for people around the world to educate others on the power of getting outside for a walk. In addition, she hosts a video series called “Walk with Walsh”.



**SUSIE ELLIS**  
**Founder, Chairman & CEO, Global Wellness Summit; Chairman & CEO, Global Wellness Institute**

Susie Ellis is the co-founder, chairman and CEO of the Global Wellness Summit, the foremost gathering of business and government leaders in the \$4.2 trillion global wellness economy. She is also chairman and CEO of the nonprofit Global Wellness Institute, considered the industry’s leading global research and educational resource. Recognized as an authority on wellness trends and initiatives, Susie initiated forecasting for the spa and wellness economy over 15 years ago, establishing the industry’s first trends report. She sits on numerous academic and industry boards and holds an MBA from the University of California, Los Angeles.



## PREFACE

# 2019 Global Wellness Trends Report

***Each year, the Global Wellness Summit (GWS) identifies new trends that will have a meaningful impact on the \$4.2 trillion wellness industry. Significantly, this is the only wellness forecast that draws from the insights of the 600+ executives who were delegates and presenters at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit. In addition, the GWS Trends incorporate the perspectives of renowned economists, medical and wellness professionals, academics and leaders across all sectors of the wellness industry.***

Each of the eight trends speaks to topics that push the health and wellness envelope in unprecedented ways. We predict that these very new directions in wellness will grow worldwide and become big business in the years ahead.

This year, we take a close look at what the medical profession is prescribing—and while you might think that would be complicated to understand, it's actually a walk in the park. With overtourism to the same old places being the #1 issue facing the travel industry today—unwell for both locals and tourists—will wellness tourism be an antidote, pulling people to less trafficked, healthier destinations? Will “choosing undertourism” become the new eco-tourism and ethical consumer wave? (So the Mona Lisa can keep smiling.) Get ready to have a new respect for your nose and what your olfactory sense can do in conjunction with your brain, such as take you back to happier times. Say goodbye forever

to one-size-fits-all diets and hello to personalized nutrition—your DNA will lead the way and help you find the foods that work for you.

It's time to rethink fashion, not only personally but also societally. From the supply chain to the chain stores, what we wear and what it means is taking on (and off) a life of its own. And speaking of a life of its own, we are looking at China—it's extraordinary growth and wealth and what that means for wellness in the world. We've gone deep into the depths and looked at how dying is finally becoming part of the wellness conversation and how everything around death is suddenly getting rethought: from what a healthy end-of-life looks like to a surge in eco-friendly and creative burial options. But, whatever you do, don't stress: There are going to be so many more options for meditation than ever before, and hard science will confirm the benefits of different types for different goals.



One example of the Well Fashion Trend: Eco-friendly, digital-only fashion appeals to the selfie generation. Carlings' Neo-Ex collection raises awareness of the environmental cost of a throwaway culture—estimated to create a staggering 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually.



## TREND #1

# Well Fashion – Way Beyond Athleisure

**A new era of sustainable, ethical, intelligent, healing, more inclusive and meaningful clothing is on the rise**

***By Beth McGroarty***

The moment we're born, clothing gets slapped on us. And for most of us, that founding moment foretells a nearly lifelong, complex relationship (even obsession) with what we wear. It's understandable: No other objects touch our bodies every single day, and our clothes are a powerful nonverbal projection of "who we are." So, our relationship with fashion gets imbued with tons of emotion (from joy to misery): Clothes can make me new, better, sexier and more sophisticated or make me look ugly or off trend. This magical thinking drives us to overbuy, stuffing our closets with purchases we thought would transform us but typically gather dust and regrets or get tossed.

This problem of fashion overconsumption has, of course, been radically worsened by the rise of "fast fashion" over the last couple of decades: the manic overproduction of ever-cheaper clothes and ever-changing trends that encourages people to buy, buy, buy—and has made clothing a profoundly disposable concept. Fast fashion,

driven by globalization (cheap labor and resource markets, which means clothing gets designed in one country, made in another, and sold in yet another), has led to production doubling in the last 15 years.<sup>1</sup> Eighty billion pieces of clothes are now produced worldwide each year!

It's impossible to overstate the disastrous impact this greedy, throwaway fashion machine has on the environment and humans: the waste...the pollution...the garment workers (mostly women) paid 40-60 cents/hour in places such as Bangladesh or Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> Every second, the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles is landfilled or burned.<sup>3</sup> Three in five garments bought end up in a landfill/burned within a year.<sup>4</sup> Less than 1 percent of clothing material is ever recycled. This "take-make-dispose" model creates a staggering 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually and dumps 20 percent of all global wastewater, and if nothing changes, the fashion industry will use up more than 25 percent of the world's entire carbon budget by 2050.<sup>5</sup>



*BuDhaGirl founder and CEO Jessica Jesse addresses delegates at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit on “The Concept of Wellness in Fashion.” Jesse’s presentation provided the inspiration for the Well Fashion Trend.*

Given these realities, it’s odd how little attention the world has paid to the complex intersection between “wellness” and “fashion,” beyond the familiar story of athleisure disrupting the market. Or how few people that are wellness- and eco-minded—who drive around in a Prius, eat all-organic, and have a mini-stroke if someone serves their fresh-pressed juice with a plastic straw—have really grappled with their relationship to and consumption of clothes, learned about their source and true environmental impact, or pondered the many negative ways that fashion impacts their wellbeing—or imagined the positive ways that it could.

Because the world desperately needs a more “well fashion” and because there are so many powerful new directions in fashion that are healthier-for-the-planet-and-people, it was a hot topic at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit. It spanned iconic Italian fashion designer Alberta Ferretti keynoting on what wellness in fashion meant to her and the first “wellness fashion show”: a creative collaboration between BuDhaGirl, a fashion brand focusing on mindful glamour; Louie Schwartzberg’s extraordinary biophilic cinematic art; and La Forma, an athleisure maker with sustainable values at its core.

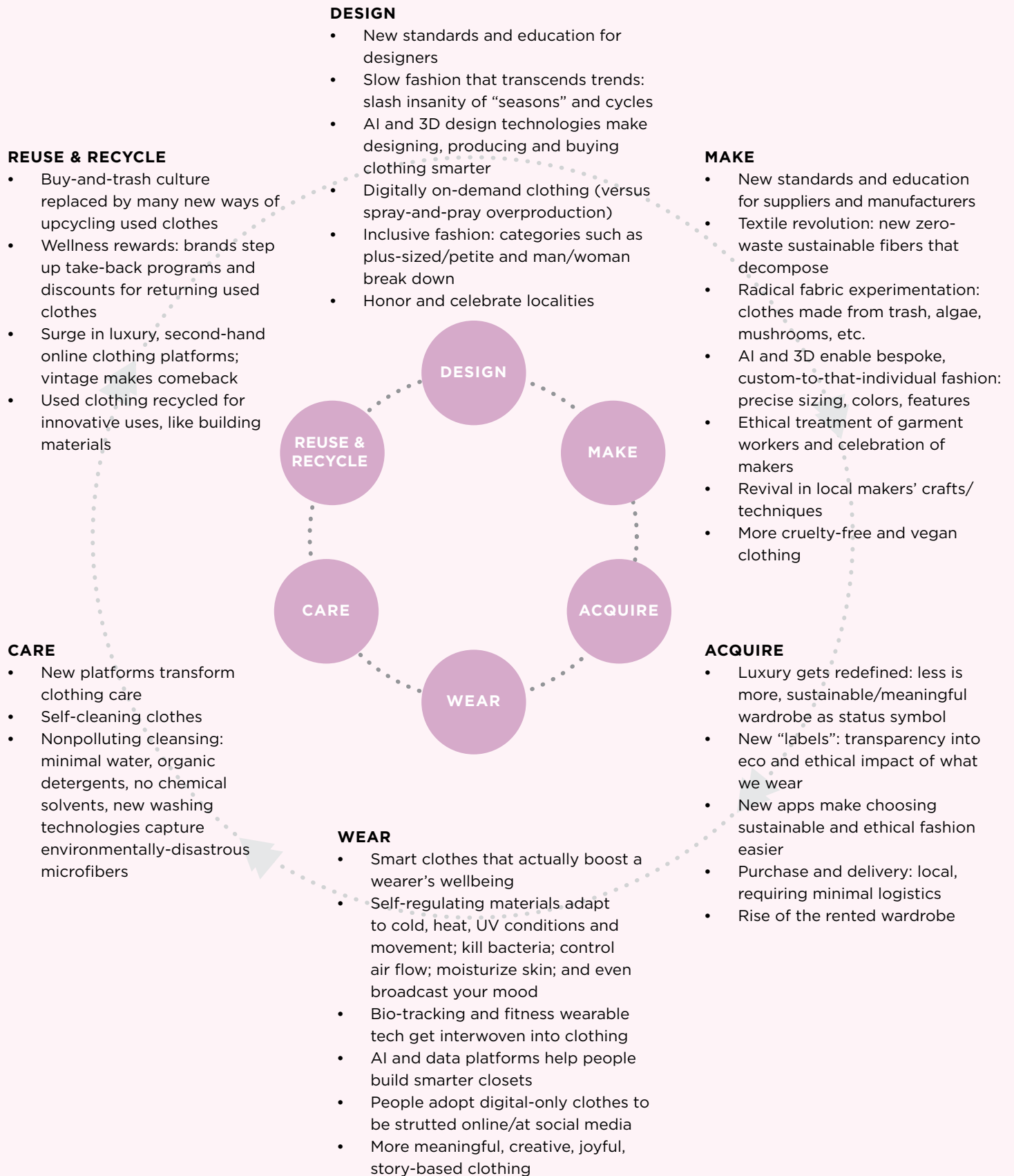
But it was BuDhaGirl founder and CEO Jessica Jesse’s talk, “The Concept of Wellness in Fashion,” that provides the inspiration and framework for this trend: how the market and mindset around fashion will move from unhealthy to more “well”—better for the planet, for the people that make clothes, and for us, the people that wear them. The trend parallels in many ways how the beauty industry is currently being remade by wellness concepts.

Jesse explained how the “entire conversation around fashion needs to radically change because every point in the process—how we design, make, acquire, care for, experience and dispose of our clothing—is broken.”

And if fashion is a market where concepts of wellbeing for the planet and people have been strikingly late in coming, now so many innovations are underway. Fashion is currently being disrupted in all directions, such as the decimation of the concept of work versus casual dressing. The athleisure story—how the functionality and aesthetic of fitness wear has taken hold of the market—has been told and retold. But there’s far more wellness ahead in fashion’s future—and this is what it looks like...

# FASHION'S FUTURE

## More “Wellness” Across the Whole Cycle



## FUELING THE TREND

### Climate change crisis goes from far-off worry to in our faces

If the environmental destruction of our planet used to seem a next-generation problem, a series of new scientific reports agree that the devastating consequences of climate change (air pollution, food shortages, wildfires, coastal flooding, droughts, population displacement, etc.) may hit the crisis point in a very few years. A new [UN report](#)<sup>6</sup> found that we've got just 12 years to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C, and if it surpasses that, the likelihood of extreme climate conditions jumps dramatically. A new Global Carbon Project report<sup>7</sup> shows that, instead of decreasing, carbon emissions actually rose 2.7 percent in 2018, likening the crisis to a “speeding freight train.”

People are finally *hearing* and *feeling* this unfolding nightmare, and more research shows the horrible role that the [\\$2.4 trillion fashion industry](#)<sup>8</sup> plays in our Earth's destruction. The stats could fill a book. The fashion industry spews 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions a year, more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. Washing our clothes releases half a million tons of microfibers into the ocean every year, equal to [50 billion+ plastic bottles](#).<sup>9</sup> Textile dyeing is the second-largest water polluter in the world, and it takes 2,000 gallons of water just to make a typical pair of jeans!

### A western problem

Westerners like to blame developing economies, such as China and India, for their new hyper-consumption ramping up the climate crisis. But [research](#)<sup>10</sup> shows people in emerging Eastern countries are more sustainability-focused than Americans and Europeans: They purchase a fraction of the clothes and are more likely to buy local fashion. For instance, [only a third of shoppers in developed countries seek sustainable fashion, compared with 78 percent of Indians and 65 percent of Chinese](#).<sup>11</sup> The mall-rat American reality: Clothing consumption has doubled to 14 million tons a year in under two decades, and 35 billion pounds of clothes will get thrown away in 2019.<sup>12</sup> The average American buys a jaw-dropping

86 items of clothing a year, [80 percent of which they seldom wear](#),<sup>13</sup> with each of us sending 70 pounds annually straight to dumpsters. UK shoppers send 300,000 tons of clothes to landfills every year and keep \$46.7 billion worth of unworn clothes in their [closets](#).<sup>14</sup>

### Mind-set shift: From conspicuous consumption to conspicuous *conscious* consumerism

Future forecasting firm LS:N Global, whose researchers Jessica Smith and Rhiannon McGregor keynoted at the GWS, has neatly summarized the major trend that is rewriting consumer behavior: We're “moving from an age of conspicuous consumption to an age of conspicuous *conshumanism*,” where people display their humane, rather than monetary, worth through choices they make as consumers. With a new anxiety around wealth, spending is migrating to goods that tell a story about how they help people or the environment. You might say, after years of talk, something real is happening—and a mountain of surveys and stats confirm that the shift to sustainable, ethical brands and a new interest in “well fashion” is underway. A 2018 JWT Intelligence survey found that 90+ percent of global consumers are trying to live more sustainably and think that brands that pollute the environment should be fined. A recent Ipsos MORI/Fashion Revolution poll of Europeans found that consumers now demand to know more about the environmental/social impact of the clothes, shoes and accessories they buy, with 75+ percent reporting that fashion brands should be required by law to be ethical and sustainable.

The clearest window into trends is social media, where billions of people post and search, and global fashion search platform Lyst reported a 47 percent growth in sustainability-focused fashion keywords in 2018 (such as “vegan leather” or “organic cotton”). “Sustainable fashion” made Pinterest's top social trends for 2019. And a vocal tribe of celebrities and social media influencers are making a bigger “well fashion” impact than public service announcements ever could. Perhaps no one more than Meghan Markle, who loudly and proudly wears sustainable/ethical fashion brands. When she donned a pair of Outland Denim jeans,

their web traffic skyrocketed 3,000 percent—and her choice meant that the company could employ 30 more seamstresses rescued from human trafficking/sexual exploitation in its Cambodian production house.

### **Governments & industry organizations forge new targets & laws**

It would be naïve to expect people to suddenly stop shopping or for eco-activist fashion brands (which can remain more niche) to make the massive dent needed. But with the unthinkable economic and human cost of climate change looming, and fashion's terrible role in it better understood, more large public organizations and governments are taking action to move the fashion industry from its linear, take-make-waste model to a sustainable circular economy.

A big move: On December 10, a Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action was launched by the UN, and 40 big brands and suppliers—such as Stella McCartney, Burberry, Adidas and H&M—pledged to collectively take action on the environmental/social impact of the fashion industry and cooperate with the charter's 16 targets, including net zero emissions by 2050, the use of sustainable materials, and low-carbon transport. Brand participation is voluntary, but the UN Charter ratchets up the pressure globally. France is a standout nation for legal action, where fashion makers must take responsibility for the end of the life of the clothing they make (through collecting and recycling programs), and the country is considering legislation to limit the volume of various fibers that makers can place on their market. Let's just say that the US is doing nothing of the kind, and more regulatory action is needed worldwide and—we predict—is ahead.

### **A Profusion of “Well” Fashion Brands**

There are hundreds (and hundreds) of sustainable, ethical and wellness-focused fashion brands across the world: hundreds of indie brands along with globally recognized pioneers, such as Stella McCartney, Eileen Fisher and Patagonia,

all reaching for evermore sustainable and ethical practices. (Just visit Patagonia's website and digest all they're doing as a company and environmental activist, all while humbly admitting that they are still, as an apparel maker, “part of the problem.”) Fast fashion companies such as H&M are making important moves, with their new goal of selling strictly sustainable products by 2030. The sheer volume of clothes that the fast fashion kings sell (hundreds of millions of items each year) means any positive changes they make have a vast impact.

For every company covered in this report, dozens were left out. Here are just a very few making interesting moves we researched: A.BCH. collections, Allbirds, Amour Vert, Antibad, Apolis, Arc'teryx, Christopher Raeburn, Community Clothing, Courbet, Filippa K, Finisterre, Gabriela Hearst, Gather&See, Hugo Boss, Kering, Klow, Kotn, Maggie Marilyn, Maison Makarem, Mother of Pearl, Natascha Mehrabi, Noah, Olderbrother, Organic by John Patrick, Outerknown, Pangaia, Peoples Product, People Tree, PrAna, Rami Helali, REI, Rêve en Vert, Rothy's, Satta, Sofia Metsoviti, Ted Baker, Toms, Veja and Zero + Maria Cornejo.)

This trend follows the logic of tracking the garment across its lifecycle (a kind of “tale of the traveling pants”) to identify some key innovations in how clothing will get designed, made, bought, worn, experienced, washed and reused in the future.

*AI and 3D design make made-to-order clothes possible, reducing over production and waste. ZOZOSUIT from Japan sends customers a free ZOZOSUIT interwoven with 300 sensors that capture, in 3D, exact measurements; customers order tailored-to-their body clothes.*





## ASPECTS OF THE TREND

### The Future? On-Demand, Bespoke Clothes, Accessories & Jewelry

A new era of AI and 3D design technologies means brands could break the spray-and-pray model of overproducing cookie-cutter clothes and start delivering much smarter, on-demand, made-to-order clothes. As Sue Siegel, chief innovation officer at GE put it, “(With the combination) of AI, materials, design, and 3-D technology...you get a massively bespoke approach to designing jewelry, clothing and shoes. You’ll soon see it come much more into our lives and pervade everything we do.”<sup>15</sup> This digital-only and machine-learning-powered fashion design is far more sustainable: It reduces production volume because items are only produced when necessary, and, because they are custom-designed to actually fit (with preferred colors and features), they will actually get worn. Bespoke clothes may once have been the exclusive province of Wall Street banker types, but, in the future, the designed-for-me concept will get more democratic.

Change of Paradigm is developing virtual and holographic reality apps that let people experience clothing before they buy: They use digital textiles to ensure fit, and, at the click of your mouse, you can change patterns, prints and features. Sustainable fashion brands, such as Atacac, are now using the software. CLO has developed 3D virtual prototyping programs so fashion designers can create without ever sewing or cutting a physical pattern: Everything’s done online. Companies, such as Denmark’s Solve, are rolling out downloadable fashion: If you have access to a laser cutter (found in more places now), you can download their handbag patterns, laser-cut the recycled fabrics, and, for a few bucks and 20-minute assembly time, you have a cool, sustainable new bag. ZOZO, the brainchild of Japan’s leading e-commerce site, is a concept that makes your clothes fit precisely. They send you a free ZOSUIT interwoven with 300 sensors that capture in 3D your exact measurements, and, with their smartphone app (which lets you model your selections in 3D before ordering), you then order bespoke, tailored-to-your-body clothes.

Think basics like sweaters, shirts, tees and jeans in natural fibers, at democratic, under-\$100 prices. (ZOZO is now available in 72 countries/territories.) Our future is more on-demand, digitally designed and custom-created-for-you fashion.

### Sustainable Materials—Clothes Made of Algae, Mushrooms & Crop Waste

So many materials we’ve been making clothes out of are Earth killers. Man-made fabrics, such as nylon, polyester and acrylic, are petroleum-based, meaning they can take centuries to decompose—and they release tsunamis of plastic microfibers into oceans and lakes. Toxic bleach, dyes and thousands of other chemicals used in clothing manufacturing pollute our air and water. Clothes packed with chemicals and dyes can hurt our bodies: A rash is one thing, but chemicals, such as dimethylformamide, found in some workout clothes have been linked to liver damage, while wrinkle-free clothes can get coated with formaldehyde, a carcinogen.

The future is natural fibers that are sustainably sourced, such as silk, linen, organic cotton, wool, flax, hemp and alpaca, and semisynthetic and cellulosic fibers, such as modal, rayon, Tencel, lyocell and cupro, that involve “man-making” but break down easier. But there’s so much radical innovation in sustainable materials happening. A small army of companies is crafting clothing from zero-waste, hyper-renewable algae. Israeli-based Algalife turns algae into fibers and dyes, and the fabrics are also designed to improve and protect skin, as proteins, vitamins and anti-inflammatories are naturally released by algae-immersed fabric. AlgiKnit crafts yarns from algae for use in clothes and shoes. Vivobarefoot created the Ultra III Bloom running shoes made from algae, sourced from destructive algal blooms in waterways that release toxic chemicals. Each Vivo pair prevents 40 balloons of CO<sub>2</sub> from being released into the atmosphere. There’s fungi fashion, such as MycoTEX, who, with Utrecht University, is pioneering custom-made clothes fashioned from decomposable mushroom roots. Another pack of pioneers, such as Agraloop, is making textiles out of food crop leftovers, creating biofibers from things, such as banana and pineapple, whose

fabrics are slated for collaborations with heavy-hitter fashion brands. Reebok's new Cotton +Corn trainers fashion their soles from a long-wearing corn derivative.

### **“Trashy” Clothes**

Call it “trashion,” or waste-makes-taste, recycling all kinds of garbage into trendy new clothing, accessories and shoes is *everywhere*. Patagonia is a pioneer and has been making fleece jackets using polyester made out of recycled bottles for 25 years (with a collection heavily made up of recycled nylon, cotton, polyester, down, cashmere and wool).

Plastic water bottles are an environmental scourge, with a million a minute sold worldwide, and recycled plastic fashion is now surging. Start-up Aday uses recycled plastic to make its futuristic clothes (one jacket is made from 41 reconstituted water bottles). Everlane is launching a line called ReNew made entirely from millions of recycled water bottles; Chilean brand Novedades creates luxury fashion from plastic bags; Rothys shoes are made from 100 percent-recycled bottles; and Spain's Ecoalf creates clothes and shoes from algae and recycled plastic as part of its Upcycling the Oceans collection.

Other trash-trawling fashion includes transforming ocean waste (whether plastics or discarded fishing nets) into regenerative materials: brands, such as Adidas, Stella McCartney, Riley Studio, and Gucci, are partnering with activists, such as Parley for the Oceans, who sources materials from companies, such as Aquafil, that turn ocean garbage into amazing materials, such as Econyl. Indosole turns discarded tires in Indonesia into a whole shoe line, and Amsterdam's Gumdrop, who says 3.3 million pounds of gum end up on that

city's streets every year, “chews” that discarded gum into a new kind of rubber for shoes with fashion brand Explicit.

### **Know, Honor and Treat Fairly, Thy Maker**

The fashion industry employs an estimated 300 million people, and, while most of us know that most of these workers get paid very little for working awful hours in unsafe environments, we don't really grasp the extent and landscape of this modern slavery. Globalization means brands manufacture where wages are most shockingly low (Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Cambodia and Mexico), and the industry war for rock-bottom prices means a supply chain where fashion brands often don't even own their factories or visit them. The upshot? Many clothes in your drawers are made by some of the world's most vulnerable and exploited people, often forced into labor and not paid at all.

Nonprofit KnowTheChain offers a report and system, scoring the world's megabrands on how they're treating workers. In a nutshell, abominable: Out of a 100, the average score was 37! Adidas and Lululemon scored highest, and, surprisingly, fast fashion companies fared well, while many luxury brands, such as Prada or Ferragamo, performed horribly.

*More designers are creating apparel from sustainable materials. Vivobarefoot's Ultra III Bloom running shoes are made from algae, sourced from destructive algae blooms in waterways. Each Vivo pair prevents 40 balloons of CO2 from being released into the atmosphere.*



Access this important report here: [https://knowthechain.org/wp-content/plugins/ktc-benchmark/app/public/images/benchmark\\_reports/KTC\\_AF\\_2018.pdf](https://knowthechain.org/wp-content/plugins/ktc-benchmark/app/public/images/benchmark_reports/KTC_AF_2018.pdf)

More people are demanding ethical fashion, and the future is more action by brands on (and transparency into whether they're delivering) fair compensation, human rights and healthy workplaces. So many fashion companies are now going beyond "ok" to dramatically empower the economic lives of local makers and artisans.

Fashion4Freedom is smashing the old exploit-the-worker factory production model by giving artisans of traditional Vietnamese crafts their own equipment and then connecting those creators to sustainable brands—so *they* become the entrepreneurs. Malaysia's Earth Heir makes entrepreneurs out of Malaysian craftsmen/women, working as an intermediary that creates fair access to markets. The ethical e-commerce fashion site Nisolo, founded in response to the tragedy at the

*ADAY uses recycled plastic to make its futuristic clothes like their Waste Nothing Jacket and Like a Boss Sweatshirt. For example, one jacket is made from 41 reconstituted water bottles. Photo credit: Leeor Wild*



Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh that killed 1,134 workers, eliminates the money-pocketing brand middleman by bringing the clothes and shoes made by extraordinary artisans (the craftspeople luxury brands turn to) directly to the consumer. Egypt's Okhtein (a bag maker worn by Beyoncé) works with Egyptian NGOs to empower women artisans that face economic hardship.

**Transparency into Creators:** If manufacturing is a faceless business, now more brands are providing transparency into the supply chain and their makers—and even celebrating *by name* the people who make your clothes and shoes. Everlane's "Radical Transparency" program ensures that its factories embrace fair labor laws: It ranks them on their compliance with those laws and honestly shows shoppers how much it costs to make each and every product. Known Supply Apparel provides info on the artisan from an underserved community who stitched your garment; each piece is hand-signed, and you can even send the maker a thank-you note. With each leather good you buy, Italy's Arno Cooperative sends a photo of the craftsperson that fashioned it, a map of all the places in Tuscany where it is made, and Arno's website has info on each artisan's family and life. And you can send a thank-you note right back to the maker. Fairness in fashion, for people with actual faces, is one humane future trend.

### Cruelty-free & Vegan Clothing

Vegan is the hot trend in eating, and it is also in fashion, as more people now care about the ethical treatment of animals. If the luxury fashion world has always been heavy on fur, leather and rare skins, things are being seriously shaken up, with more brands nixing animal materials from their lines and unleashing a wave of alt-fur, alt-leather, alt-everything that is actually trendier than the real thing. New technologies are able to create fake fur and leather that looks amazing, with the latter market forecast to hit \$85 billion by 2025.<sup>16</sup>

Stella McCartney has been the hands-down trailblazer here, with a brand centered on cruelty-free fashion, and Calvin Klein is an activist, too. So many brands have recently bid farewell to fur: Burberry, Versace, Furla, Michael Kors, Gucci,





*Fashion brands are embracing transparency in manufacturing, letting customers know who made their clothes and shoes. Arno Cooperative sends a photo of the craftsman, along with a map of places in Tuscany where the item is made.*

Tommy Hilfiger, Maison Margiela, Fendi, Armani, Hugo Boss and Ralph Lauren—along with online shopping sites, such as Net-A-Porter and YOOX, and entire cities, such as San Francisco. Many of the hippest, fastest-growing brands are all about wearing your vegan cred, such as Paris-based Veja, with its vegan shoes/sneakers collection worn by Meghan Markle, or Budapest-based Nanushka, with its rave-gathering vegan haute clothing line or uber-cool vegan footwear brand Yatay.

### **Smart Clothes That Boost Your Health & Wellbeing**

Clothes are pressed against our bodies all day, but aside from keep-me-warm or cover-me-up functionality, they've been rather "dumb." No longer; a revolution in smart materials is doing what makes nothing but sense: clothing that optimizes your wellbeing while you wear it. A dizzying array of new technologies—from Internet-of-Things hardware/software to body-

mapping technologies—mean futuristic fashion can embed numerous wellness benefits, such as clothes that adapt to all kinds of environmental and bodily changes (heat, cold, air flow, UV rays, etc.). But the trend spans much more than environmental response clothing. An era of "active well clothing" that is connected, intelligent and healing is rising: from anti-bacterial clothes that clean themselves to clothes that can heal or moisturize your body to clothes that express your mood.

Some of these high-tech concepts give new meaning to the idea of "comfortable clothes." A collaboration between Zaha Hadid Design and Swiss tech-sports brand Odlo offers base layer leggings and tops that deploy seamless knit technology and organic body mapping to control the flow of air around the body and adapt to your breathing and movement, like a second skin. Ministry of Supply, brainchild of MIT-schooled engineers, has a mission of using tech to make clothes smarter and more comfortable,

*Arno Cooperative's Sera boot in Black Suede  
Photo credit: Jenny Chung Seeger*

*Sondra, a craftswoman for Arno Cooperative, Inc., working.*



and their new, wirelessly-charged smart jacket automatically adjusts the temp based on the weather, your body temp, and how much you are moving—and is activated by a phone app or smart assistant, such as Alexa. Clothing brand Become uses techwear fabrics to help menopausal women manage hot flashes and night sweats.

There are clothes that help our bodies heal and sleep better. Under Armour's Athlete Recovery Sleepwear (created with quarterback Tom Brady) enmeshes bioceramic technology into pajamas that absorb infrared wavelengths emitted by the body to reflect them back as far infrared energy, to help the body recover faster and sleep better. Start-up Lumiton has just created a sunlight-activated Wear Healthy line powered by laser technology that is designed to deliver multiple wellness benefits: The UV-protecting fabrics are infused with laser dyes that get energized with sunlight to produce red and near-infrared light, whose wavelengths, they argue, increase collagen and muscle growth and reduce pain/inflammation. For intense sports, Aexos has created garments that use biomapping and new materials that protect during impact to reduce whiplash and concussion (Hello, football world). For instance, its Halo shirt has a high collar that remains soft and flexible normally but stiffens and protects on

impact. Think how an adaption of this tech could help bone-fragile elderly people (all those broken hips), providing stiffening, protecting clothing for hard falls.

If the world is mad for collagen as an ingestible beauty supplement, now wearable collagen is a thing. Tech sportswear brand Buki has released a chemical-free Collagen Collection, which embeds collagen into fabrics to provide all-day moisturizing, and the effect never wears out because the fabric is *made* of the protein. And new fabrics are being crafted interweaving other proteins, like milk.

Beyond the futuristic, another trend is weaving "ancient wellness" healing and herbal properties into fabrics and clothing collections. Eco-chic Australian label Kitx uses Ayurvedic recipes to dye their collection and to infuse them with antibacterial properties; menswear line Emily Bode creates aromatic textiles suffused with Indian medicinal plants (such as turmeric, neem and basil). And if we had Earth Shoes in the 70s, trendy footwear designer Astara has essentially created earthing shoes, using crystals, such as black onyx and blue apatite, so that the shoes resonate at the same vibration as Earth's magnetic field (7.83 hertz), and you feel like you're walking barefoot on grass or sand.<sup>17</sup>

*Cruelty-free and vegan clothing/shoes/accessories are a hot trend led by fashion icons, such as Stella McCartney and Calvin Klein. Shown here: garments from Budapest-based Nanushka's vegan haute clothing line.*







*Ministry of Supply uses tech to make clothes smarter and more comfortable. Their smart jacket is activated by a phone app and adjusts the temperature based on the weather, your body temp, and how much you are moving.*

Another trend: high-tech clothes that allow you to express yourself—or what you might call mood clothing. University of Central Florida scientists have created a color-adaptive material (ChroMorphous) that lets wearers control the color and pattern of their clothes using an app; India-based Broadcast Wearables has created a programmable t-shirt called Sygnal that allows people to change designs and slogans with a tap on the logo.

#### **Wearables become...Naturally Wearable, Migrating to Clothes**

Biomeasuring wearables are fast moving into pretty jewelry, just as they're expanding from tracking fitness/performance to measuring things, such as stress and mood. And smart, wellness-tracking tech is now moving into clothes—smart because they're already on us anyway. Ralph Lauren's PoloTech shirt monitors heart rate, stress and energy output; SUPA makes smart, heart-rate monitoring bras; Wearable X even makes connected yoga pants that vibrate to guide users through yoga postures and sequences.

Fast Company recently reported<sup>18</sup> on what looks

to be a crucial breakthrough for the smart clothing space, whose adoption has been held back by the need for these clothes to have a heavy battery (how do you clean it?). Engineers at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, have discovered a way to store and generate energy in fabrics without big power cells. It's complex science (vapor-coated conductive threads, a flexible mesh of electrodes), but it allows fabrics to easily power things, such as temperature sensors, motion trackers and haptic feedback devices. And the creators argue that this method can be "scaled up and remain cost-effective" for mass production. This is the kind of breakthrough that would indeed usher in a much-needed next gen of smart clothing.

#### **Digital Fashion: Clothing You Only Wear Online/ at Social Media**

LS:N Global's 2019 trends report spotlighted a new direction in fashion that may have people over 50 scratching their heads but has a fascinating future: all-digital fashion designed to be exclusively strutted online and at social media sites. It speaks to younger generations where styling oneself on Instagram is as

important (more?) than getting decked out in “real life”—and what could be eco-friendlier, with no material production or transport needed? As LS:N points out, “Avatars are the new fashion models, and younger consumers are already collectively spending millions on virtual outfits for their Fortnite characters.” It’s fashion for the selfie generation that needs no “shelfie.” And if the hysterical consumption of real, resource-devouring clothes has been spurred on by show-off social media culture, this is some digital, eco-conscious payback.

Tech innovation means digital fashion brands can create hyper-realistic and more boundary-pushing clothes. A couple of the new players: Norway-based all-digital retailer Carlings’ Neo-Ex collection costs up to \$20, and your new clothes get digitally “fit” onto your photo by their digital 3D designers. (The company’s mission is to raise awareness of the environmental cost of the throwaway culture associated with fashion influencers.) London’s 3D designer Catherine Taylor creates super-realistic virtual clothing that, when animated, has the movement and physical properties of real fabrics.

### **An Avalanche of Platforms for Recycling, Reselling & Renting Fashion**

We live in a make-buy-trash fashion culture: Eighty-three percent of our clothes/shoes get chucked in the garbage. And in 2018, there

*Smart clothes that boost health and wellbeing include sportswear brand Buki’s chemical-free Collagen Collection, which embeds collagen into fabrics to provide all-day moisturizing. New fabrics are also being crafted from other proteins, such as milk.*

were reports about fashion’s nasty secret: Brands incinerate/shred unsold stock to protect their halo of exclusivity. For instance, Burberry acknowledged it destroyed \$36 million worth of unsold clothes/accessories in 2017!

Thankfully, there is now an incredible surge in new platforms that upcycle all those dead dresses. And a reuse and re-wear revolution is really disrupting the “buy new” fashion world, whether it’s recycling old fabric into new clothes or brands stepping up buyback programs (and rewarding you for that closet clean-out to the big uptick in luxury, used online clothing sites to vintage staging a comeback or the fact that you can now rent your wardrobe. It’s a much more virtuous circular economy, giving many potential lives to each item of clothing.

### **- Refashioning Old Fabric into New Clothes**

So many brands are upcycling cast-off material into new creations. Eileen Fisher’s powerful recycling program called Renew has taken back over a million garments to repurpose, and the old-made-new garments are sold in its stores or pop-up shops where that \$300 jacket gets reincarnated at less than \$100. Reformation is a cult brand that remakes old materials and vintage clothing into feminine creations. Dead stock becomes live stock with brands such as Cambodia’s tonlé, which uses surplus fabric from mass clothing makers and turns it into zero-waste collections, or Queen of Raw, which connects designers and textile firms with dead stock fabrics from factories/brands. Subscription-based brands let people return worn clothes for new ones: For Days lets you send back worn t-shirts for new ones, with the collected tops getting recycled into new tees. Because high-end hotels need to constantly give guests fresh sheets (and the endless laundering means they wear out fast), in 2018, wellness hotel brand Westin began a new program recycling the tens of thousands of pounds of sheets/towels from its global hotels into pajamas for children in homeless shelters—even developing a proprietary way to break down the old fibers to make new fabric.



### - Good Behavior Rewards

So many brands will now reward you for bringing back your unwanted clothes for recycling. Guess just partnered with I:Collect (which gathers/recycles used fashion), so if you bring in five clothing items you get 15 percent off—and H&M has a similar deal. J.Crew partnered with Blue Jeans Go Green, which recycles old denim to build housing for communities in need: Bring back a gently used pair to J.Crew and get a \$20 discount on new ones. Sweden-based Nudie Jeans gives a discount if you return your old jeans, and they provide free repairs for life. UK department store John Lewis's buyback plan: Gather at least £50 worth of clothing, a courier fetches your items, and you get sent a gift card matching their value. Online, sustainable used clothing emporium thredUP has just launched the thredUP x Reformation UPcycle kit: They send you the kit, you fill it with unwanted clothing from any brand, and send it back. For clothing that passes their resale test, you get money or a Reformation credit (and they'll responsibly recycle those clothes that don't make the cut).

### - The New Crop of Online Resale Shops—Luxe for Less

An ever-growing number of online resale shops (where you can both sell and buy) has led to an avid new generation of people hunting down luxury fashion at dramatically cheaper prices, and a perception shake-up around the concepts of value and luxury. The resold clothes/accessories market is forecast to more than double by 2022 (from \$20 billion to \$41 billion), and pre-owned fashion will make up around one-third of the average woman's closet by 2027. This no longer just the province of deal-seekers and millennials: Thirteen percent of this sector is driven by millionaires.<sup>19</sup>

There are so many great sites where you can buy high-end for less: eBay, of course, and RealReal, Poshmark, Vestiaire Collective, Vinted and thredUP. These platforms are innovating: for instance, thredUP has a new collection concept, Remade, where they take mountains of data to identify exactly what resells to create an affordable collection *designed* to be resold. Each item comes with a buyback promise, ensuring

it will be resold on thredUP, with sellers earning 40 percent of the original value. UK-based The Resolution Store is an online, ever-refreshed site where the piles of amazing (wasted) clothes that get gifted to fashion influencers get resold. Even traditional thrift stores, such as Goodwill, are upping their game, as they recently opened "Curated by Goodwill NYNJ, with a new aesthetic and color-coded racks of clothes.

### - Vintage Is Hot

Thrifting for vintage finds, once the province of bohemians and punk rockers, is, according to *Women's Wear Daily*,<sup>20</sup> undergoing a major renaissance, with rare and glamorous vintage clothes now being vocally worn by celebs, sold in the toniest shops, and paraded across social media. If the Instagrams prod us to be fashion clones, vintage fashion is emerging as a deeply eco-friendly way to be truly unique. The Japanese, the largest second-hand clothing market on earth, are so mad for premium vintage that they're depleting the world's stock. One example of a brand bringing new-look vintage to the people: Peekaboo Vintage, whose owner Emily Bothwell lends her private collection of vintage rarities to celebs and offers a big vintage collection at Topshop and ASOS Marketplace, all while broadcasting her eco-mission: #Ilovepreloved.

### - The Rented Wardrobe: Luxe Fashion for the Experience Economy

Platforms that let you rent your wardrobe are rising, which deliver the endorphin rush and variety of fast fashion (you get to dress like celebs dress, rotating in new designer clothes every week), without having all those environment-killing fashion mistakes rotting in your closet. Let's face it. The fashion industry has sold us a bill of goods when they argue that clothes are "investments." While some are longer-wearing choices than others, they simply aren't: fashions and our body shape change all the time, we outgrow our shoes as we age, clothes fall apart, we gain a few pounds, and, after years, we sometimes just don't want to wear that blouse, even if we can't quite say why.

The goliath in the rent-your-wardrobe space is Rent the Runway, which began as a site where

you could rent that special-occasion gown but has expanded to a monthly unlimited membership service (9 million people pay the \$159/mo.) giving constant access to their vast “closet in the cloud”: all the designer clothes/accessories you need for work, fancy events, pregnancies, etc. The process: Members can keep four items at a time (out of their 800,000 units from 500 designers) and rotate them in and out as fast as they want. Every item is delivered in two sizes (smart) and is returned with a prepaid shipping label to the company’s vast warehouse, dry-cleaned, and shipped out to the next wearer. And the company has partnered with WeWork, installing drop-off boxes at the co-working spaces and allowing WeWork members to rent their wardrobe via tablet, with plans to have clothing rental pop-ups in select WeWork locations. Rent the Runway reports their passionate members use the service 120 times a year (that means new items every three days!), which the *New Yorker*<sup>21</sup> has noted is “an extraordinary number of wardrobe refreshes for anyone other than an heiress or a royal,” while also analyzing how the digital rental concept is a democratizing shift in fashion. Why wear that grubby, in-heavy-rotation, little black dress when you can wear something different, such as a soft yellow, silk Escada shift, every week?

Other rent-your-clothes pioneers: Girl Meets Dress and China’s YCloset, along with Dutch brand, Mud Jeans, which leases organic denim that can be either kept, swapped or returned. The Black Tux, focused on renting formalwear to American men, is considering a monthly subscription model, as it finds men are renting for more than special occasions, such as job interviews, dates, etc.

Yes, the idea of renting versus owning what you wear requires a whole new mindset. However, it’s all part of the new experience economy, and you get to experience (and afford) far more clothes than you could ever buy. And the rent-not-own fashion model liberates us from the time and energy eaten up by shopping while freeing up space in our closets.

### **Washing & Caring for Clothes Needs a New Cycle**

The way we wash our clothes is arguably the

most environmentally destructive stage in the whole fashion cycle. Because of our supercharged washing machines, our clothes shed half a million tons of microfibers into waterways every year, equal to 50 million plastic bottles. These microfibers end up in the food chain (so, we may be eating our athleisure!) and are associated with various health risks. We need more basics: from appliance-makers pioneering minimal water use during washing to our need to embrace organic detergents.

Clothes cleaning start-ups are getting creative. Slovenia-based Planet Care has created a cartridge filter to capture the destructive fibers shed during washing and drying, for use by appliance makers or direct-to-consumer. In the future, more clothes will actually clean themselves (so they last longer and longer between cleanings). Australia’s RMIT University has created textiles that are infused with nanostructures that can degrade organic matter (dirt and grime) when exposed to any kind of light. Denmark’s Organic Basics has created organic cotton fabrics (think: underwear) woven with ultrafine silver threads (called SilverTech) that have antibacterial and antimicrobial properties (as well as being odor-controlling).

### **Apps Make the Right Choice Easier**

People want to be sustainable and ethical in their fashion purchases, but, in a sea of brands, it feels impossible. Well, of course, now there’s an app (or tool) for that. Just a few:

**Good on You:** Launched in Australia, starting in 2018, it’s available globally on iOS and Android. With data on 2,000 brands, you can just type in the brand or a type of clothing and instantly see an out-of-five rating along with a summary of how ethical and sustainable the company is. Their algorithm crunches a huge amount of data from certification platforms, such as Fair Trade, Carbon Trust, the Global Organic Textile Standard and Greenpeace Detox, to rank brands in different areas, such as how they treat workers, the planet or animals. The app also makes suggestions to help you discover new “well” fashion brands if your brand comes up “avoid” or “not good enough.”



**Done Good:** It filters fashion brands to help you identify which ones align with your values. It also offers a Chrome extension, so if you're shopping online and Google something like "linen dress," a sidebar pops up with suggestions for ethical brands that offer that item (plus discounts).

**Project Just:** Breaks down brands' ethical and sustainability practices, and, on the "Project Just Wiki," you can find individual brand reports and summaries that nutshell that label's pros and cons.

### The Smart Closet

Most of us have piles of clothes, shoes and accessories, but they get lost in our closets and drawers. Our wardrobe is not optimized. To remedy this, start-ups are using machine learning/ AI and data crunching to help people build smart virtual closets—basically giving you your own digital stylist or "wardrobe wellness" coach. The free (in beta testing) app Save Your Wardrobe builds your wardrobe in two ways. For items you own, you photograph your clothes, and its computer vision technology smartly categorizes each item, even identifying the brand. Users can also let the app automatically read their digital

receipts to collect every detail on new purchases (such as size, color, when you bought). With all this info, the app can then give you a complete window into all your clothes (total value, items), driving a recommendation engine that can plan what you'll wear for the workweek or vacation ahead. And the platform will also help you manage your clothing care, repairs, donations and reselling. The brand's language is heavily focused on wellness, with a "wellbeing tracker," a special tool "that helps you feel better about your wardrobe." Finery is another high-tech wardrobe app that provides smart outfit suggestions and uses a vast database of online outfits and other people's shopping habits to power suggestions for you.

### Rip Off the Labels: Fashion's New Inclusivity around Size and Gender

The fashion industry is all about labels, not just Chanel or Levi's, but labels such as "petite" or "plus-sized" or "man" or "woman"—dictating what you should buy, in what part of the store, and at what racks. But in our era of feminism, body positivity and "wokeness" of all kinds (especially from millennial and gen Y generations), all those labels are being questioned, and the fashion world is embracing a dramatically healthier inclusivity around body shape and gender identity that is shaking up the language they use, the runway, new collections and social media.

### - Clothing that Fits...Without Labels

If there is one uber-trend in fashion these last years, it's that a new comfort is demanded: from the loose, structural and modest high fashion for women to the athleisure, workleisure and streetwear takeover. Fit has rightly become a feminist issue, given an industry that stubbornly

*Trend-setting brands are adding healing and herbal properties to their fabrics and clothing collections. Eco-chic Australian label Kitx uses Ayurvedic recipes to dye their collection and to infuse clothes with antibacterial properties. Photo credit: Levon Baird*







*Kitx incorporates ancient wellness healing traditions in its wellness collections. Photo credit: Levon Baird*

refused to acknowledge the size of actual women's bodies. Brands have retailed the old 0-12 when 40 percent of women globally are overweight,<sup>22</sup> and, for example, the average American woman wears between sizes 16-18.<sup>23</sup> In the last couple of years, companies, such as fast-growing pioneer Universal Standards, or Premme or Isolated Heroes, have stepped in to provide great-looking, sophisticated clothes for women with larger bodies. Mainstream brands, such as Reformation, J.Crew and Madewell, are expanding their size ranges up. They're digesting the data: The size-inclusive market is expected to jump from \$21 billion globally to \$60 billion by 2020.<sup>24</sup>

But the future is total inclusivity and breaking down the walls and labels around size. Ahead-of-the-curves Universal Standards points to the new directions: It gathered a cult following for its plus-sized line, but in 2018 added smaller sizes, and in 2019 will launch collections that span 0-40. Co-founder [Alexandra Waldman](#) has argued,<sup>25</sup> "The world doesn't need another plus-sized

brand. We need to...just start making clothes for women, for everyone." The body-inclusive fashion moves are everywhere, from Asos's fitness line that spans petite to size 30 to Rihanna's new, headline-grabbing, body-diverse Savage x Fenty lingerie collection to Serena Williams's new line that is expanding its sizes up but just calling them the "Great" collection.

### - Gender Fluid Fashion

A raft of studies shows that millennials and gen Z have brave new ideas about gender identity: believing it shouldn't define people, with younger generations embracing much more fluid identities. And the future of fashion is to interrogate the constricting, arbitrary boxes we get shoved into: blue versus pink, dresses versus suits, pretty versus masculine.

The first chapter in that revision is a slew of clothing brands now blurring gender lines, with a rise in unisex or "fluidly sexed" collections. If our first sartorial moment was having a pink or blue onesie clapped on us, now, more baby/kids brands are nixing gender stereotypes. For example, Celine Dion's new childrenswear brand Celinununu has a mission to free children from the "girl" "boy" prison, with gender-free colors and dresses available for both boys and girls. More adult brands have an explicit mission of producing genderless clothes, such as Rebrand, Agender or NYC store, The Phluid Project. More mainstream brands like Asos and Zara have rolled out unisex collections.

If gender-neutral clothes are welcome liberation, in pursuit of that gender-busting "middle" ideal, they can sometimes bleach the richness of what the categories of "feminine" and "masculine" once held. The future, a next stage in "well" fashion, will be more exploration of *all the things* that clothes could let someone be.

### More Meaningful, Creative, Story-Based Fashion

Jessica Jesse, who provided the roadmap for this trend about the myriad ways that fashion will become more "well," notes that while we

humans are hardwired to be individuals, so much of recent (and fast) fashion has robbed us of our uniqueness and histories. In other words, the very joy of fashion: its unique power to express meaning and tell a story. The dopamine rush of swiping a credit card for another pair of identical jeans or workout leggings is not joy.

Jesse predicts a future where personal expression and *meaning* will matter more in fashion. “The Maasai women of Kenya and Tanzania are really the best-dressed women in the world,” noted Jesse. “Everything they put on has a provenance, a complex meaning, and tells a story—every colorful pattern in the many-layered fabrics they wear, every bead on their necklaces, tells who they are and where they came from, over generations.” (Maybe that’s why Pinterest just reported that “African print fashion” was one of the top fashion trends of 2018, with searches up 229 percent—people are hungry for more vibrant, tradition-rich, means-something fashion.)

If, in the West, women have but one day (their wedding) devoted to the concept of meaning and story as the very point of dressing—“something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue”—in the future, Jesse predicts, that kind of philosophy will become more everyday-important. A slower, more mindful, more self-expressive form of dressing will rise, where each item bought or chosen has *value*—whether because it was crafted, not mass-manufactured; or refashioned from something in your mother’s or friend’s closet; or your own more thoughtful experimentation in capturing through your clothes what makes you, you.

## THE FUTURE

The future of fashion is re-thinking each touch-point in the cycle: from how brands design and make our clothes to how we buy, care for, experience and dispose of them. Every single point is broken, and the fashion industry is a massive force in destroying the planet and hurting people. As we’ve seen, there will be so many innovations that usher in a new age of sustainable, “clean” fashion—from a materials revolution crafting fabrics from plastic bottles

and algae to the possibility of on-demand, bespoke clothes that fight overproduction to a surge in platforms that make recycling, reselling and renting our wardrobes a snap. And the new intersection between wellness and fashion will also mean clothing that can optimize our wellbeing—that regulates heat and airflow or helps us sleep or heal.

There are many other things to discuss, such as fashion retailers bringing all kinds of wellness experiences into the store, whether it’s Eileen Fisher’s new Making Space test-store in Brooklyn that offers wellness education/experiences (such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) or big US shoe retailer DSW offering a “Sole Lounge” dedicated to foot wellness, including mani-pedis. A discussion is also needed around delivery getting radically more local (there’s a whole lot of shipping going on in the new online luxury resale and rent-your-wardrobe models).

But the real future is about *people* getting real. It’s about each of us taking a very hard look at our fashion consumption behavior and some deeply honest stock of our emotional relationship to clothing. Because, while the appearance of so many amazing sustainable and ethical fashion brands is a wonderful thing, we will never be able to stop the nightmare environmental destruction caused by the fashion industry unless we stop buying so many new clothes, shoes and accessories.

The most powerful solutions are low-tech. It means embracing that less is truly more, buying less new stuff, and keeping it longer. It means changing our attitude about pricing: We know that an \$8 t-shirt can’t be sustainable or fair to workers. We need to recycle our clothes for reuse or resale. We need to buy more used or vintage or recycled clothing—it’s luxury for less. We need to proudly re-wear our clothes, a rising global movement being embraced by celebs, such as Cate Blanchett, Michelle Obama and Kate Middleton, with social media initiatives, such as it’s “chic to repeat” or #StyleRepeats. We need to wash/dry our clothes less and run cycles on cold. Of course, we will buy new clothes, but let’s proudly celebrate new “labels,” and brands

that choose sustainability and treat workers and animals right.

We think 2019 will be a watershed year where more people will trade in the addictive endorphins of manic fashion consumption for the serotonin (true peace and happiness) of buying slower and choosing clothes with values and meaning. It would be an investment in our mental wellness: Studies show people who focus on material possessions have more anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and intimacy problems.

The overproduction and overconsumption of fashion, fueled by cheap global markets and materials, and which really kicked up in the 70s and went haywire in the 2000s, we think, is really just a blip in history. A more “well” fashion market and mindset is ahead.

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Tourists overwhelm the popular Carnival of Venice, where an estimated 3 million+ visitors flock to the event each year.



## TREND #2

# Wellness Takes on Overtourism

**Worldwide, more than 1.3 billion people travel internationally annually, up from 500 million trips in 1995. The problem is, they all want to see the Mona Lisa.**

***By Laura Powell with Beth McGroarty***

The good news is that the world is becoming more affluent. The good and bad news is that increasing numbers of people are opting to spend their new-found wealth on travel. Worldwide, more than 1.3 billion people travel internationally annually, up from 500 million trips in 1995.

According to the Brookings Institution, “By our calculations, just over 50 percent of the world’s population, or some 3.8 billion people, live in households with enough discretionary expenditure to be considered middle class or rich.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, “the rate of increase of the middle class, in absolute numbers, is approaching its all-time peak. Already, about 140 million are joining the middle class annually and this number could rise to 170 million (per year) in five years’ time.”<sup>2</sup>

That explosion is a double-edged sword. If greater wealth leads to a growing ability to travel, then, in theory, more places could benefit economically from tourism. The trouble, however, is that the tourism expansion happens to be highly concentrated. According to Euromonitor International, 46 percent of all travelers go to just 100 destinations.<sup>3</sup>

Gloria Guevara, the CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), warns of the problems caused by that concentration. “The top 20 country destinations will add more arrivals by 2020 than the rest of the world combined. Places (that) capture a significant share of the travel and tourism pie... may be threatened by their own popularity in environmental, social, or aesthetic terms.”

This clustering of international travelers in a handful of countries is likely to continue. By 2020, Euromonitor projects the top 20 countries in its study will see an additional 121 million arrivals, while the remaining 59 countries will receive around 72 million arrivals.<sup>4</sup> If those new tourists were distributed throughout various regions of the top countries, this might not be a problem. But many first-time globetrotters want to see the highlights—the Mona Lisa in Paris, the Ginza in Tokyo, the canals of Venice—meaning the preponderance of new travelers are treading familiar and crowded tourism routes.

In addition to an emerging middle class, other factors contributing to the recent exponential growth in international tourism include demographic shifts



*Throngs of visitors take photos and coveted selfies of Leonardo DaVinci's famous "Mona Lisa," considered the most visited work of art in the world. The explosion of tourists to highly publicized destinations threaten their environmental, social and aesthetic qualities.*

(those millennials love spending their money on experiences), the awareness of new emerging travel markets, convenience and improved connectivity, and travel options designed to fit a wide range of budgets. Again, while all of these factors democratize travel, which is good, they can also contribute to the growing problem of overtourism.

We've been hearing the term *overtourism* a great deal during the past two years. Headlines about its dangers are everywhere, from CNN to *Condé Nast Traveler* to Skift, a global travel intelligence company. An August 2016 Skift thought piece<sup>5</sup> on the impact of too much tourism spurred the wave of awareness of the problem. By the end of 2017, the WTTC and McKinsey & Company had published "Coping with Success: Managing

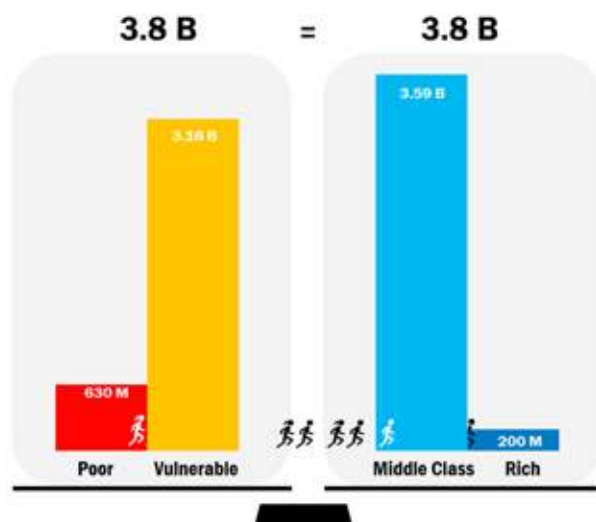
Overcrowding in Tourism Destinations." The report studies how overcrowding threatens the world's natural and cultural wonders. By 2018, the Oxford Dictionary had put overtourism on its annual "Word of the Year" list.<sup>6</sup>

## FUELING THE TREND

### Overtourism Defined

Overtourism is one of the most pressing issues impacting the travel and tourism industry today. This is especially the case in Europe, where the phenomenon is most acute.

One of the challenges in defining overtourism is that its symptoms vary across destinations. In cities, too many tourists can alienate residents and overtax local infrastructure. In UNESCO World Heritage sites like Machu Picchu and Angkor Wat, mass tourism leads to litter-filled landscapes, threatening the spiritual, cultural and physical integrity of sacred places. On the beaches of Thailand and the Philippines and Spain, overtourism damages the environment and degrades the visitor experience. On Easter Island; in Bagan, Myanmar; and in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, hordes of tourists pose threats to local heritage and culture. Regardless of



*According to the Brookings Institution, just over 50 percent of the world's population, or some 3.8 billion people, live in households with enough discretionary expenditure to be considered middle class or rich.*

the symptoms, the common denominator is a negative outcome—whether on the environment, on the local residents, on the culture, or on the tourism experience.<sup>7</sup>

In “Tackling the Problem of Overtourism,” academics Claudio Milano, Joseph M. Cheer and Marina Novelli define overtourism “as the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general wellbeing. The claim is that overtourism is harming the landscape, damaging beaches, putting infrastructure under enormous strain, and pricing residents out of the property market.”<sup>8</sup>

Rafat Ali, CEO and founder of Skift, speaking at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit in Italy, calls overtourism “a potential hazard to popular destinations worldwide...the dynamic forces that power tourism often inflict unavoidable negative consequences if not managed well.”<sup>9</sup>

Barcelona, Venice and Dubrovnik are among the most-cited examples of overtouristed places. According to the McKinsey/WTTC report, “Alienated residents voice a number of concerns, including rising rents, noise, displacement of local retail, and changing neighborhood character. In Barcelona, one of the first cities to elect a mayor who ran on a platform of managing overcrowding, residents complain of rising rents (as landlords opt to rent apartments to AirBnB guests instead of locals), and rowdy tourists taking over the city center. In Venice, tourists are actually displacing locals. In just 30 years, the city’s population was cut in half, to 55,000 and locals continue moving to the mainland to escape the tourist influx.”<sup>10</sup>

The report adds, “Given that the infrastructure used by tourists is shared with essential non-tourism activities, such as commerce and commuting, visitors add to the wear and tear and create challenges in terms of energy consumption and waste management.”<sup>11</sup>

Overtourism isn’t necessarily equivalent to overcrowding. Places affected include remote

islands and national parks. Even small numbers of visitors to these delicate ecosystems can result in large negative impacts in terms of pollution, overuse of natural resources, and harm to wildlife. For example, in both Thailand and the Philippines, some islands have been closed to tourists in order to alleviate harm to landscapes and coral reefs. The New Zealand government has limited full-trail hikers of The Milford Track—a 33-mile trail that winds through the South Island’s mountains and rainforests—to 90 per day during peak season. In 2018, the prefecture of Haute-Savoie in France started limiting the numbers of daily climbers on Mont Blanc.

### Why Overtourism Resonates

For the past 20 years, the travel industry has tried, at varying times, to promote the concepts of ecotourism, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism. But because of their nebulous definitions, and their reliance on the voluntary goodwill of governments, businesses and tourists, sometimes against self-interest, none of these concepts took off. Why has overtourism been able to capture the public imagination in a way that its cousins haven’t? Perhaps, says Ali, it is because the simple portmanteau of overtourism “appeals to basic baser instincts of alarm and fear versus altruism. That makes the business case for understanding and managing tourism better than appealing to the altruism implied by a sustainability label. It puts a framework around the global tourism boom, which often leads to destructive consequences.”<sup>12</sup>

Certainly, the quality of life issues associated with overtourism make it more relatable to the average person. Rising rents in urban areas, pollution, overcrowded public transportation and noise are all experiences that the average city dweller can understand.

One of the solutions oft-cited for easing the ills of overtourism is to encourage visitors to circulate to other locations around a popular region or country. The McKinsey/WTTC report says, “Efforts to redistribute visitors geographically—a tactic we call “spreading”—(should occur) across existing sites and new destinations. Spreading

can ease several of the challenges associated with overcrowding, from creating an even distribution of tourists to drawing tourists away from bottlenecks.”<sup>13</sup>

Destinations can pursue spreading by promoting lesser-known attractions and developing alternative tourism regions. For example, some countries and cities are shifting the focus of promotions away from their most-visited attractions and toward wellness routes. According to the Global Wellness Institute’s Global Wellness Tourism Economy report, “Governments are looking to wellness tourism to diversify their tourist sector, carve out a unique niche, reduce seasonality, combat overtourism in some cases, and bring more benefits to local communities. A small but considerable number of countries also focus on developing this sector as part of their national tourism development/marketing strategies. Worldwide, the number of countries that actively market some form of wellness tourism at the national level has grown from 65 in 2013 to more than 100 today.”<sup>14</sup>

*Experts, such as economist Thierry Malleret, believe wellness travel could attract visitors to under-visited regions, like Italy’s South Tyrol, a high-growth wellness destination.*

### A Dose of Wellness

Overtourism is a wellness issue for the world. After all, travel to overtouristed places is not a well experience for visitors nor for locals. As economist Thierry Malleret puts it, “In the same way that air pollution negatively impacts the wellness experience where one cannot breathe, will overtourism do the same in places where one cannot move?”<sup>15</sup>

Can wellness tourism prove to be the antidote that eases the ills of overtourism? Experts say diversifying the tourism product helps relieve pressure on natural and cultural resources and achieves a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits for residents. Certainly, wellness assets provide a path toward diversification and distribution.

Wellness travel can draw visitors to under-visited regions. According to Malleret, “At the recent Global Wellness Summit, some speakers stated that much of the growth in wellness tourism could take place in underdeveloped countries and areas, thus providing an “escape valve” to the problem of overtourism (one very specific example was Italy’s South Tyrol, a high-growth wellness destination that might also provide an overflow to some of the crowds in Venice).”<sup>16</sup>







*According to GWI's Global Wellness Tourism Economy report, "Wellness tourism growth is very much a tale of developing markets, with Asia-Pacific, Latin America-Caribbean, Middle East-North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 57 percent of the increase in wellness trips since 2015."*

According to GWI's Global Wellness Tourism Economy report, "Wellness tourism growth is very much a tale of developing markets, with Asia-Pacific, Latin America-Caribbean, Middle East-North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 57 percent of the increase in wellness trips since 2015. Over the past five years, Asia is the number one growth sector in both wellness tourism trips and revenues."<sup>17</sup> Many countries have only recently begun thinking about how they can position themselves to attract wellness tourism. They are developing strategies in conjunction with assessing impacts on local communities, according to Katherine Johnston, senior research fellow at the Global Wellness Institute. Starting from this point, she says, "lends itself to a more sustainable model for communities. The thinking of wellness is evolving to not just what's good for me, but what is this bringing to the country and region."

Indeed, the "we" in wellness is an important aspect to consider. According to the GWI report, "In recent years, wellness travel has also been evolving from a focus on being experiential to being transformative. Much of this transformation is still centering on "Me." However, GWI predicts that a "We" perspective will grow as our quest for wellbeing continues to evolve, and wellness travel will see a shift from a consumptive to a contribution mindset. Future wellness travelers will increasingly link personal transformation with the connections they make during travel

and their impacts on the people and the places that they touch, so that wellness travel will become a more meaningful two-way exchange between the travelers and the destination, instead of a one-sided consumptive and commercial transaction. This consumer evolution, along with the development of wellness tourism, can play an important role in mitigating the negative impacts of overtourism in some popular destinations and regions. In a holistic wellness framework, being well and doing good are closely connected. We cannot be truly well if our communities and the environment around us are not well."<sup>18</sup>

The wellness community is largely ahead of the curve in having its collective consciousness awakened to the possibilities of making more ethical choices. Wellness pilgrims are realizing that the health of the places they are visiting, and their impact upon that health, is an important consideration when seeking venues aligning with their ideals of wellness and sustainability.

Additionally, by nature, wellness travelers often venture to destinations far off the crowded, beaten path. Many holistic wellness journeys require travelers to connect with destinations through nature and local traditions. "When you have local healing or medical traditions, spiritual and other practices, it makes the whole experience more authentic," according to Ophelia Yeung, senior research fellow at the Global Wellness Institute.

## Aspects of the Trend

Tourism professionals must seize on the interest of wellness travelers seeking alternative destinations that provide hyper-local, transformational experiences. Tourism boards need to shift their focus from promotion to planning and management challenges in order to spread these visitors to alternative areas. Those destinations with a clear, long-term vision are the most likely to achieve sustainable growth and mitigate—or prevent—overcrowding.

According to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy report, “Tourism leaders should ask questions about their product strategy: What differentiated and unique products are required to meet the needs of target segments? Wellness offerings are being linked with their own natural and cultural assets. Like other forms of specialty travel, wellness travel is not a cookie-cutter experience. Every destination has its own distinct flavors, linked with its local culture, natural assets, foods. The more discerning wellness travelers are interested in what the destination offers that is different. These unique experiences can be built upon indigenous healing practices, native plants and forests, vernacular architecture, street vibes, culinary traditions, history and culture. Wellness is multidimensional, encompassing a large and diverse set of activities and pursuits.”<sup>19</sup>

According to the McKinsey/WTTC report, destinations should opt “to be selective about the tourists they attract, focusing more on the value of tourism rather than the number of visitors. These tourism authorities want to attract ‘good tourists,’ defined as those who respect the destination and contribute to the local economy.”<sup>20</sup> Wellness tourists certainly fall into that category.

National tourism bodies are taking notice of the wellness market. They are realizing that a focus on wellness can be a smart strategy for reducing the effects of overtourism while distributing the benefits of economic development across a country.

Here are some of the reactive and proactive government initiatives aimed at combating overtourism through wellness.

## A Tale of Two Countries: Croatia and Slovenia

Dubrovnik, Croatia is oft-cited as ground zero of the overtourism phenomenon. In 2016 alone, the city’s walled old town, which is home to just over 1,000 people, hosted one million tourists, 800,000 of whom were cruise ship passengers (who spend significantly less money than overnight visitors). Eighty-five percent of all visitors to Croatia come to Dubrovnik, and most of those visits happen during the summer season. According to the Croatian National Tourist Board (CNTB), the country has been keen on “the adoption of decisions in the area of wellness tourism” as encompassed in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia and the Action Plan for the Development of Health Tourism in Croatia, both of which were approved in 2014.

In Croatia, wellness tourism, which is considered to “mainly take place in hotels and health resorts,” is defined as a product group consisting of medical wellness and holistic wellness. According to CNTB, “Wellness tourism is certainly in the group of products by which Croatia wants to achieve a more balanced seasonal and geographical distribution of the tourist traffic, which in practice means a shift from a dominant image of a sun and sea destination (which results in a heavy concentration of tourist activity during summer months) and the affirmation of those parts of Croatia which are from the touristic point of view still less known, although they offer very attractive contents and a high quality tourist offer.”

For example, Croatia has plans to develop a Wellness & Spa Tourism Zone in Varaždinske Toplice, an area with centuries of tradition in health tourism. According to the government’s investment prospectus, “The aim of the integral project is to turn Varaždinske Toplice into the highest quality health tourism destination, which will enable top positioning on the market as a prime destination in continental health tourism.”<sup>21</sup>

While Croatia’s policies have largely been reactive, instated to take the pressure off Dubrovnik, nearby countries are tackling the threat of overtourism proactively before it becomes an issue. For example, the national tourism

plan of Croatia's neighbor Slovenia focuses on geographically dispersing visitors across the country.

According to Maja Pak, the director of the Slovenian Tourist Board, "Slovenia tells a green story. We are surrounded by greenery—towards the Alpine peaks, the green forests, the Adriatic, the Karst, the vineyards, and the Pannonian plains. Awareness of our responsibility to develop tourism in a sustainable manner has become a priority. The 'overtourism' phenomenon has definitely and decisively accelerated this."

To better distribute tourism flows and to develop tourism beyond major tourist destinations, Slovenia has created four macro-regions, three of which are wellness-oriented. The Thermal Pannonian is an area filled with healing waters. The Mediterranean and the Karst take in sea, lakes and caves. The northern Alpine region encompasses the mountains. The capital city of Ljubljana and its surroundings make up the fourth region.

In dividing the country in this way, Slovenia is merely promoting assets that already exist. For example, the country is rich with thermal mineral springs. Today, natural spa resorts and wellness centers combine natural features, years of healing traditions, and contemporary medical approaches in wellbeing and health. The Slovenian Spas Association works with the government to showcase these key assets, which can drive tourism throughout the entire country.

## The World's Newest Wellness Destinations

### Japan

Other countries are also recognizing the potential of wellness tourism for economic development. Japan is now the third largest wellness tourism destination in Asia in terms of total visitors.<sup>22</sup> Traditionally, most of those visitors have come from within Asia. However, recently, the tourism industry writ large has received substantial investments in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. They are in part designed to broaden Japan's international appeal and to distribute its tourism flows.<sup>23</sup> The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) has been developing new tourism routes with wellness features in order to coax travelers away from the congested Kyoto-Osaka-Tokyo corridor. For example, Japan's Dragon Route (or "Shoryudo") winds through the Chubu region, which includes historic and cultural sites, natural landscapes (including Mount Fuji), and plenty of hot springs. According to the JNTO's New York office, the village of Misugi, located in Mie Prefecture, is commencing a wellness travel initiative utilizing existing assets. Promoted features include stargazing, forest bathing and a beer onsen.

Meanwhile, high-end brands, including InterContinental, Hyatt and Marriott, are opening resorts in lesser-known (among international visitors) tourism destinations within the country. All are keen on capitalizing on the attraction of the traditional Japanese spa experience.

*LEFT: Croatia plans to develop a Wellness & Spa Tourism Zone in Varaždinske Toplice, which would take pressure off popular locations, such as Dubrovnik. Photo credit: Croatian National Tourist Board/Ivo Biocina RIGHT: Slovenia is rich with thermal mineral springs. Today, natural spa resorts and wellness centers, such as the Orhidelia Spa Center, combine natural features, years of healing traditions, and contemporary medical approaches in wellbeing and health. Photo credit: Slovenian Tourist Board*







*The Japan National Tourism Organization is developing wellness-focused tourism destinations, such as Misugi, which promotes natural assets like stargazing and forest bathing. Photo credit: Hinotani Onsen Misugi Resort*

For example, Beppu, on the southern island of Kyushu, is a renowned onsen retreat among the Japanese. The scenic area has more than 2,400 natural springs. With the 2019 opening of the ANA InterContinental Beppu Resort & Spa, the area is aiming to increase its international tourism numbers significantly. The Lake Biwa Marriott Hotel, located by Japan's largest lake, is also designed as a wellness destination. The Park Hyatt Niseko Hanazono, slated to open in 2020 in one of Japan's prime ski destinations, will also have a large wellness component.

### Cities

Even in the world's most crowded cities, people need a respite. It may seem counterintuitive to place a wellness hospitality property smack in the middle of a major metropolitan area. But the fact is, several of the world's top wellness brands are moving beyond their roots in idyllic locations to set up shop in big cities. Aman is already in Tokyo; Six Senses recently opened in Singapore; and both wellness brands are coming to New York City

in 2020. Kerzner International Holdings Limited recently announced it is evolving its One&Only portfolio to include One&Only Urban Resorts. The first will open in Dubai. Fivelements, which runs a Balinese eco-wellness resort, is launching a wellness day spa concept in Hong Kong. According to Andrew Gibson, co-founder of the Wellness Tourism Association, "These examples of new wellness ventures in urban locations are a result of the overwhelming global interest in wellness and the increasing evidence that being healthy is not a preserve for the wealthy."

Each of the companies mentioned is approaching its urban strategy differently. Aman's urban properties appear to operate more like standard hotels, albeit with large spas and other wellness components. According to Roland Fasel, COO of Aman, the city hotels are designed around the brand pillars of high-touch service, creating experiences that derive from the local DNA, a holistic wellness component, uncomplicated luxury and understated elegance, and generosity



of space. The orienting ethos of it all, says Fasel, is the idea of welcoming people into a home, which applies whether a guest is in the middle of nowhere or smack dab in the core of the Big Apple.

According to a press release, “One&Only Urban Resorts will challenge the conventional city hotel. In a buzzing and busy city, a place to escape the bright lights is always needed, a place to unwind; all urban resorts will offer beautifully designed green spaces to provide a serene sanctuary year-round.” Each urban resort will house a One&Only Gym, cycle and yoga studios, and a spa that is open around the clock.

Six Senses’ city properties will offer creative wellness programming, including options for social wellness. According to Anna Bjurstam, vice president, spas and wellness at Six Senses, “For example, in Singapore, where space is more limited, it’s about designing an immersive experience throughout the hotel through the content we are creating.” In such properties, where space is tight, she says “wellness shows up in different ways.” For example, the Six Senses Duxton hosts a resident Chinese doctor, who provides complimentary consultations for guests. According to Six Senses CEO Neil Jacobs, Six Senses in Singapore will also be developing a restaurant menu with Chinese medicinal offerings.

But Six Senses New York will be wellness on steroids (to mix metaphors). The most revolutionary aspect of the New York property will be its attention to social wellness. “We are aspiring to tackle one of biggest threats to wellness—loneliness—by introducing our first Six Senses Place, where hotel guests and members can be part of a community,” Bjurstam said.

A dedicated member and guest-only space will include a bathhouse, a clinic, a shared work space, halls for wellness lectures and other events, and a restaurant. Members and guests will also have access to blood tests, biomarker testing and other scientific treatments. And of course, there will be a very large spa.

Meantime, Fivelements is developing a standalone urban retreat in Hong Kong’s Causeway Bay. Yoga & Sacred Arts retreat is expected to open in 2019. The center will feature holistic practices aimed at fostering self-exploration, mental and physical health, and overall wellbeing. Designed to cater to urban wellness tribes, it will offer an array of yoga and dynamic sacred arts practices, plant-powered nutrition, and integrative wellness programs. There will also be plenty of bespoke therapies, including bodywork, intuitive healing, energy work and wellness coaching.

*In Hong Kong, Fivelements is developing a standalone urban wellness retreat, expected to open in 2019. Yoga & Sacred Arts will feature holistic practices and emphasize overall wellbeing.*





*Six Senses's city properties offer creative wellness programming, including options for social wellness. Six Senses Duxton hosts a resident Chinese doctor, who provides complimentary consultations for guests. Photo credit: Seth Power*

## THE FUTURE

As we have discussed, overtourism is rearing its ugly head throughout the world. But given the recent publicity surrounding the issue, governments, businesses and travelers are starting to take heed. In large part, wellness tourism can be part of the solution.

At the 2018 Global Wellness Summit, Dr. Jean-Claude Baumgarten, the former president and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council, stated that wellness tourism could “be a solution to overtourism, by diversifying an established destination’s tourism product” and opening up new areas that travelers might not have previously considered.

Resolving the problems involved with overtourism starts with a change of mindset for all stakeholders. Fortunately, the wellness community is, by nature, a mindful group. And where wellness and mindfulness are “dominant lifestyle values,” according to GWI senior research fellow Ophelia Yeung, changing behavior by encouraging ethical choices is possible.

Governments are increasingly recognizing that quantity over quality is not a winning proposition when it comes to attracting tourists. Pristine destinations like Bhutan and Botswana have long limited tourism numbers, and now other countries are starting to protect their natural sites with the same strategy. Governments are also realizing that less-visited regions and contemplative landscapes can be competitive wellness assets. The 2018 Global Wellness Economy Monitor points out that wellness can move visitors out of a country’s over-visited regions to rural areas.

For example, in Italy, South Tyrol and Emilia-Romagna are actively promoting their wellness features, which may, in part, help draw visitors away from the crowds of Venice, Florence and Cinque Terre.

Another promising factor is that millennials and their younger Generation Z cohorts are always looking for the next big thing...often on Instagram. Social media is a way for unknown places with small budgets to gain traction, especially among “tribes” with very specific interests, including wellness travel.

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Students meditate at their desks during the David Lynch Foundation's Quiet Time program. The Foundation is currently funding an independent study on the impact of self-transcending meditation on 4,000 NYC public school students—from how it impacts anxiety and depression to graduation rates.



## TREND #3

# Meditation Goes Plural

**No more singular, generic “meditation.” People will get clearer about the core meditation types and their unique brain impacts—just as this explosive market will bloom into many varieties.**

***By Beth McGroarty***

It's hardly breaking news that meditation is one of the most powerful wellness trends. In a few short years, it has been installed—along with a healthy diet and exercise—as one of the three pillars of wellbeing. With promising early evidence that it's a uniquely powerful solution for our stressed-out, digitally addicted, distracted times, we've all seen the [magazine covers](#)<sup>1</sup> announcing that a “Mindful Revolution” has arrived and how meditation is the anxiety-attacking and focus-restoring choice of everyone from Silicon Valley entrepreneurs to government leaders. And if it feels like nothing has ever been talked about so much, now people are actually doing it. According to the [CDC](#),<sup>2</sup> for example, meditation is now the fastest-growing health trend in America, with the number of meditators tripling between 2012-2017. Meditation studios, brands and apps are spawning worldwide—with Apple naming mental wellness/ mindfulness apps the #1 app trend of 2018. It can sometimes feel as if we've reached maximum, peak mindfulness and meditation...

...But we haven't because the growth in people practicing is matched by profound confusion around the very concepts. For something that delivers clarity, there's serious confusion around how the terms “meditation,” “mindfulness” and “mindful” are used, which infects many of the medical studies. One crucial problem is that the terms meditation and mindfulness get used generically and interchangeably, when there are general agreement and scientific research to support that there are really three core types (as we shall see below) that involve different practices, which translates into different impacts on the brain, and different benefits (outcomes): 1) focused attention 2) open monitoring (which includes mindfulness meditation) and 3) self-transcending meditation. In the recent meditation boom, it's the different breeds of mindfulness meditation (paying attention in the present moment without judgment) that have become dominant, and it's led to a conflation of all meditation with mindfulness. And if mindfulness meditation is a real practice (a noun), through the

marketing of “mindful everything,” it has become a fuzzy adjective and lifestyle trend applied everywhere—whether “mindful eating,” “mindful parenting” or “mindful boxing.” What’s next? Mindful waterboarding?

And this mixing up of all meditation types has infected—and hence devalued—too much of the clinical research. There are now hundreds of randomized and neuroimaging studies on meditation approaches, but too many are plagued by inconsistent definitions and a muddled methodology about what they’re exactly studying, whether a focused attention or self-transcending meditation type. This is what happens: in meta-analyses, researchers average the results of disparate meditation studies’ impact on X to tally up results and then make pronouncements, such as “meditation is positive for pain” or “meditation shows little impact on anxiety.” With such generalizations, you’re already in Dangerville. What kind of meditation—at what dose? And these methodological problems in studies are leading to a serious backlash, with recent headlines<sup>3</sup> such as, “[Our Obsession with Mindfulness Is Based on Limited Scientific Evidence](#),” and where groups of top scientists argue that “for all the excitement about mindfulness meditation in contemporary culture, evidence of its benefits is limited.” Note how even in the critiques of the muddled studies, mindfulness meditation stands in for all meditation!

Meditation is at an adoption and conceptual tipping-point. Even though types have been practiced in Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish traditions for over 5,000 years, as a modern endeavor, it’s very young. The future: Meditation will move from a singular to a plural practice—from a generic concept to specific types, with people starting to understand their specific brain mechanisms and outcomes. More research will study (to start, at least) the three main types head-to-head and with more solid randomized controlled trials when types are studied individually.

This is crucial because the hot market of meditation will “go plural” in a whole other way.

If people used to take a “meditation” class or do “meditation” at a wellness retreat, now new ancient and modern breeds will multiply—with very different practices from Kundalini yoga to sophrology trending in 2019. More apps and meditation studios will become one-stop shops for diverse meditation types, with sometimes jaw-droppingly full menus. The wave of new brain and meditation technology will keep rising, such as the Muse headband that uses biofeedback to customize meditation practices or more wellness destinations experimenting with mild-brain-zapping transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) to make meditation easier and deeper.

At the 2018 Global Wellness Summit, new approaches in mental wellness were a big topic, with the Global Wellness Institute’s Mental Wellness Initiative’s in-depth report, “[Mental Wellness: Pathways, Evidence and Horizons](#)” released, analyzing the dizzying array of evidence-based mental wellbeing practices now available. As the report’s editor Professor Gerry Bodeker (University of Oxford, Columbia University) notes, “Meditation is mainstreaming now, and it’s just in time to counteract the epidemic of stress that threatens our society.”

And it was Bob Roth’s talk (CEO of the nonprofit David Lynch Foundation and one of the world’s top experts on meditation) that inspired and set the entire direction for this trend. Roth has taught Transcendental Meditation (TM) for 50 years to thousands of people: from at-risk youth and veterans with PTSD to celebs such as Oprah Winfrey, Hugh Jackman, Katy Perry, Jerry Seinfeld and George Stephanopoulos. And at the David Lynch Foundation he has overseen bringing TM for free to over one million inner-city kids in 35 countries. Roth argues that we need to adopt the framework of the three core meditation types (which may be familiar to research insiders but are not to most regular people) and consider how the dozens of meditation varieties fit into the three core types.

And it’s Roth that predicts—in 2019 and beyond—that meditation will move from singular and generic to plural and specific. As he notes,



*Meditation spaces at hotels are becoming increasingly important and stunning. At Four Seasons Chiang Mai in Thailand, private classes using breath work, visualization and mindfulness meditation happen at a lofted barn with sweeping views of the rice paddies below.*

“The current science and understanding of meditation is at a very early stage. Imagine if we categorically stated, ‘medicine affects health,’ or ‘diets affect weight loss.’ It’s not very helpful information. The future is more medical studies evaluating the types head-to-head and more people grasping that specific meditation practices have specific benefits for specific people. It’s not that one is better than the other, per se. And it shouldn’t be an either/or but really a yes/and—because we should think of meditation types as a personal toolbox. Definitions will get sorted out, the research will focus on specific types and outcomes, and it’s only this that will take meditation from hyped fad to an evidence-based medical intervention.”

## **FUELING THE TREND**

### **Rising stress and depression**

Rates of anxiety and depression are galloping around the world; one could cite hundreds of studies. Globally, one in six people now has at least one mental or substance abuse disorder (over 1.1 billion people)—with anxiety disorder ranking #1.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, 67 percent of people report that they’re more stressed than they were

five years ago;<sup>5</sup> in the US, major depression is up 33 percent since 2013 (and up 47 percent for millennials);<sup>6</sup> In China, 40 percent of adults report they experience a lot of stress daily.<sup>7</sup> While studies on different types of meditation’s impact on stress and mood need to test types head-to-head, the research on various meditation types’ impact on stress and mood is too promising, and the world is desperate for low-cost solutions with no side effects. So many early studies suggest this: from those indicating that meditation produced changes in brain circuits involved in regulating emotion to those showing that mindfulness meditation reduced stress markers, such as cortisol. The cost of all this stress—as it’s the seed of so many diseases from high blood pressure to Alzheimer’s—is simply unsustainable. And calming our “gotta, gotta, gotta” minds will not only drive growth in all “meditations,” it will drive the study of which ones work best for individuals.

### **Meditation: Where Yoga Was Two Decades Ago—Mainstreaming & Evolving**

Just a few years ago, meditation was a fringe activity for insider wellness types, but it’s now clocking the meteoric growth yoga did 20 years ago. While there’s no global data on meditation

adoption and market size, you can look at the US market as one snapshot: [Pew Research](#) reports that 40 percent of Americans say they meditate at least weekly,<sup>8</sup> and the [CDC reports](#) meditation is now tied with yoga as the top two alternative medical practices in the US.<sup>9</sup> It's all about exploding access: more meditation at fitness studios and more dedicated meditation centers, more meditation at work and in schools—and, of course, via meditation apps, which are pulling in hundreds of millions in investment and reaching hundreds of millions of people. It's a market growing exponentially, set to double, for example, in the US, from \$1.2 billion in 2017 to \$2 billion by 2022.<sup>10</sup> And the growth is all part of a skyrocketing, larger “anxiety economy”—that's risen because of things such as the smartphone, the 24-hour bad news cycle, social media and climate change stress. Like all markets, whether fitness or yoga, industry growth leads to diversification (new brands and new models). Think of the head-spinning number of yoga and boutique fitness brands/concepts that now exist. That same evolutionary force will now take the meditation market “plural.”

## ASPECTS OF THE TREND

### Understanding the 3 core types of meditation & their brain impact becomes more important

Roth argues that to ground our understanding of meditation and its effects, we should first embrace a three-type meditation classification paradigm: 1) focused attention 2) open monitoring and 3) self-transcending. While there are hundreds, if not thousands, of meditation practices and brands, the three categories analyzed below represent the generally agreed-upon and best-studied *mechanisms* that are operating across the increasingly crowded meditation landscape. All are legitimate techniques involving different practices and outcomes. (And all have benefits—you wouldn't want to choose between Vitamins A, C or D). Most meditations will activate more than one of those mechanisms or exist on a continuum between open monitoring and focused attention.

More head-to-head studies on these core types

are starting to clarify how they impact the brain and the benefits they have. A 2017 Max Planck Institute [study](#) (cited below) studying brain MRIs compared focused attention and open monitoring meditation against each other, finding that these types of meditation are associated with changes in different brain regions. An earlier [study](#) was the first to analyze the impact of the three meditation types on electrical brain waves, whose frequencies correlate with a different state of consciousness (more below).

There are five brain waves, each with a distinct purpose—from fastest to slowest they are Gamma, Beta, Alpha, Theta and Delta.

### Focused Attention Meditation

This type of meditation involves training to clear the mind of thoughts through concerted concentration exercises, such as focusing on objects, the breath or bodily sensations. And the mind is brought back to that object of focus when it wanders. As Roth notes, in this form of meditation, thoughts themselves are often seen as the disrupter, even the obstacle to mental calm, focus and higher awareness. Vipassana meditation, believed to come from Buddha himself, as well as other meditations from the Tibetan Buddhist and Chinese traditions, are part of the focused attention category.

**Brain impact:** Because the meditator is intensely controlling his or her own attention, research<sup>11</sup> shows that the practice creates very fast Gamma brain waves at 20–50 cycles/second (also with some Beta activity), which are involved in higher processing tasks and cognitive functioning, such as learning, memory, and the binding of our senses in regard to perception. Research<sup>12</sup> also shows that focused attention meditation leads to a higher volume of gray matter in prefrontal brain regions, which are all about attention, higher-level awareness and monitoring. Other research has suggested that this form of meditation reduces depression and anxiety and improves sleep.

Roth summarized, “It can be a particularly powerful tool to train the mind to focus more intently and to be less scattered in your thinking.”



### Open Monitoring Meditation (Includes Mindfulness Meditation)

The most practiced breed in the West (as it includes mindfulness meditation), open monitoring meditation, as Roth puts it, does not see *thoughts* as the disruptor of our calm but rather it is often the *content* of our thoughts. It involves training in how to pay attention in the present moment and, as (negative, stressful) emotions and thoughts and physical sensations come up, learning to observe them in a dispassionate, nonjudgmental way. So, it's not about stopping thinking or emptying the mind, but rather learning how to dispassionately observe the mind's "content." You often begin open monitoring meditation with a body scan (where you move through the body slowly, paying attention to each part and sensation) or by focusing on your breath and then expand to opening up awareness to thoughts, sounds and feelings that arise.

It spans many familiar kinds of meditation, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), created by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979, an eight-week course offered in clinics and hospitals around the world that uses both the body scan and breath awareness. (Kabat-Zinn was a powerful force in bringing mindfulness meditation to the West.) Or Loving Kindness Meditation, which often uses repetition of phrases to extend kindness and love out from the self to loved ones and the rest of the world. It includes chanting meditations or sound meditations/baths that use vibrations and sound to drive present-time awareness. And it includes the vast majority of guided meditations served up on the exploding number of meditation apps, such as "meditation for work" or "meditation for grief."

**Brain impact:** Research<sup>13</sup> indicates that open monitoring (and mindfulness) meditation primarily generates slow Theta brain waves at 4–8 cycles/second (and secondarily Alpha 2 waves at 10–12 cycles/second). Theta waves are dominant in daydreaming and sleep and are associated with a relaxed, emotionally open and connected state of mind. There are many studies on open monitoring/mindfulness meditation. A

Carnegie Mellon University study showed that an eight-week mindfulness meditation course shrunk the amygdala (the brain's "fight or flight" center, involved with fear and stress). And as the amygdala shrinks the prefrontal cortex (that region of high-level brain processes, such as awareness, focus and decision-making) becomes thicker—so our primal responses to stress get overtaken by more thoughtful, calm ones. As Zev Schuman-Olivier, director of the Center for Mindfulness and Compassion at Cambridge Health Alliance (associated with Harvard Medical School) summarized,<sup>14</sup> "What we see with mindfulness meditation is this improvement in attention and cognitive control...and in emotional regulation again and again."

### Self-Transcending Meditation

This type of meditation is strikingly different than focused attention or open monitoring/mindfulness in that it's not concerned with regulating thoughts or feelings and involves no mental effort—so it's very easy to learn and do. If focused attention and open monitoring meditation involves using cognitive processes to change cognitive processes (thoughts to change thoughts), self-transcending meditation does not. Using the analogy of the ocean, which can be turbulent at the surface but quiet at its depth, Roth says the mind is the same: naturally active on the surface and quiet at its depth. TM utilizes a mantra (a sound that has no meaning) to effortlessly "dive within" to access the field of silence that lies deep within the mind. Unlike other forms of meditation that are often taught in large groups - or through an app, book or tape - TM is taught in personal instruction from a certified instructor who has completed a six-month training program. Other modern examples of self-transcending meditation include the practices served up at ZivaMeditation.com or Deepak Chopra's Primordial Sound Meditation, which forges your mantra from a particular vibrational sound prevalent at the place/time of your birth.

**Brain impact:** Research<sup>15</sup> shows that self-transcending meditation increases Alpha 1 brain waves at 8–10 cycles/second, which are associated with quiet, flowing thoughts, such as

daydreaming, and with states of relaxed alertness (it's the resting state for the brain). TM has been widely studied, with more than 400 peer-reviewed studies conducted since 1970. And the research shows everything from how it calms the amygdala reactivity center and strengthens connections within the prefrontal cortex, which is also called the executive center or CEO of the brain. Numerous studies have also documented its benefits to heart health, including a [2013 report](#) from the American Heart Association that found TM to be as effective as medication in reducing blood pressure for patients with high blood pressure. A US Department of Defense-funded study found TM to be more effective in reducing PTSD symptoms in veterans than prolonged exposure therapy.

Roth also notes that TM awakens the brain's default mode network, also known as the "imagination network," where creative, innovative thoughts arise. On the other hand, research shows that the more effortful techniques of Focused Attention and Open Monitoring actually suppress the imagination network. It may be why TM is so popular with creative types.

#### Action on the Meditation Front for 2019

Meditation will continue to blow up in 2019, taught at more schools and workplaces (meditation rooms are the hot, new perk)—and found everywhere from airports to museums to your Peloton bike. More ancient and new breeds will take off as people become more comfortable with the practice and want to explore further—and realize multiple meditations have multiple benefits. The landscape will get more confusing. (Yes, there's now baby goat meditation, what could be more distracting?) Some practices

that call themselves "meditation" will not be a real meditation practice but will rather reach for a mindful or meditative state (our old noun-adjective problem). What's fundamentally an ancient practice will increasingly be delivered by slick apps. And a whole new slate of "meditation technologies" will track our meditating brains and interact with us to deepen the experience.

#### A FEW MEDITATION TRENDS TO WATCH...

##### Sophrology

One unique thing about the wellness world is the constant importing and exporting of established practices, and out of Europe now comes sophrology—or "dynamic meditation." Sophrology is an emerging stress-management technique that marries components from Eastern meditation practices and Western relaxation concepts—and it's gaining serious interest worldwide. The practice was created by Spanish neuropsychiatrist Alfonso Caycedo in the 1960s as a structured method for conquering anxiety and building consciousness, and it's a technique (there are 12 levels of study) that combines components of mindful meditation (Tibetan Buddhist and Japanese Zen); breathwork; guided visualization; phenomenology; and gentle, mindful movement, such as yoga.

It's been popular across Europe for decades (where there are thousands of practitioners): used in the medical world, in schools to help students manage stress, to help women prepare for birth, in the corporate world to prevent burnout, and with sports stars to get in the right mind for big events. In places such as France and Switzerland, it's routinely covered by health insurance. And now this 50-years-young practice is gaining traction in the UK, Asia and the US. It's particularly on the rise in the UK, with the shining example being the three BeSophro clinics in London, run by Dominique Antiglio, author of the best seller *The Life-Changing Power of Sophrology*. And now, there's a new Online from BeSophro platform launching so the rest of the

*BeSophro clinics in London, run by Dominique Antiglio, author of the best seller The Life-Changing Power of Sophrology, are a shining example of the rise of Sophrology in the UK. Photo credit: Daniella Staub Photography*





*Kundalini yoga incorporates chanted mantra, dynamic breathing techniques, movement and asanas, and many mindfulness-based meditations.*

world can train. You can now practice sophrology at a wellness resort, such as Spain's SHA Wellness Clinic; at numerous studios in Hong Kong, such as the Integrated Medicine Institute; via many French apps, such as Sophrologie Avec Petit BamBou; or at the American Sophrology center in Scottsdale, Arizona. (It's just picking up in the US, but celeb fans include Arianna Huffington.)

Practitioners agree that it's a powerful way to reach calm and self-awareness for those who may struggle with meditation. No complex thinking or postures required, it only involves 20–30 minutes a day, and, because it has 50 years of solid use in Europe and its roots are medical, it may appeal to skeptics or those put off by the spiritual vibe of some meditation classes.

### **Kundalini yoga**

Of all the breeds of yoga, the most meditation-heavy, Kundalini yoga, has got to be the hottest right now. And moving from sophrology to it, we're definitely moving from the secular to the spiritual. It has an air of mystery about it, as ancient Hindu Kundalini yoga teachings were kept secret (and reserved for nobility) for thousands of years until Yogi Bhajan brought it to the West, you guessed it, in the 60s. It's a millennia-old mash-up of most of the yoga tools, both spiritual and physical, and incorporates chanted mantra, dynamic breathing techniques, movement and asanas, and many mindfulness-based meditations. (Each sequence is called a kriya and has a sequence of these components, with classes ending with a meditation.) Practitioners wear all

flowing white, the teacher wears a turban, and with gong baths and group chanting, walking into a class feels like witnessing the uber-trend of once New Age practices going mainstream before your very eyes. Kate Hudson and Alicia Keys are just two of the celeb devotees.

It may also be trending because it meets people's new desire for a personalized plurality of meditations, as the founder Bhajan passed on thousands of very specific meditations designed for specific goals: whether to boost beauty or energy or to fight stress and addictions. The practice is very prescriptive: you perform meditations for a specific challenge a certain number of times with precise gestures.

People credit Guru Jagat, a young American practitioner, with bringing Kundalini yoga to the millennial generation and making it very cool. Her RA MA TV, dubbed the "Netflix of Kundalini yoga," broadcasts her virtual classes to thousands of subscribers in 180 countries. More Kundalini yoga classes are now popping up in cities everywhere—from Singapore (Kundalini Yoga with Akashaki) to Santa Monica (Kundalini Yoga by the Sea).

### **Mindful fitness surges**

One of the most powerful wellness trends is adding mindfulness to the workout, either in fitness classes where you're trained to move consciously with intention and/or by ending

*Breathpod works with groups, individuals and businesses to harness the power of their breathing for better health and wellbeing.*







*Jeannette von Johnsbach offers her unique BioMeditation sessions at the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills.*

classes with a dose of mindful meditation (this trend's practices fit into the open monitoring category). That long-lived hyphen between "mind-body" is being strengthened and literally addressed in this trend, and the new mindful fitness speaks to people wanting solutions that meld physical and mental wellness in one class or platform. You can see fitness expanding to mental wellness everywhere, such as in Peloton's recent foray into meditation (and yoga), and they're now serving up on-demand meditation sessions, such as breath-focused and guided visualization classes.

Being mindful while moving has ancient precedents: Walking meditation has long been a Buddhist practice where one focuses on the breath or on the body's movement through space.

And now there is a rush of mindfulness-meets-fitness moves globally. Pioneering fitness chain Equinox (US and UK) integrates mindfulness meditation practices into classes, with a fitness class called HeadStrong revolving around mindfulness. Running shoe company Asics just created "the world's first running track to train your mind" (called the Blackout Track), which removes light and all distractions to create a "meditative running environment." SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain has a new weeklong fitness

program that intersperses physical workouts, such as boxing and hiking, with stress-reducing practices, such as meditation and sophrology, to work both the body and mind in equal parts. The NYC fitness program Body Activation, created by a professional dancer, blends the hot trend of stretching with the open monitoring-based body scan, progressing from the feet to the head—and ends the physical training with meditation.

Combining mindfulness training with fitness obviously seems best suited for exercise that's more "mindless," such as cardio and running, because with sports that require intense concentration (such as boxing or football), you would run the concentration needed for mindful meditation right up against the intense focus needed to execute the moves—diminishing, rather than adding to, both. There isn't much clinical evidence yet around the mindful fitness concept, but an interesting [study](#) from Rutgers University found that MAP (Mental and Physical) Training (combining aerobic exercise with silent mindfulness meditation) led to some eye-opening results, including significant neurogenesis and a greatly boosted ability to concentrate—while 40 percent of participants in the "combo" clinical intervention found a permanent solution to their depression issues.



### More mindful spa experiences

More spas are creating mindfulness and treatment mash-ups. Some might begin with a guided mindfulness meditation session, then move on to treatments, and finish with a guided visualization—like those at Mexico’s Nizuc Resorts & Spa. Things are getting pretty creative. At the Shore Club Turks and Caicos, they offer an out-in-nature Twilight Ceremony (held at twilight), which combines mindful meditation with massage, sage burning and prayers.

The Mindfulness Spa Experience at Santuario LeDomaine spa (at Abadia Retuerta LeDomaine) in Spain, uses virtual reality technology to deliver guided meditations—a pretreatment ritual that focuses the guest’s mind on the treatment to come while guiding their breathing—to make the touch experience and stress-reduction deeper. One of the hottest treatments in L.A. is Jeannette von Johnsbach’s BioMeditation sessions at the Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, a long, hands-on therapy that combines meditation to incite a dream-like state with touch and energy healing to clear energy blockages.

### “Shaking meditation” is shaking

A practice called Tension and Trauma Release Exercise (TRE) —that’s being called “shaking meditation”—is on the rise. And while it’s not a meditation practice per se, its effects could be called meditative. It involves a series of controlled exercises that take you to that place where your muscles start to tremble, to unlock the body’s tension and trauma of getting stuck in protective patterns (tense muscles, clenched jaws, shallow

breathing, etc.). The goal is to reduce stress, shut down the fight-or-flight instinct, and rest your mind. (Yes, you will be shaking on the floor.)

Classes are being offered at more yoga and wellness studios. It’s big in the UK, with at least 100 TRE providers, and it’s where TRE guru Steve Haines teaches at the chic Triyoga studios in London. Learning how to shake off your trauma has been taught everywhere from Sacred Space in Miami, to the new TRE for Life studio in Uganda. There’s also a phone app ([Stress Less TRE](#)), and soon there will be a UK [TRE Association](#), where trainers will share their tips and expertise.

### More drop-in meditation studios—with deep, diverse menus

As much as we hate the phrase “X is the new Y,” the boom in drop-in meditation studios worldwide indicates that meditation is very much the new yoga. There are so many examples, including pioneers such as NYC’s MNDFL (now with three locations) and L.A.’s The DEN Meditation (now with two). So many more cool, around-the-corner meditation places are opening all the time, such as Inhere meditation studio in London (founded by a neuroscientist); Re:Mind in London; Meditation Bar in Austin, Texas; Enhale in Hong Kong; and MINDSET Brain Gym in Toronto (where they use brain wave-sensing tech to chart your progress). In New York, you don’t even need to “drop in” to do your mindfulness meditation because the Be Time meditation studio on wheels drops right in on you.

What’s so striking when you peruse these studios’ all-day programming is just how *many* types

*In New York, Be Time meditation studio on wheels comes to clients, allowing them to do their mindfulness meditation class without traveling. There are also an estimated 1,500 meditation and mindfulness apps that make meditation more accessible, whether you are at home, work or traveling. Headspace alone has 35 million users in 190 countries while Calm has driven 26 million downloads with 50,000 new signups each day.*





*New York-based INSCAPE is one example of the boom in drop-in meditation studios worldwide. The studio offers guided meditations that follow the logic of the core types described above: mindfulness meditation, focused attention, mantra-based meditation, etc.*

of meditation are on offer. And it's nice to see a studio, such as NYC's suave INSCAPE, offer guided meditations that follow the logic of the core types based on evidence for brain changes: mindfulness meditation, focused attention, mantra-based meditation, etc.

Another major trend in the wellness world<sup>16</sup> is new wellness center and club concepts that put incredibly comprehensive wellness offerings (doctors, coaches, yoga, meditation, fitness, stress-reduction treatments, healthy nutrition, etc.) all under one roof—such as the new THE WELL in Manhattan. And these new wellness clubs and studios are rolling out extraordinary and “plural” meditation menus. HealHaus, the new, headline-grabbing wellness studio in Brooklyn (which is all about healing mental wellness approaches that recognize that life can sometimes be pretty tough) features an amazing lineup of meditation classes—with (as we count) 14 different meditation classes every day, from transcendence meditation to loving kindness meditation to mindful breath meditation—and that doesn't even include their workshop menu. (They plan to open in cities such as L.A., Washington D.C. and Atlanta.)

When Six Senses opens its first urban wellness resort in NYC in 2019, it will feature the ahead-of-the-curve Six Senses Place, a wellness club open to both hotel guests and local members. It's hard to even wrap your mind around all their planned wellness programming (for a wellness lover, it will be like being in a healthy candy store). And their menu around meditation and other neuroplasticity-driving brain boosters will be wildly creative: from multiple meditation and mindfulness classes to breathwork to chanting to conscious movement to meditative visual healing to nootropics to binaural beats to neurofeedback to expertly delivered Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS), where low levels of neurostimulation are targeted at different areas of the brain and used to drive meditative brain states (more below). As more people get used to these rich meditation menus, the idea of the old “meditation class” will feel almost quaint.

#### **Apps bring meditation to the masses—and get people used to flipping meditation “channels”**

There are now, according to estimates, roughly 1,500 meditation and mindfulness apps—and there's no doubt that there has been no greater force ever in making the idea of meditation less

mysterious and more accessible. Headspace alone has 35 million users in 190 countries while Calm has driven 26 million downloads with 50,000 new signups each day. While it's important to note that the vast majority of meditations they serve up are the mindfulness meditation variety, they all have a different angle and vibe.

Headspace, Calm and MindFi, like so many of these apps, target their content and meditations toward specific life issues, such as mindful exercises for managing anger, falling asleep, or dealing with a bad relationship. Buddhify is based on what you're doing right now, such as walking, trying to sleep, or scrolling through Instagram, and then serves up a meditation or insight based on that activity. The new Insight Timer is very different: It's a sort of clearinghouse for 2,000 guided meditations from a network of 1,500 real teachers (most unaffiliated with the app) with the stated goal of "giving meditation away for free to everyone on the planet." The INSCAPE app aims to be the "Spotify of mindfulness," and it's encouraging that they stress known, active-mechanism techniques: focused-based, mindfulness, visualization and mantra-based, meditations.

Now that most meditation practice has been app-ified, there are things to ponder. It's indisputable that they're bringing meditation to millions of more people. However, they're also creating platforms that create an expectation of endless "meditations," the kind of programming we are used to from Netflix. People need to understand that a good deal of what these apps serve up is not a "meditation practice." There is often much wellness advice and wisdom and inspirational positive psychology (which is great), but at those app-moments, one is not practicing meditation. It's too tiresome to ponder the irony that it is apps that will help us disconnect from the stresses of technology. But there are things to mull: We passively consume so much screen-based media, and now meditation is part of that. Is there a difference in the outcome from taking that meditation class in person (showing up and doing the work) compared with a guided meditation via an app? Scientists don't know, and they should

study it. By app-ifying all kinds of wellness, are we bypassing perhaps the most important thing that the wellness world delivers—community with other humans, group rituals, healthy things that happen with real teachers and people?

### **New technologies aim to boost and personalize—as well as hack—the meditation experience**

A new flurry of technology solutions, using things such as biofeedback, EEG (brain wave) tracking, tDCS, and other biometric measurements, are aiming to boost and deepen meditation practices and to optimize and personalize the experience in real time. Another trend is tech that hacks the

*INSCAPE offers a meditation app, which aims to be the "Spotify of mindfulness." The app stresses lesser known, active-mechanism techniques, such as focused-based, mindfulness, visualization and mantra-based meditations.*







*Meditation is no longer a “one size fits all” program. Ancient and modern breeds are multiplying, and very different practices are trending in 2019. Plus, a wave of new brain and meditation technology will keep rising, such as the Muse 2 headband, which incorporates biofeedback to customize meditation practices.*

brain to produce meditation states without the need to meditate. Who would have ever thought that there would be a rising, distinct “meditation technology” space?

The new Muse 2 “brain sensing” headband is a standout. Its sensors track EEG brain signals, heartbeat, breath and body movements to deliver a meditation experience that changes and gives audio feedback in real time to guide you into a calm, focused state. For instance, your busy mind will create a rainstorm, your calmer mind a light drizzle, and if your brain waves are truly quiet, you hear birds chirping. Muse’s goal is to take the guesswork out of meditation. And it gamifies the experience (you get rewarded for meditation achievements) while it also sends that breathing and heart rate data back to your phone to keep you engaged with your progress. The DreamOn wearable uses low-frequency pulses to lull your brain to sleep, but is also designed to be used as a meditation aid (and can walk you through meditations and breathing techniques). The Umay REST’s Thermal Meditation device was engineered to counteract the toll taken on our eyes and brains from being glued to digital devices 10 hours a

day: It sits on your eyes, and its thermal therapy is aimed at restoring eye health while its “Thermal Meditation” (gentle vibration patterns for guided breath meditation) is designed to calm and clear the mind.

Healium is a virtual-reality-based meditation experience that runs on your brain waves and heartbeat to create a personal, interactive meditation environment. Through a wearable connected to the app, your EEG (and other) feedback create your VR meditation world—you may find yourself scaling mountains or relaxing near a waterfall. And a [study](#) in *Frontiers of Psychology* found that it only took four minutes for Healium to reduce anxiety. At L.A.’s Upgrade Labs, which positions itself as the world’s first biohacking health and fitness facility that “uses technology to help members reach their highest level of physical, cognitive and cellular performance,” they offer EEG brain training and treatments, such as Theta Delight, to hack and induce meditative states.

In general, more researchers are exploring how tDCS, where electrodes are placed on your



forehead to deliver mild positive and negative shocks to your brain, could help with many neurological or psychological issues—whether depression, insomnia or Parkinson’s disease. And [they’re studying](#)<sup>17</sup> how it could make meditation easier and deeper, such as increasing electrical activity in the insula while dialing it down in the default mode network. The thesis: brain stimulation + meditation = much more effective meditation. And we’ll see more devices/headsets deploy transcranial direct current stimulation, like [Swedish start-up Flow](#) that connects to an app that supports meditation.

You will see more wellness resorts using EEG technology and transcranial magnetic stimulation to optimize brains, reduce stress, and create blissed out meditative states, such as SHA Wellness Resort’s new “cognitive enhancement therapy” and at Six Senses Place coming to NY this year.

## THE FUTURE

One of the maddening things about the wellness market is the constant promotion of the next and newest trend, so the most crucial, evidence-driven approaches fall off trends lists and people’s radar (because, like, meditation is “so 2015”). As if there was an annual expiration date on 5,000-year-old solutions. We really need to digest how young the research on and market around meditation is: It only bubbled up in the West 50 years ago and has only started to approach mainstream understanding, interest and investment a few years ago.

For a practice that’s all about finding calm and clarity, the debates around meditation are so unusually heated and contradictory. It seems to hold on its shoulders a lot of stress: It will solve everything or it solves nothing—it’s by nature a critique of ego-driven capitalism or it’s the best way to become a better entrepreneur—it’s

*The Mandrake in London offers an incredibly creative Spiritual Wellbeing Program with everything from full-moon gong baths and crystal bowl meditation to meditative Lucid Dreaming sleepovers.*



become an unspiritual, commercial McMindfulness or it's by nature too religious. (Christian groups are now suing to keep meditation out of US schools.)

There is *much* confusion about what meditation is and does. Mindfulness has come to stand in for all meditation types, and there's been the relentless application of the adjective "mindful" onto things that are not meditation practices. And mostly, there's been confusion about how different meditation practices impact the brain and what health outcomes result. While most scientists would now agree that different practices show distinct patterns of brain activity and effects, there is much work to be done on systematically comparing different kinds of meditation and how they affect various cognitive and emotional measures.

It's the usual throw-down to the more resource-challenged wellness world (unlike big pocketed Big Pharma): More, bigger and more rigorous studies are needed. Agreed! The future is more independent research that studies the three main types (to start) head-to-head and with bigger, more rigorous randomized controlled studies for individual meditation types. You can see movement underway. For instance, Brown University just created eight-week training programs to compare focused attention and open monitoring meditations against each other, to give researchers the needed tools to test their mechanisms and clinical outcomes.<sup>18</sup> The David Lynch Foundation is committed to large investments in independent, randomized controlled trials testing self-transcending meditation on its own and head-to-head, with studies from 1,000 to 4,000 subjects. (The DLF is currently funding an independent study on the impact of self-transcending meditation on several thousand NYC public school students—from how it impacts anxiety and depression to academic performance and graduation rates.) And we believe, as governments and medical systems increasingly become bankrupted by stress-related disorders, they will invest more research dollars too. So, it's not unlikely that in 5-10 years, backed

by growing evidence, that doctors will prescribe distinct types of meditation for distinct mental and physical issues.

We'll all somehow have to get used to saying "meditations." And we need to start distinguishing between new and different types because, not only is the future for meditation practices bright, that future will be much more "plural": more choices that are more personalized to what we each need most.

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Rx

Prescription:

30 minute walk  
outside  
twice a day

Dr. Robert Zarr, a pediatrician,  
writes prescriptions for parks—just  
as though he were prescribing  
medication.



## TREND #4

# Prescribing Nature

**There is enough science about the health *benefits* of nature to get the attention of the medical profession. Nature as medicine. Just don't tell big Pharma.**

***By Jennifer Walsh with Beth McGroarty***

Imagine going to your doctor and, instead of a prescription for some named or generic pharmaceutical, you instead receive a prescription for a 30-minute walk in nature. This is not actually that far-fetched. Put down the Prozac and pick up your walking shoes.

Paracelsus, the 16th-century German-Swiss physician, wrote: “The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician.” He could not have imagined the advent of the Smartphone, nor a 24/7, digitally enhanced, Instagram-able world. Much has been written about the evils (and glories) of technology, but the resulting dissociation from our natural surroundings leaves us emotionally and physically worse off. We are *bereft* of nature. Our bodies—and our minds—need nature. And there is hard science to prove it.

In fact, there is enough science about the health benefits of nature to get the attention of the medical profession.<sup>1</sup> Nature as medicine. Just don't tell big Pharma.

One contributing factor to this is the shifting demographics—people are living in urban areas, often with little or no nature.

In 1950, around 30 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2018, that number was 55 percent, and, by 2050, it will be 68 percent. With this spread unevenly around the world (for example Northern America has 82 percent of its population living in urban areas already today!), it is clear that more people are living in settings with little—and sometimes no—nature.<sup>2</sup> Not only has this resulted in a decrease in experiencing the joys of nature, but it has also meant that the healing power of nature is not readily available for most people in the world.

At his office in Washington, D.C., Dr. Robert Zarr, a pediatrician, writes prescriptions for parks. He pulls out a prescription pad and scribbles instructions—which park his obese, diabetic, anxious or depressed patient should visit, on which days, and for how long—just as though he were prescribing medication.<sup>3</sup>



*“Blue zones centenarians didn’t reach 100 by running marathons, pumping iron or joining a gym. Instead, they stayed fit by doing their own house work and yard work, by maintaining a garden year-round, and by walking places instead of taking a car,” Dan Buettner, author of *The Blue Zones*.*

Zarr says it’s important to give concrete advice instead of repeating the vague admonitions (Exercise more! Get outside!) that people are used to hearing.

Zarr is part of a small but growing group of healthcare professionals who are essentially *medicalizing nature*. He relies on a compendium of 382 local parks—the product of meticulous mapping and rating of green spaces, based on accessibility, safety, and amenities—that he helped create for [DC Park Rx](#),<sup>4</sup> a community health initiative. The Washington program was one of the first in the United States; there are now at least 150 others. “We work with the doctors, nurses and health care providers around the country and show them why it’s so relevant to prescribe parks and how easy it is to do so that they can make it a part of their daily routine.” The group refers to this program as “Ecotherapy.”

At the Global Wellness Summit (GWS) in Cesena, Italy, in 2018, we learned the impact of walking in nature from [Dan Buettner](#), author of *The Blue Zones*, which examines the lifestyles of the world’s

longest-lived people. And what Buettner found is that these people—who live to be over 100—have movement engineered into their daily lives.<sup>5</sup>

“Blue zones centenarians didn’t reach 100 by running marathons, pumping iron or joining a gym. Instead, they stayed fit by doing their own house work and yard work, by maintaining a garden year-round, and by walking places instead of taking a car. My team calculates that the longest-lived people are moving every 20 minutes or so, instead of the American way of sitting at a desk or TV all day and hoping to make it up with 30 minutes at the gym,” states Buettner.

While this may sound like a very proscribed and narrow existence—and by some standards it *is*—it is also very effective. Simple, it turns out, is powerful. Dan and his team are working on making more cities in America healthier through the “Blue Zones Project.”

The power of nature is not new to GWS trend-spotting. We first identified “forest bathing” as a trend in our [2015 Trends Report](#).<sup>6</sup> Citing Dr.

Qing Li, one of the world's leading experts on the power of trees and spending time in nature, we presented research and scientific studies conducted in the mid-1980s in Japan. Forest bathing continues to grow in interest and stature, now truly recognized as a healthful pursuit. As one walks in the forest, one is enveloped by the atmosphere—sounds, colors, scents and more, and the mindfulness that occurs, as a result, is a benefit as well. The book *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*, released earlier in 2018 by Dr. Li, is described as “the definitive guide to the therapeutic Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku*, or the art and science of how trees can promote health and happiness.”<sup>7</sup>

In October 2018, the National Health Service Shetland (Scotland) rolled out what has been billed as “nature prescriptions” to help treat a range of afflictions, including high blood pressure, anxiety and depression. The doctors and nurses have been urged to hand out pamphlets that describe the health benefits of being outdoors, along with specific outdoor activities for people to engage in throughout the year.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Chloe Evans is a general practitioner on the island: “The benefits to patients are that it is free, easily accessible, allows increased connection with surroundings which hopefully

leads to improved physical and mental health for individuals.” Her practice first piloted the initiative last year.<sup>9</sup>

And if nature prescriptions are already popping up globally, it's only a matter of time before the medical profession adopts this approach in hospitals as well.

Roger Ulrich, PhD, published a landmark study “View through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery” in the journal *Science* in 1984.<sup>10</sup> Thirty-five years later, architects, doctors and nurses agree that hospital gardens are not only back in style, but they are also a necessity, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects. In a recent survey of 100 directors and architects of assisted-living residences, 82 percent agreed that “the design of outdoor space should be one of the most important considerations in the design.”<sup>11</sup>

### The Nature Economy

The nature economy is booming. Hotels and spas are taking advantage of their often intrinsically beautiful locations to offer more outdoor programming, and marketing it to their guests more creatively. There is a real desire to connect guests to natural surroundings, and this presents an incredible opportunity for destinations around the world.

*The Westin Hotel group's “RunWestin” programs are highly customized based on guest preferences and desired levels of activity, in conjunction with the hotel location, natural surroundings and more.*







*Skylonda Lodge entices guests with programs built into the forests of Woodside, California. Many of their activities are held in redwood forests or, at least, with expansive views of the incredible landscape around them.*

The Westin Hotel group offers a “[RunWESTIN™ Concierge](#)” as part of their new “RunWestin” program. Highly customized programs are developed based on guest preferences and desired levels of activity, in conjunction with the hotel location, natural surroundings and more.<sup>12</sup>

[Skylonda Lodge](#), billed as “a luxurious retreat destination deep in nature designed by wellness experts,” seeks to entice guests with programs built into the forests of Woodside, California. Many of their activities are held in redwood forests or, at least, with expansive views of the incredible landscape around them.<sup>13</sup>

In the Baja Peninsula’s [Magdalena Bay](#), one can spend hours at a time on the water, whale-watching. This is an unparalleled opportunity to witness the annual migration of grey whales mating and birthing their young side by side with the occasional blue and humpback whales.<sup>14</sup>

Borgo Egnazia in Puglia, Italy, has as its tagline: “Nowhere Else.” This speaks to the unique, natural surroundings that offer visitors an opportunity to be immersed in the landscape of Itria Valley and the world-class olive groves. It is about being outdoors in every way along the Adriatic Sea.<sup>15</sup>

As experience in nature becomes another new luxury, hotels and spas are tapping into what makes their destination unique—and offering

unique programming. For those properties confined within cities, the natural beauty—and benefits—of the outdoors is being brought inside, showcasing local flora and fauna.

### **Bringing the Outside In**

Since more people live in cities, a walk in nature is harder to find, as most cities don’t have the benefit of greenways and natural parks. If spending time in *actual* nature is the new (and not so new) gold standard for wellness, creating the ideals of nature *indoors* is also booming. Biophilia, from the Greek meaning “love of life and the living world,” came to the forefront in 1984, when [E.O. Wilson](#), a biologist, theorist, naturalist and author, stated that loving nature is part of our DNA. “We love nature because we learned to love the things that helped us survive. We are hard wired to affiliate with the natural world and just as our health improves when we are in it, so our health suffers when we are divorced from it.”<sup>16</sup>

Wilson went on to say, “Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction.”

An entire sector of the global wellness economy has taken these words to heart. And home. And community.

With people spending, on average, 90 percent of their time indoors, especially as part of their



work, many businesses are working to change the *nature* of the indoor landscape.<sup>17</sup>

According to Paul Scialla, CEO of Delos,<sup>18</sup> a leading company in the creation of wellness real estate and communities, “Through evidence-based design, our buildings and communities can be leveraged to enhance our physical, emotional and cognitive health outcomes. This realization is part of why we’ve seen biophilic design become enormously popular within WELL Certified<sup>19</sup> spaces over the past few years and as the demand for high performing buildings continues to grow. Naava, a Finnish health technology firm that specializes in the development of smart, active green walls, is one example of how companies are embracing this movement—as green walls not only work to purify the air we breathe but can also help reduce stress and foster a connection to the natural world indoors.<sup>20</sup> Most recently, to address health and wellness directly within our homes, we’ve started applying these same nature-based strategies that have been used so successfully in office spaces, including purified air, purified water and lighting that mimics the natural patterns of the sun—all with the intent of improving health outcomes for people around the world.”

“Green spaces” actually leave people feeling less stressed and more focused. Amazon, in Seattle, is joining this worldwide movement. “Downtown Seattle lacks greenery and plant diversity,” John Sa, an Amazon spokesman, said. “By bringing the outdoor work environment indoors, we create an environment where employees can collaborate and innovate together in a peaceful setting that is more like a tropical rainforest than a city.”<sup>21</sup>

“Humans are more generous, cooperative, and forward-thinking when surrounded by nature,” said Tim Beatley, an architecture professor at the University of Virginia and executive director of the Biophilic Cities Project, a group that works with city collaborators to implement biophilic design across the world.<sup>22</sup>

L.L.Bean has been trying to actively bring people outdoors for more than 100 years, but this year, they created pop-up offices outdoors to show the importance of nature. Spending time outside, even at work, has tangible benefits, according to the retailer: Seventy-four percent of workers said it improves their mood, 71 percent said it lowers stress, and certain types of “indoor work,” including brainstorming, are perceived as especially doable outside.<sup>23</sup>

*Borgo Egnazia offers visitors an opportunity to be immersed in the landscape of Itria Valley and the world-class olive groves.*



According to a [study by the University of Exeter](#), offices with plants “could increase productivity by 15 percent” as well as “lower physiological stress, increase attention span and improve wellbeing.” This focus on “greening” our indoor spaces has an overall impact on how we feel about space, so we will likely be seeing more of this in shopping centers, schools, and hospitals in the future.<sup>24</sup>

Debra Duneier, founder and president of EcoChi,<sup>25</sup> a New York-based interior firm with “purposeful design” at its core, takes into account an emotional aspect of nature. “Some of the happiest moments of our lives are spent outdoors. We all have recollections of these experiences—a blazing sunset, the scent of the ocean air, animal life encountered on a stroll through the woods, the view of a pastel sunrise from a mountaintop, a golden harvest moon or the fleeting glimpse of a mammoth butterfly. EcoChi brings nature indoors with patterns, textures, colors, furnishings, arrangements and art. The brain recognizes these elements and reacts in a positive way, almost as if you were outdoors experiencing it. The result is a feeling of happiness and wellbeing for you and your guests.”

To encourage clients to move their businesses toward a model that respects people, the planet

and profits, Debra and her team created “[EcoChi 180° Seal](#)”—a certification program that features 18 guidelines that have to be met for a supportive, sustainable and effective environment.<sup>26</sup>

The first EcoChi-certified restaurant was formerly Paul Newman’s restaurant the Dressing Room. It was the first farm-to-table and sustainable restaurant in the US and has re-opened under the name Positano in Westport, Connecticut. The project is at the forefront of environmental sustainability with an innovative approach that meticulously blends green practices with environmental psychology and classical feng shui. Three months after the redesign was completed, Chef Fernando Scarpati called Debra to tell her that people in the community were coming to the restaurant when they were sick. They came to the restaurant to heal from migraines and stress-related ailments. Fernando told Debra, “I just had to call to tell you because I know it is because of your design work.”

#### Nature Smart

More and more companies are promoting the outdoor lifestyle. “Nature Smart” brands are educating consumers on the benefits of nature. It used to be that the person who served as the poster child for this idea was more of a modern-

*Biophilic design has become enormously popular within WELL Certified spaces over the past few years, as the demand for high performing buildings continues to grow. Photo courtesy: Frasers Property, Australia*



day hippie than a corporate CEO. They would literally shout from the mountaintops. All of that continues to change.

REI (Recreational Equipment, Incorporated) is one of those brands that literally walks the talk. Founded in 1938, REI is an American retail and outdoor recreation services corporation. It is organized as a consumers' cooperative. REI sells sporting goods, camping gear, travel equipment and clothing.

REI has worked to awaken a lifelong love for the outdoors in their members. Today, nearly 80 years later, the co-op has grown from 23 climbing friends to a community of more than 17 million members.

Each year, they close on Black Friday to ensure that their employees spend time outdoors, all part of their #OptOutside campaign.<sup>27</sup> Even bigger, REI is partnering with the University of Washington to the tune of a \$1 million donation to a new academic initiative called "[Nature for Health](#)."<sup>28</sup> The idea is to build a mountain of data surrounding the health benefits of living a life outside.

### Your Brain on Nature

We know that activity, especially outdoor activity, is good for us, but what is most staggering is how good it is for our brains. According to a [study by the European Society of Cardiology](#), those who take a brisk walk daily for at least 25 minutes could be adding at least three years to their lives. This simple practice can help repair DNA and reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and breast or colon cancer.<sup>29</sup>

[Professor Liisa Tyrväinen and her team](#) at the Natural Resources Institute Finland recommend a minimum "nature dose" of five hours a month—several short visits a week—to ward off the blues.<sup>30</sup>

At the University of London, the [PLOS ONE journal](#) states, "Exposure to nature may also engage what has been termed the "default mode" networks of the brain, which emerging literature suggests may be important for peak



*Amazon is bringing the outdoor work environment indoors by creating an environment where employees can collaborate and innovate together in a peaceful setting that is more like a tropical rainforest than a city.*

psychosocial health. The default mode network is a set of brain areas that are active during restful introspection and that have been implicated in efficient performance on tasks requiring frontal lobe function such as the divergent thinking task used here. On a hike or during exposure to natural stimuli which produce soft-fascination, the mind may be more able to enter a state of introspection and mind wandering which can engage the default mode. Interestingly, engaging the default mode has been shown to be disrupted by multimedia use, which requires an external attentional focus, again pointing to the possibility that natural environments such as those experienced by the current participants may have both removed a cost (technology) and added a benefit (activation of brain systems that aid divergent thinking)."<sup>31</sup>

Brain benefits to walking in nature include a decrease in stress, increase in short-term memory, restoration of mental energy, increase in cognition, and increase in creativity.

In 2009, a team of [Dutch researchers](#) found a lower incidence of 15 diseases, including depression, anxiety, heart disease, diabetes, asthma and migraines, in people who lived within about a half mile of green space.<sup>32</sup>





*EcoChi brings nature indoors with patterns, textures, colors, furnishings, arrangements and art.*

The global economist, Thierry Malleret, collaborating with his wife, Mary Anne, wrote the book, *Ten Good Reasons to Go for a Walk*. It offers its readers well-researched arguments enlivened by personal anecdotes to convey the vital message that walking can dramatically improve our health, both physical and mental, while also having the potential to make our world a better place. The Mallerets presented this project at GWS 2017 in Palm Beach, Florida.<sup>33</sup>

If the stats alone don't have you reaching for your walking shoes, just consider the list of innovative thinkers that have spoken about their love of walking in nature. Former President Barack Obama was known for his walking meetings; Mark Zuckerberg, Founder of Facebook, takes many of his meetings outdoors. Aristotle was known for lecturing outdoors. Queen Elizabeth is a renowned nature lover, and Einstein enjoyed a good walk outside. Steve Jobs did, too.

### Green Exercise

There are more exercise classes and indoor programming than ever before, but the big box gyms are not the only game in town. Indoor classes are often costly. Outdoor movement has a new term that is spreading globally: "green exercise." Green exercise is a term that describes working out in the outdoors. Many find that green exercise lowers blood pressure, increases creativity, decreases depression, and increases blood flow.<sup>34</sup>

Biofit, an organic fitness company based in London, has invested in biophilic design and also teaches many classes outdoors. Most importantly, they educate others on why our bodies are meant to move outdoors.<sup>35</sup>

Some people practice yoga outdoors. The mindful practice of walking or hiking in nature is "yoga for the brain." Look for more traditional fitness outlets turning their attention outdoors.

### Nature Deficit Disorder

Richard Louv coined the term "Nature-Deficit Disorder," and he has written books such as *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*, which dive deep into what happens when we experience the lack of nature.<sup>36</sup> This is especially critical when it comes to children and teens, as they are the generations that have been connected to technology from a young age; they are also the generations that have been truly disconnected from nature. The disconnect between nature and children has resulted in an increase in childhood obesity, attention deficiencies, early mental stressors and anxiety issues. The glow of our devices has been shown to throw off our natural circadian rhythm, especially impacting young people while their brains are still being fully developed.

There are many things that can be done to counter Nature-Deficit Disorder, such as more school programs to get children outdoors even in the cold temperatures and local community gardens around schools, which allow children to understand how plants and food are grown. In Izumi, a city south of Osaka in Japan, a decrepit textile building was transformed into a kindergarten, with ample outdoor space for children to exercise and experience nature.<sup>37</sup>

In schools across America, access to recess or free time has been on the decline. In 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported on "Strategies on Recess in Schools" and identified only eight states that have policies requiring daily recess in schools.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Nooshin Razani, at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, California, is one of several studying the emerging data on the health benefits of nature on children. She is training pediatricians to write prescriptions for young



patients and their families to visit nearby parks.<sup>39</sup>

### Next Generation Plant Power

Thankfully for the visual power of Instagram, plants and flowers have become big business. Millennials have taken to gardening and planting in a way that has never been seen before. Being “green” has never been hipper than it is today. Greenery NYC, a botanic design company, has increased its clientele by 6,500 percent since it was founded in 2010. “Wellness is a priority for our millennial-aged residents,” said Dave Maundrell, executive vice president of new developments for Brooklyn and Queens at Citi Habitats. “They’re willing to pay more for access to a green space.”<sup>40</sup>

This “greening” of spaces has taken over even the smallest of apartments and allows people to feel like they are more connected to nature even if they are not. CNBC reports, these and other budding green thumbs are at the root of the DIY yard and gardening industry hitting \$36.9 billion, according to the 2017 National Garden Survey, which found that of the six million Americans who got into gardening in 2016, five million were between the ages of 18–34.<sup>41</sup> In addition to outdoor gardens, house plants are known to cleanse the air, remove pollutants, and some even promote sleep.

### THE FUTURE OF PRESCRIBING NATURE

The remarkable power of nature and its healing benefits may not only impact an individual’s health but also that of the planet. The more we need something, the more we tend to protect it. Imagine that your walk in the park might help preserve that very park for generations to come.

The future of prescribing nature could take a turn toward DNA testing. When you get your results, you might find out that you are predisposed to be healthier if you live near the ocean. Or maybe you need the dryness of desert life?

An app could direct you to your ideal nature refuge, no matter where you are in the world.

Your insurance plan might offer you reduced premiums for adding nature to your list of wellness activities.

Just as pop-up shops dot the shopping streets of every major city at the holidays, “pop-up parks” might begin to appear in urban areas that do not have natural resources. Imagine you can leave your office cubicle at lunch time and find a pop-up park in which to walk, sit and take in the sounds, scents and sights of nature.

The world is unlikely to slow down anytime soon, so individuals must. The evidence is overwhelming: It’s time to do more than just put down your phone, tablet or laptop; it’s time to pick up your walking shoes. Head outdoors, find the balance that exists in nature, and let it offer you its intrinsic gifts. It doesn’t cost anything, but the benefits are priceless. And the businesses that understand and embrace this, and offer an authentic experience of nature, will see their labor bear fruit for years to come. And while you’re heading outside, take your children along.

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A close-up photograph of a laboratory flask containing a yellow liquid. A green plant stem with a small yellow flower is submerged in the liquid. In the foreground, a test tube is partially visible, also containing a green plant stem. The background is a blurred green leaf.

Evidence-based studies around scent's powerful impact on our wellbeing have made the underappreciated sense of smell take center stage.

**500 ml**  
**APPROX.**



## TREND #5

# MediScent: Fragrance Gets a Wellness Makeover

**A new understanding of scent's crucial role in our physical and emotional wellbeing is transforming how we think about, nurture, and use our sense of smell.**

***By Cassandra Cavanah with Beth McGroarty***

The sense of smell is having a renaissance. It is often dismissed as the least relevant of the five senses—in a 2011 survey, 53 percent of millennials said they'd give up their sense of smell before they'd give up a tech device. Throughout history, our noses have been underrated by many and praised by few. In 1798, philosopher Immanuel Kant dubbed smell the “least rewarding” sense, and said it was, at best, “a negative condition of wellbeing.”

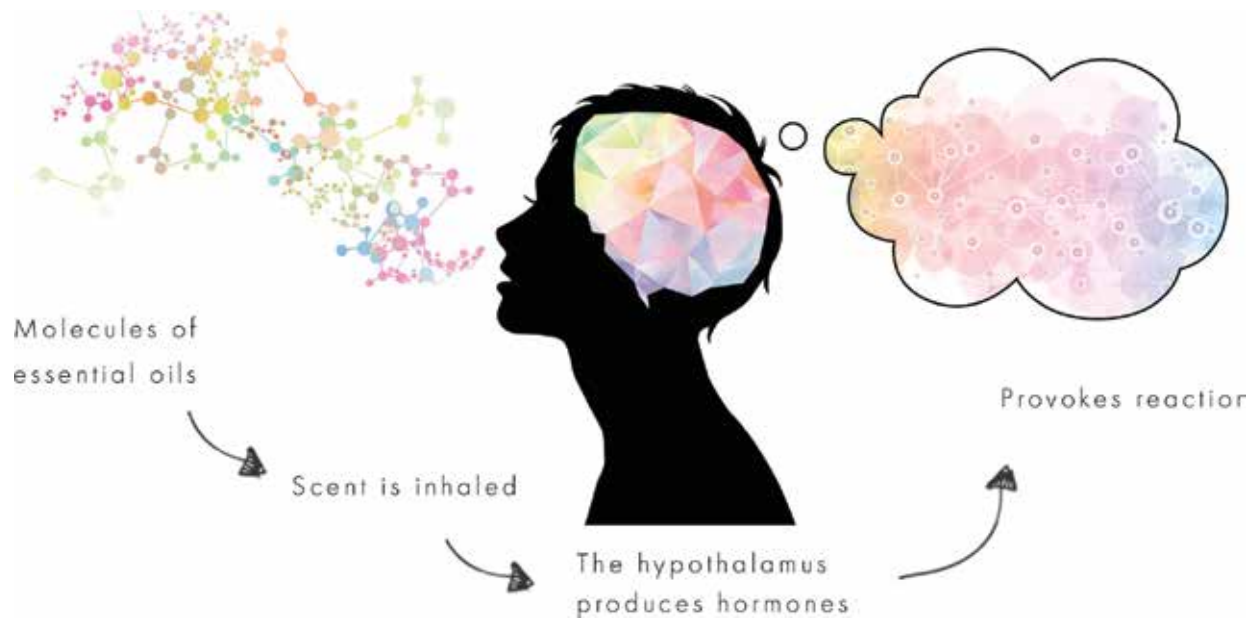
Yet, during the 2018 Global Wellness Summit, trend forecaster David Bosshart, PhD, quoted Nietzsche—“my genius is in my nostrils”—when explaining the importance of smell (and taste) in the multisensory experience of sharing food and drink.

Today, evidence-based studies around scent's powerful impact on our wellbeing are being released fast and furiously. At the same time, new aromas are being discovered, new scent-based applications and products announced, and new innovations in the ways we harness the power of scent are being found. From candles and oils

that evoke a sense of place (miss your hometown smell?...there's a candle for that) or trigger specific memories (backyard BBQ, grandma's kitchen, etc.) to psychoactive perfumes designed to evoke new emotions; from art installations, such as Jean-Marc Chaillan's *Mood Cloud*, which explores the not too far-fetched concept of melding wellness with big data (such as wellbeing microensors), to shower calming aromas over stressed-out parts of a city, to the discovery that wine tasting (and smelling) works the brain harder than a math problem.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Influence of Scent**

No matter where you are, you are likely being subtly (and not so subtly) influenced by scent. It is believed that an astonishing 75 percent of the emotions we generate on a daily basis are affected by smell, and, because of this, it is believed we are 100 times more likely to remember something we smell over something we see, hear or touch.<sup>3</sup>



*The sense of smell has a direct impact on your brain. Photo courtesy: Neom Organics Scent Discovery*

Though most of us instinctively understand that scent (baking cookies, a campfire, gardenias, etc.) is tied to memories and can transport us to another place and time in our lives (often referred to as the “Proust effect”<sup>4</sup>), we didn’t really understand *how* or *why* until fairly recently. In 2004, Drs. Linda Buck and Richard Axel were awarded the 2004 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their paper that demystified the sense of smell and our olfactory system, including the discovery that there are approximately 1,000

olfactory genes in our bodies (roughly 3 percent of the human genome). Each olfactory receptor cell is able to detect a minimum number of odors, and Buck and Axel estimated the average human being is able to recognize and remember about 10,000 different scents.

This landmark research inspired biologists and neuroscientists to dive even further into our olfactory system. For example, scientists at Rockefeller University are now saying it’s more likely humans can distinguish up to one trillion<sup>5</sup> scents!



The sense of smell is the first of the senses to develop. We now know that, by the end of the first trimester, babies can smell what mom is eating—an influence on their future taste—and, once born, smell is the most important of the senses newborns use to orient themselves to their surroundings, much like any other living mammal.

Study after study has shown that no other sense has the power to influence and transport us the way scent can. Recently, neurobiologists at the University of Toronto<sup>6</sup> discovered the actual

*The connection between the brain’s hippocampus and the olfactory could lead to new discoveries about how scent can be used in treating forms of memory loss, such as dementia and Alzheimer’s.*



*SZENT's bottles feature collars infused with natural oils that, through sense of smell, promise to transform plain drinking water into something more flavorful.*

mechanism in the brain that enables us to recreate sensory experiences from memory and were able to map how it connects with the part of our brain where information about space and time is stored. The connection between the brain's hippocampus (the part associated with forming new memories) and the olfactory nucleus is clear—and could lead to new discoveries about how scent can be used in treating not only forms of memory loss, such as dementia and Alzheimer's, but also for using the sense of smell to enhance memory recollection and improve cognitive learning (more on this later).

“Until recently, smell has been the most underrated and underutilized of our five senses, but it's turning out to be the most important,” said Joanne DeLuca of Sputnik Futures, a company that specializes in anticipating consumer trends.

This reawakening of our appreciation of scent goes hand in hand with many of the larger wellness trends, including the desire to “unplug” and reconnect with the physical world. “Taking time to smell the roses” has taken on a deeper meaning, as we search for more connection, authenticity and mindfulness in every aspect of our lives. And the disruption in fragrances themselves—which have seen a marked shift from traditional luxury perfumes to unconventional,

surprising scents—mimics the larger consumer shift to more individual, personal and functional beauty products.

The brain/scent connection is being explored in every aspect of our lives—from the personal scents we choose to a growing conscious awareness of aroma's powerful impact on our daily activities to the building of medical evidence that supports scent's surprising power to heal.

#### **AROMATHERAPY 2.0: SCENT AS MEDICINE**

This focus on scent's powerful connection to our brains and its potential to heal, soothe and delight is “making consumers hungry to learn more about how it can be leveraged for health and wellbeing,” says Matthias Tabert of International Flavors & Fragrances (IFF), a leading innovator of scent.

Of course, the concept of aromatherapy, or using scent to treat “disease,” is a centuries-old practice. However, what's old is new again thanks to huge leaps in technology, fragrance development and neuroscience studies, including new formulations; cleaner and greener ingredients; and more science-based research encouraging medical professionals, health insurers and skeptical consumers to take another, more serious look at this age-old treatment.

Companies like Aeroscena, based in Cleveland Clinic's Innovations Lab, are literally redefining and relabeling aromatherapy. The company has trademarked the term “phyto-inhalants™” to describe its line of plant-based aromatherapeutics formulated to specifically treat health symptoms, such as pain, nausea and anxiety. The company, which boasts a medical advisory board that includes the likes of Dr. Michael F. Roizen, chief wellness officer of the Cleveland Clinic, is pioneering the concept of clinical aromatherapy in the US (other countries have been more open to aromatherapy's use). Founder Mark Kohoot says they are bringing legitimacy to aromatherapy's folklore through large-scale medical studies that provide evidence-based proof that scent can stifle pain (a study is currently happening with patients receiving knee replacements), improve sleep, alleviate morning sickness, and relieve anxiety. The biggest problem with adoption? In the US, insurance companies won't cover natural remedies without FDA approval; a hurdle Aeroscena is working to overcome in its quest to bring clinical aromatherapy to market.

Aromatherapy 2.0 ticks all the boxes today's consumers care about, including 100 percent natural ingredients, transparency, sustainability and evidence-based results. And the natural essential oil market is expected to grow at a rapid pace, reaching \$13 billion in 2024<sup>7</sup> thanks, in part, to an aging population looking for natural solutions to combat what ails them as well as a growing demand for natural essential oils in beauty products.

**Mental Wellness:** Because the brain hatches memories in conjunction with smell, it's been discovered that scent can play a healing role for people suffering from neurological disorders, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Interestingly, scent is featured both in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's—losing the sense of smell is often an early symptom of the disease<sup>8</sup>—and in its treatment: Scent therapy can help ground and comfort people with short-term memory loss by triggering positive memories from their past.

For example, a New York nursing home partnered with scent innovators at IFF to create a “memory” kiosk called “Scents of the Game,” featuring six distinct scents that can be found at a baseball game with the goal of triggering long-forgotten memories for residents with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Smelling a hot dog, baseball mitt or popcorn not only connects them to the joy they felt visiting Yankee Stadium in their youth, but this sensory therapy also serves to stimulate their minds and gives them a reprieve from the disorientation they feel in their daily lives.

**Scent as Flavor:** “Eighty percent of what we taste is what we smell,” says Karen Stanton, Director of Global Marketing & Branding for Taste, IFF. It makes you imagine a world where scent can create no-calorie eating and drinking experiences. One real-world example of this comes from SZENT, a company that has developed water bottles featuring collars infused with natural oils that, as you smell them, turn plain, zero calorie drinking water into something else entirely.

*Scent is becoming a bigger part of a traveler's experience, with luxury hotels enabling guests to personalize and choose the aroma that fills their room. Photos courtesy: Anantara Quy Nhon Villas*





“Flavors” include tangerine, tropical, pineapple, mint and passionfruit and are available on Amazon right now.

In Singapore, an innovative bar and restaurant called the Tippling Club has patrons choose their drink by scent versus reading menus. Taking SZENT’s concept to the next level, imagine alcohol-free cocktails based purely on the smell... no hangover, no guilt—all wellness.

**Scent in Branding:** Using scent commercially clearly isn’t necessarily a new phenomenon—hotels, spas and retailers have been aware of its ability to tap into consumers’ brains for years. What is different is a growing acceptance that “olfactory logos” are a *must* to complete a brand’s identity.

Fun olfactory logo fact: In 2018, Hasbro (US) patented the “scent of childhood” by winning a trademark for its iconic scent of Play-Doh (one of only 13 scent trademarks ever issued by the US Patent and Trademark Office).

There is an exploding industry of scent specialists vying for a brand’s marketing dollars to create signature scents as businesses big and small recognize that smell registers in our brains first—before sight, sound or touch. The goal is to either get you to buy more, stay longer, or come back. It appears to be money well spent: Studies show that consumers have a much better experience and are likely to stay somewhere longer and spend more money if the experience includes scent. In fact, shoppers tend to stay 15 minutes longer in locations that are pleasantly scented, and that translates into spending.

Advancement in scent technology will start impacting product development in interesting ways. For example, studies show that the longer women can smell their hair-care products, the more likely they are to stay loyal to them. Don’t be surprised if scent scientists develop some way to layer time-released beads of scent into personal care products so that users can get a whiff of that “just washed” smell all day long. Another hair-care innovation comes from HAI Beauty Concepts, which launched a new line of blow dryers that infuses every blow out with the sweet scent of jasmine (with more scents to come).



*A float tank is a great place to experience the healing properties of scent. Photo courtesy: Floataway*

**Scent of a Place:** Unsurprisingly, the hospitality industry was among the first to register the impact scent can make on brand loyalty. If you’re a frequent traveler, signature scents are likely the reason you feel more at home at a Westin versus a Marriot hotel. Boutique hotels have smartly gravitated toward scent as a differentiator, and new properties, such as Anantara Quy Nhon Villas in Vietnam and the just-opened Fendi hotel in Rome (Fondazione Alda Fendi Esperimenti), are taking the luxury of scent to another level by letting guests personalize their room’s aroma from a scent menu.

Just as intriguing is a new deeper focus on the “bottling” of the scent of a place, allowing you to take home that “holiday” feeling or the relaxation from your last spa visit in the form of a candle or skin-care product. With the scent of your recent vacation wafting through your home or office, your mind and body are transported back to a state of relaxation.

Scent’s ability to transport us to other places is used to great effect in multisensory experiences in spas that are designed to chill us out and calm us down. From experience showers to multisensory pods to float tanks, spas are deploying scent to trigger subtle changes in our bodies, such as lowering heart rate and blood pressure, improving breath, and triggering positive memories for stress reduction.



*More and more hydrothermal areas in spas—such as this deluge shower—are infused with scents that can trigger subtle changes in our bodies and minds. Photo courtesy: Dornbracht International*

**Scent Explored in Art:** Ambitious multisensory art exhibits that focus on the sense of smell are helping us come to a greater understanding about the role aromas have in shaping our perceptions. Polymorf, a Dutch design collective, created an award-winning art installation entitled *Famous Deaths*,<sup>9</sup> which seeks to recreate the last breaths of famous people, such as JFK and Whitney Houston. And a recent New York exhibition entitled *Avant-Garde* explored how scent can create richer experiences. One installation, *Dialect for a New Era*, partnered a perfumer and a linguist to explore the notion of expanding language beyond words by associating signature scents with them. For example, push a button for the “collective moment of déjà vu,” and you’ll get a whiff of birthday cake.

**Functional Fragrances:** “The future of fragrance will be using scent to ‘biohack’ our brains and bodies to perform better,” says Sputnik’s DeLuca. For example, researchers at [Stevens Institute of Technology](#) revealed that the scent of coffee alone might help people perform analytical tasks better, suggesting a placebo-like effect of caffeine.<sup>10</sup> Don’t be surprised if the pleasant aroma of coffee brewing permeates your workspace in the near future!

The Nue Co, a UK natural supplement company, has created the first anti-stress supplement that can be worn as a fragrance. Dubbed “Functional Fragrance,” the new scent is unisex and was developed using data insight and research into the connection between cognitive function and the olfactory system.

The research of scent’s impact on learning and cognition will flourish over the next few years. Already, studies of rosemary’s effect on cognition indicate that being exposed to the aroma helps people perform mental tasks faster and more accurately. And, a positive side effect is the feel-good factor of aromatherapy: The subjects’ moods improved with exposure to the rosemary aroma.

**Scent’s Power in Workplace Wellness:** Using aroma in workplaces as an invisible mood enhancer—both for employee satisfaction and productivity—is on the rise. A Japanese company found that while lavender and jasmine soothed employees, diffusing a lemon scent was able to increase their productivity by 54 percent. [Rachel S. Herz](#), assistant professor of psychology at Brown University, writes that people who work in the presence of pleasant-smelling air set higher goals and are more likely to employ efficient work strategies. People are more creative in problem-solving when exposed to a pleasant scent compared to an unpleasant one.<sup>11</sup>

**A Scent of Your Own:** A study by Scotland’s University of Stirling found that people choose fragrances that complement their natural scents, indicating that we instinctively choose a scent to work in tandem with our individual body odor and pheromones. An example of this comes in the form of Glossier You, a “skin smell enhancer” that

is billed as the ultimate personal fragrance in that the major ingredient is the smell of your own skin, which is enhanced with subtle base notes.

“One of the clearest signs of wellness and attractiveness is having a really great personal scent. When we’re at our healthiest, our bodies emit a certain scent—one that attracts a mate at an instinctual level—and, when you’re sick or unwell, you’ll smell completely different,” said DeLuca of Sputnik. “Bottling the ‘scent of self’ will be the luxury fragrance of the future.”

The vast array of androgynous and disruptive scents hitting the market is also part of the personalization craze. We are seeing a massive cultural shift that is being mirrored by scent. Not only did Abercrombie & Fitch do away with the manly smell of Fierce in their stores, but they also replaced it with one of their new gender-neutral scents. This craze toward olfactory experiences that aren’t either “pretty and pink” or “musky and male” is everywhere. Unisex scents are flooding perfume counters everywhere as subtle, intriguing olfactory experiences disrupt not only gender norms but also our expectations of personal fragrance.

**Whiffs to Transport Us:** Swedish brand Byredo’s understated scented candles and perfumes are



inspired by founder and artist Ben Gorham’s recreations of people and places. “Black Saffron” recalls the smells, tastes and colors of his mother’s hometown in India (saffron, black violet, rose, raspberry and vetiver blended with leather); “Mojave Ghost” seeks to bring the soulful beauty of the Mojave Desert alive in the form of soft notes of sandalwood, Chantilly musk, violet and magnolia; while best-seller “Gypsy Water” evokes time spent in nature, conjuring images through the scent of campfire, mingled with pine needles, lemon and juniper berries.

Swiss perfumer Valeur Absolue has added a new wellness dimension to its fragrances, infusing them with ingredients designed to soothe, nurture or inspire passion. They are using what could be called the “stealth” scent of *Areaumat perpetua*, a natural extract of the flower that is linked to the release in the body of feel-good endorphins. You can’t consciously smell it, but it stays at work in the background. In addition, Valeur Absolue’s Harmonie line fuses ingredients, such as neroli and Earl Grey tea, vanilla and woody notes, to soothe and calm and adds another touch of wellness in the form of semiprecious stones resting at the base of the bottle to shake in before you spray.

Feel-good fragrances abound in this new world of scent. Simple pleasures in the form of the scent of crackling fires, flannel shirts, and unfiltered smells of the forest bring us back to “real” life wherever we are. Though comforting, they are complex—such as D.S. & Durga (US) Amber Kiso, which co-founder David Moltz described in a *New York Times* article as “an old-world base of vanilla and myrrh and holy Japanese woods, like hinoki and maple, the kind that ritual samurai would rub on their blades.” Another upstart brand, Heretic, has created a liquid version of the traditional sage smudge stick, designed to “combat stale or negative energy.” The perfume leads with white sage combined with juniper and violet leaf to create a heady blend that calms and soothes.

*Valeur Absolue’s Harmonie line is infused with ingredients designed to soothe, nurture or inspire passion, including the “stealth” scent of *Areaumat perpetua*, a natural extract linked to the release of feel-good endorphins.*



*This new “smart” diffuser by Scentee is controlled by a smartphone so users can change the scent according to their mood—or schedule a bedside diffuser to activate in the morning with an energizing aroma.*

### New Scent Delivery Systems

The popularity of essential oils in the home has prompted advances in diffuser technology, such as the UK’s Neom Organics Wellbeing Pod, which not only humidifies the air around the user but also delivers the perfect amount of scent for better sleep, less stress and more energy at the touch of a button.

Aeroscena’s Ascents Diffuser is the selected aromatherapy solution in Stay Well Shop, which features products curated by Delos, the company behind the Well Building Standard. The diffuser is calibrated to eliminate the issue of “scent habituation”—the concept that your brain starts to ignore scents after consistent exposure to them<sup>12</sup>—so it quietly emits scent for 10 minutes, then shuts off for 10 minutes on a continuous cycle so your brain won’t ignore the effects of the scent. It also uses innovative gel pods with dry diffusion technology to eliminate the spillage associated with liquid oil aromatherapy.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

Japanese start-up Scentee is developing a “smart” diffuser that can be controlled by a smartphone so users can change the scent according to their mood via an app—but, even more interestingly, users can set diffusers to activate at certain times, so, for example, your bedside diffuser can start your day with energizing aromas and end your day with your favorite sleep aroma.

**Digitization of Scent:** The next fragrance frontier will no doubt be the digitization of scent. Professional “scent chasers” already use technology to capture the compounds of odors in nature so they can be recreated back in a lab.

But start-ups are working to bring this type of technology right into our hands. NanoScent (Israel) is developing technology that enables a smartphone to identify and analyze scents—and claims that once the tech understands your scent profile, it can not only help you choose the best skin-care products or perfumes for you—



but it also promises to double as a matchmaker by identifying mates whose scent is a good match for yours. NanoScent's science is more serious than it sounds. The core technology was invented to detect breast cancer by recognizing the changes in the smell of breast tissue, and it's currently being used to sniff out drugs in prison.

Scientists at the Imagineering Institute in Malaysia recently announced an invention that could enable scent to be transmitted electronically by stimulating neurons in the nose. Though it's a long way off from becoming a reality, the idea of being able to send a "digital smell" over the Internet or as part of virtual reality or augmented reality is incredibly alluring. It would mean that, while sitting in the comfort of your own home, you could have the full sensory experience of literally anything you can imagine, experiencing new scents, accessing scent memories over the internet, or even taking an online yoga class with the scent of your favorite studio filling your living room.

The exploration of scent and the power of our sense of smell in wellness is in its infancy. In the future, we can expect the neuroscience of scent to become more pervasive in everything we do, and aromas will be used in ways we would never have dreamed of—both in public and personal spaces.

## ENDNOTES

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Eager to travel abroad and engage in healthy lifestyles, women are leading the wellness consumption trends in China.

## TREND #6

# China – Uncovering the Wealth in Wellness

**China's unprecedented economic growth, political influence and technological advances have transformed the country into a global powerhouse. Given the size of the market and its growing middle class, China's influence is now impacting the global wellness industry.**

***By Jenny Lo with Beth McGroarty***

As the world's most populous with a population of 1.42 billion,<sup>1</sup> China's unprecedented economic growth, political influence and technological advances have transformed the country into a global powerhouse. Given the size of the market and its growing middle class, China's influence is now impacting the global wellness industry.

At the recent 2018 Global Wellness Summit that took place in Cesena, Italy, Cathy Feliciano-Chon (managing director of CatchOn & Company, a strategic marketing and communications consultancy specializing in travel, hospitality, wellness and lifestyle) gave a riveting presentation called "The Impact of China on Wellness... and Everything Else," which helped usher in a great deal more interest and awareness of China's role in the future of the global wellness economy.

These numbers speak volumes:

- Among the 802 million mobile users in China, over 104 million have at least one fitness app on their phones (interestingly with higher penetration of around 20 percent in second-tier cities);
- Sportswear sales saw 11 percent growth in 2017 with China valued as a \$27 billion market;
- Over 15 million Chinese consumers have gym memberships<sup>2</sup> while the country counts 10 million yoga practitioners;
- Sales of health supplements saw an annual online growth of 27 percent in 2017;<sup>3</sup>
- Avocado prices hit a 19-year high in response to a 250 percent increase in demand for imports while the total value of foreign food imports amounted to \$77 billion in 2018;
- Cosmetic surgery has experienced a 42 percent year-on-year growth, and China accounted for 41 percent of the global total in 2017;
- In a culture where meat eating is considered a sign of prosperity, China is home to 50 million vegetarians.<sup>4</sup> This figure marks a 17 percent growth in recent years;
- Traditional Chinese medicine has reached 183 countries and regions around the world, expecting an estimated \$50 billion global





*Traditional Chinese medicine has reached 183 countries and regions around the world and is also set to be implemented by the member states of the World Health Organization in 2022.*

market;<sup>5</sup> traditional Chinese medicine is also set to be implemented by the member states of the World Health Organization in 2022;

- The healthcare sector is expected to reach \$1 trillion; and according to SpaChina, the beauty and wellness market in 2017 was worth \$14.5 billion.

While these figures only reflect part of the picture, they illustrate China's seismic shift toward health and wellness and the opportunities for growth. Despite this trend, the market is fragmented with different notions of health, reflected in spending decisions and lifestyle choices, which also vary from the West. While local companies are gaining traction, international brands in the health and wellness category are still leading the industry. Brand-savvy Chinese consumers still value the stringent safety standards, improved quality and innovation that foreign brands promise, and they are willing to pay premium prices for them.

## WHO IS DRIVING THE WELLNESS BOOM?

### The Middle Class

Many of these changes are driven by the explosive growth in China's emerging middle class,<sup>6</sup> which is on track to expand from the current 430 million to 780 million by 2025. Among them, the generation born after the 90s (comprising 16 percent of China's population today) is considered the new engine of consumption. Powered by their extraordinary levels of wealth,

exposure to western culture and digital fluency, they are expected to account for over 20 percent of total consumption growth in China by 2030. Sophisticated and well-educated with a global mindset, China's middle class places a healthy lifestyle as a high priority and sees this as the definition of a good life. Over 70 percent exercise regularly, purchase organic food, and strive to achieve a daily work-life balance.<sup>7</sup> This market segment also dominates global consumption for a variety of products, from American almonds to Korean beauty products, and their penchant for online shopping drives more than half of all global e-commerce.

### Female Consumers

Although males outnumber females by 34 million, the "she-economy" in China is growing, driven by an increase in income level, broader exposure, and changing roles and values. Eager to travel abroad and engage in healthy lifestyles, women are leading the wellness consumption trends in China. Aside from fueling the fitness craze and contributing to the double-digit growth in health supplements, women are overtaking men when it comes to independent travel. In 2019, 59 percent of outbound tourists are expected to be female (an increase of 18 percent), with 14 percent more in spending compared to their male counterparts. Whether girlfriend getaways, health travel or multigenerational holidays, Chinese women are driving the travel experience and will influence how tourism destinations, wellness and hospitality brands develop their offerings.

### Government

China is facing a looming health crisis—an unsupported aging population as a result of the one-child policy, record-high pollution levels, growing obesity rates, heightened level of progressive and serious illnesses (for example, diabetes has an overall prevalence of 11 percent, while another 36 percent of the population has a pre-diagnosis), exploding cancer rates (three million new cancer diagnoses and 2.2 million cancer deaths each year, compared to 1.6 million and 600,000, respectively, in the US), and an ailing healthcare system. In response to the growing pressure, the State Council has launched



the ambitious “Healthy China 2030” initiative to showcase its commitment to preventing disease and improving public health and fitness. The comprehensive 29-chapter document outlines a range of policies, from public healthcare infrastructure and environment management to medical industry reform and food and drug safety. The initiative has ambitious targets, from having 530 million people take part in physical exercise on a regular basis to extending China’s average life expectancy to 79 by 2030. These targets will drive an unprecedented surge in the healthcare and wellness economy.

### WHAT IS AHEAD FOR CHINA?

We identify seven market trends and observations that are shaping the wellness industry and will contribute to its long-term growth.

#### #1 – Outbound Travel Continues to Boom

China’s outbound travel will have the biggest impact on global wellness. Wanderlust among Chinese consumers will dominate and reshape global tourism with its explosive growth and unique consumption habits.

In 2017, China Outbound Tourism Research Institute (COTRI) recorded 145 million international trips taken by the country’s 7 percent passport-holding population. Chinese travelers also took the lead as the world’s biggest spenders with an expenditure of \$258 billion, followed by the United States at \$135 billion.<sup>8</sup> On average, each Chinese traveler spends more per trip than tourists from any other country. As the number of passport holders continues to rise, this number is expected to balloon to 200 million in less than two years. This represents an astounding 20-fold growth since 2000 while spending is predicted to increase to \$429 billion. Adding to these phenomenal figures, the number of Chinese outbound tourists is expected to reach 400 million by 2030, representing 29 percent of the global travel market.

Of particular interest to tourism boards is the changing motivation for travel. Increasingly, Chinese tourists are eschewing the long-

established shopping and sightseeing tours and are now more focused on authentic experiences. According to a 2017 survey from Qyer, one of China’s leading travel powerhouses, over 70 percent of travelers are seeking local experiences or wellness-related activities, such as culinary exploration, outdoor recreation, gallery and museum visits, nature/ecological tours, beauty and spa treatments (women still prefer facials while men favor body massages), and hot springs. China has jumped from the 11th to the third position in wellness tourism, with 70.2 million wellness trips made in 2017, driving a global revenue of \$31.7 billion.<sup>9</sup>

Since the quality of domestic medical care is a major concern, many Chinese look abroad for healthcare and medical treatments. With half a million outbound Chinese medical travelers spending at least \$10 billion a year,<sup>10</sup> the market in other countries is highly lucrative for hospitals, clinics and agents. The services range from checkups, prescription fillings, surgical procedures, maternity and plastic surgery. In response to China ending its one-child policy, there is also a wave of outbound travelers seeking fertility treatments. Over-the-counter medicine and health supplements are also high in demand. While the middle class prefers regional destinations, such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore, the ultra-rich prefer France, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and the United Kingdom for more advanced treatments, drugs and technologies

*Aside from fueling the fitness craze and contributing to the double-digit growth in health supplements, women are overtaking men when it comes to independent travel.*



that are not available in the Asia-Pacific region. These include stem-cell treatments, advanced cancer and cardiac treatments, in vitro fertilization and wellness programs. There is also a growing trend for consumers to fly by private jets to receive treatments. While most of these charters are from high net-worth individuals in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, there are increasing private flights from second-tier cities such as Dalian, Chengdu and Chongqing where the numbers of ultra-rich individuals are growing.

On the other hand, Global Growth Markets estimates that there will be 900,000 outbound medical tourists from China by 2020, looking for minor treatments such as cosmetic surgery and health checks, along with 100,000 patients traveling for advanced treatments, such as cardiology, oncology and neurology programs, fertility treatment, obstetrics, gynecology and joint replacement.

## #2 - Upsurge in Inbound Wellness Tourism

For inbound travel, China is expected to outrank France as the world's most popular travel destination by 2030.<sup>11</sup> The increase in the number of international visitors to China should be considered in light of the country's unstoppable domestic tourism. In 2017, domestic travel accounted for over \$720 billion and 5 billion trips.

With tourism becoming a new driving force in China's economy, much investment has been made to develop the country's infrastructure, from speed trains to airports, and to introduce tourism-friendly policies and initiatives. Not only do these improvements inspire more Chinese travelers to consider local vacations, but they also create new business opportunities targeting domestic travelers on short getaways.

Alila, Aman, Banyan Tree and Six Senses are pioneers in the wellness market in China, with each new property setting a higher benchmark for the wellness hospitality industry. The recently-opened Amanyangyun (Yang Yun means "nourishing cloud") features one of the largest and most comprehensive spa and wellness centers in Shanghai, incorporating cutting-edge technology and innovative science with centuries-old holistic healing philosophies. Positioned as a sanctuary for holistic wellbeing and restoration, the 2,840-square-meter facility covers every aspect of wellness, from beauty, nutrition and movement to emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

West of Shanghai in Suzhou (a UNESCO world heritage site), Sangha Retreat by Octave is a nourishing health and wellness destination, providing an immersive experience in nature, healing and harmony. The 46-acre lakeside retreat

*Amanyangyun features one of the largest and most comprehensive spa and wellness centers in Shanghai, incorporating cutting-edge technology and innovative science with centuries-old holistic healing philosophies.*





*Sangha Retreat by Octave is a Suzhou-based retreat and integrated wellness community for mindful living.*

is the vision of Frederick Tsao, a fourth-generation leader of a Singapore-based family business, himself a graduate of the University of Michigan. Sangha takes a global view toward transformative, holistic wellbeing, blending Western science with traditional Chinese philosophy. It begins with a comprehensive medical assessment by an international team of doctors who create a customized program of nutritionally balanced meals, healing treatments, exercise and activities, plus follow-up support for lasting lifestyle changes.

These examples illustrate the options currently available for the increasingly discerning wellness traveler in China. As the concept of wellness evolves and is now recognized as a way of living rather than a trend, it continues to shape the way people travel.

Worth noting is the growing influence of traditional Chinese medicine in tourism, which is expected to steer an increasing number of foreigners to the clinics in China, starting with the visa-free Hainan Island as an emerging global wellness tourism hotspot, which has been visited by over 800,000 tourists from Russia

and Central Asia since 2010. In addition to over 4,000 traditional Chinese medicine hospitals, 43,000 clinics and 425,000 practitioners across the country, the government has plans to build another 15 “model zones” similar to the one in Hainan by 2020.

### **#3 – Nationalism and Cultural Resurgence**

Despite the rapid economic growth, China's extreme work culture and fledgling corporate wellness sector have resulted in increased stress levels and anxiety while more embark on a spiritual quest to question their purpose in life. More Chinese now take a keen interest in reckoning with their authentic roots, prompting a growing demand for traditional arts, cultural practices and philosophy in a bid to relieve stress and achieve emotional wellness.

International hospitality brands are among the first to respond to this growing trend. Just an hour from Shanghai at Ahn Luh Zhujiayiao, guests are invited to practice the ancient art of calligraphy, a form of meditation in the Buddhist culture, in a lobby that has been repurposed from a beautifully-restored, 600-year-old courthouse dating back to the Ming Dynasty. In



Amanyangyun, the imposing reading pavilion Nanshufang is a dedicated space to learn, contemplate and practice traditional crafts, such as music and painting, or watch Kunqu opera.

Local brands are also taking advantage of this trend. Tsingpu Retreats (meaning “back to the root” in Sanskrit) operates small-scale luxury boutique lodges in some of China’s most charming, culture-rich and largely unknown locations. Each resort’s design reflects a strong sense of place while the authentic guest experiences emphasize local cultural activities, from lacquerware making and traditional fan-making to bonsai gardening, zither playing and meditation. Beyond the current portfolio of seven resorts, the group plans to expand to over 90 locations within the next five years.

Temple getaways have been attracting an increasing number of pilgrims, who seek a short stay to cleanse their mind, body and soul through eating vegetarian food, practicing Zen meditation and engaging in a philosophical exchange with spiritual gurus, be it Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism.

Teahouses are also targeted for a modern makeover. A concept since the Tang Dynasty,

teahouses are viewed as places to contemplate, exchange ideas, and promote civility. Zen-like meditative teahouses are dotted throughout the urban landscape to exemplify scholarly living in the 21st-century style. Li Garden in Shanghai is discreetly nestled behind two office buildings to offer an otherworldly place of tranquility.

Bookstores also now function as microcultural spaces to bring people together in an atmosphere of learning. Design-savvy outlets such as Fangsuo Communes and Zhongshuge are part-bookstore, library, café, lifestyle retail hub and creative meeting point, drawing culture vultures in droves.

#### #4 – A Physical Force

The pursuit of physical fitness aligns perfectly with China’s cultural ideals. While improving oneself level by level is valued, it is also important to receive validation from your peers. The made-in-China #A4waist and #iPhone6knee challenges that once swept across social media are classic examples. While Chinese have moved on from these bizarre fitness standards, peer approval still serves as a motivating factor for the 15 million gym-going consumers and influences every sector, from the design of gyms to the

*At Ahn Luh Zhujiajiao, guests are invited to practice the ancient art of calligraphy in a lobby that has been repurposed from a beautifully-restored, 600-year-old courthouse dating back to the Ming Dynasty.*





functionality of mobile applications.

Beijing's 3,500-square-meter Trainyard Gym is designed as a vibrant social hub “to connect, work out, push limits, and break boundaries together,” with weekly evening parties featuring live DJs and specialty drinks to build a community. The statement-making, graffiti-inspired, ultra-modern interiors and full-length city views also strike the right note with selfie-obsessed gym-goers who share their lives on social media.

Even those without a full gym membership can connect to a local community online since there are over 1,000 community-based fitness mobile applications available. Keep, Yodo Run and Codoon are the most popular, with each amassing an enormous database of no less than 80 million users. Mobile fitness applications do not only measure personal performance and health data, but they also keep like-minded people united by providing an interactive, social platform where users share goals, pictures, experiences and triumphs. This community extends to events and local races. JoyRun hosted a record-breaking online marathon in 2016, mobilizing 450,000 participants across China to complete the race wherever they were, upload running times to compete with other fellow runners, and win a virtual medal.

The increase in sports participation highlights the importance placed on a healthy lifestyle. In response to consumer demand, disrupter brands are making physical exercise more accessible, affordable and customizable. Local brand Supermonkey, for example, offers 24/7, pay-as-you-go access to their 50-square-meter, cube-like gyms in multiple central locations. Offering minimal facilities at low cost (starting from \$7 per class) and operated through a mobile operation, the brand plans to open 200 outlets by 2020.

Obviously, China is in the grip of a government-backed sports and exercise boom. While the older generation still prefers traditional martial arts, such as tai chi and qigong, the younger generation is keen on a variety of different fitness activities, ranging from dance (from hip-hop to Zumba), spin, yoga, Pilates and boxing. It is



*Trainyard Gym is designed as a vibrant social hub “to connect, work out, push limits, and break boundaries together,” with weekly evening parties featuring live DJs and specialty drinks to build a community.*

estimated that the sports industry is likely to top \$436 billion by 2020. China will have the highest number of soccer playing fields and world-class golf courses as well as four million students in the Jr. NBA program. The country is also aggressively preparing for the Winter Olympics 2022 to position Beijing as the world's sporting capital (Beijing is the first city to ever host both summer and winter Olympics).

#### **#5 – Spiritual Cuisine Goes Mainstream**

Vegetarianism is traditionally associated with Buddhism and Taoism. Conveying respect for all lifeforms, vegetarianism is rooted in the dharmic concept of ahimsa (not to injure and instead to express compassion). While many believers observe a vegetarian diet to mark celebrations, very few are committed to a vegetarian diet full time since the food is regarded as simple, bland and unimaginative.

But this perception is changing. Thanks to the efforts of enthusiastic chefs to modernize and promote the once modest cuisine, coupled with growing consumer interest in the health benefits of a clean diet, Chinese spiritual cuisine is being reconsidered. Celebrated for its refined, creative and poetic characteristics, the cuisine is attracting a huge following among nonvegetarians. Shanghai-based restaurants Dashu Wujie and Fu He Hui (meaning “blessing, harmony and wisdom” and rooted in Buddhism philosophy) have been awarded Michelin stars. The latter has also been



*Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain serves an extensive menu that follows Taoism's principles of establishing a yin-yang balance to promote health and longevity.*

included in the coveted list of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants for five consecutive years.

King's Joy is located in Beijing's old cultural district opposite the Lama Temple. With a design resembling a tranquil mountaintop monastery, the restaurant is refined, stylish and spiritual. The restaurant is helmed by Chef Jianjun Pan, a former disciple at the Buddhist Donglin monastery in the Jiangxi province. Encouraged by his master to promote vegetarianism to the outside world, the meat-free menu features seasonal organic produce, and all dishes follow the "five colors, five flavors and five elements" principles inspired by Buddhist beliefs.

Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain serves an extensive menu that follows Taoism's principles of establishing a yin-yang balance to promote health and longevity. Inspired by its sacred location, the birthplace of the Taoism over 2,300 years ago, the property features seasonal, local organic produce that has been a staple for Taoist monks for hundreds of years. The 50 nourishing dishes on the menu present the essence of the spiritual cuisine with artistic flair.

#### **#6 - Wellness Cities**

In burgeoning Chinese cities where

overpopulation, endless construction, traffic congestion and pollution are the norms, there is an emphasis on wellness design and architecture to reduce the impact of these urban problems. Local and international urban planners, developers and architects are collaborating to create sustainable, environmentally-friendly designs that complement the built and living environments.

In China, Italian architect Stefano Boeri is taking the lead. He recently unveiled the revolutionary masterplan for the 175-hectare Liuzhou Forest City in the mountainous area of Guangxi. The development features high-density housing and office skyscrapers with smog-consuming facades covered by nearly 40,000 trees and one million plants of 100 different species. A first of its kind in the world, the innovative urban settlement is expected to depollute the surrounding environment by filtering 57 metric tons of dust particles from the air and absorbing 10,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, while producing 900 tonnes of oxygen. It also reduces temperatures, provides barriers to reduce traffic noise, and regenerates local biodiversity. The concept is reportedly being developed for China's other fast-developing cities, including Shijiazhuang, Guizhou, Shanghai and Chongqing.

#### **#7 - Same, Same but Different**

While the younger generation of Chinese consumers is increasingly adopting beauty and wellness practices from the West, their views and attitudes toward health are still fundamentally different. Traditional Chinese medicine has always been much integrated into the lifestyle of Chinese people of all ages. From dietary principles and herbal medicine to therapeutic treatments and martial arts, there is deep respect and appreciation for the time-honored philosophy to promote health and cultivate healing energy by maintaining and restoring a harmonious balance of the mind and body.

This explains why in a culture where paper-thin is a benchmark of beauty, the fat-burning, high-intensity exercise regimes and the long-advocated high-protein-low-carb diets in the West were not seen to take China by storm. Instead, Chinese

wellness enthusiasts lose weight through massages, herbal medicine and diet therapy to detox and promote circulation.

In the same token, cosmeceuticals enjoy a market share of 50–60 percent in Europe, the US and Japan, compared to about 20 percent in China,<sup>12</sup> where natural beauty products and high-touch treatments are still mainstream.

While spa-goers in the West like steam, sauna and Jacuzzi, the centuries-old tradition of bathing in thermal water is the most favorite heat and hydrotherapy in China. It has been back in fashion since a decade ago and quickly become a fast-growing market, especially as the country is blessed with thousands of natural hot springs. According to China's popular online travel agent Mafengwo, the revenue from hot springs travel has quadrupled since 2006 to have reached over \$14 billion.

## AFTERWORD

While China's reliance on imports and foreign expertise remains strong, the State Council's "Made in China 2025" strategic plan expects to transform the country into an innovative, hi-tech powerhouse by 2025. China aims to replace imports with local products and promote homegrown brands, intellectual properties and technology. Ultimately, the goal is to inspire patriotic pride in the "Made in China" tag. To achieve this, the government is investing financial support, resources and market knowledge. The "Made in China 2025" strategic plan will dramatically alter the way brands and companies engage with China. In particular, biopharmaceuticals and advanced medical devices will be greatly impacted since they are among the 10 industries targeted as part of the ambitious plan.

Nonetheless, China's impact in the global wellness industry going forward is still immense, from the robust demand in beauty and anti-aging to the changes in the way people live, from the increased awareness in preventive medicine and public health to the shift toward healthy eating. The Global Wellness Economy Monitor

has identified 10 key sectors where we expect to continue seeing China's significant influence in the years to come.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> 2018 figures, United Nations

<sup>2</sup> Wouter Baan, et al, *Double-clicking on the Chinese Consumer*, (McKinsey & Company, 2017), <https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/china/double%20clicking%20on%20the%20chinese%20consumer/double-clicking-on-the-chinese-consumer.ashx>.

<sup>3</sup> Ali Health Consumption Report

<sup>4</sup> Xinhua News Agency

<sup>5</sup> As a result of the government's ambitious effort to put traditional Chinese medicine on the international map

<sup>6</sup> Since there is no standard statistical definition of "middle class," the World Bank defines it as households with per capita incomes at purchasing power parity of \$11-110 per person per day.

<sup>7</sup> China Business News Weekly survey 2017

<sup>8</sup> United Nations World Tourism Organization data

<sup>9</sup> Global Wellness Institute, *Global Wellness Tourism Economy*, (November 2018).

<sup>10</sup> COTRI 2016 data

<sup>11</sup> Euromonitor International, November 2018

<sup>12</sup> Hong Kong Trade Development Council 2018 data



# *Your* HERO FOOD

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There is no “one-size-fits-all” diet. Personalized nutrition gives us new insight into what foods work best for our bodies—potentially putting an end to diet confusion. Photo courtesy: Habit



## TREND #7

# Nutrition Gets Very Personalized

**Diet confusion, new tech and the “power of me” propel personalized nutrition into mainstream**

***By Cassandra Cavanah with Beth McGroarty***

What we put in our bodies—whether it’s food, drink or supplements—has never been more scrutinized. Many believe that this laser focus—from where our food is sourced to its nutritional content to the rise of vegetarianism, dairy-free and gluten-free diets to the growing food tribes of keto, paleo and the like—has no doubt led to a healthier population. Plant-based diets are on the rise, transparency and sustainability make headlines, and food waste is lambasted. All good things, right?

However, researchers such as David Bosshart, a keynote speaker at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit (GWS) had a different take: “We are confused about what we eat, where we eat, and when to eat it. We define ourselves by what we’re eating, but, even more so, by what we *don’t* eat. Food may have moved to the center of our lives, but we are overwhelmed by our choices.”

Other doctors, researchers and scientists attending GWS agreed. Neil Grimmer, founder of Silicon Valley-based Habit, a pioneering personalized nutrition company, told the audience: “Since the dawn of time, we’ve been asking what foods are right for us. We’ve done high carb/low carb, high fat/low fat...one day eggs are good, the next they are bad.” Despite all the diets out there, Grimmer says, “the reality is that there’s one prevailing question: ‘what foods are right for me?’”

Enter the age of personalized nutrition where science and technology can dictate what food is right for us—not only for weight management but, more importantly, to manage our overall health and wellness.

## FUELING THE TREND

### The Power of Me

There's no denying that today's consumers expect personalization in every aspect of their lives—whether it's artificial intelligence-based recommendations from Netflix or Amazon, designing our own pair of Nikes or Levis, restaurants that cater to every dietary need, or devices that track every move we make, including requesting help if we've fallen or our heart rate is in the danger territory. Personalization is a trend that is here to stay—a [2018 study](#) of US consumers showed that 90 percent find personalization appealing<sup>1</sup>.

### One-Size-Does-Not-Fit-All

In the fight against obesity, diabetes and other preventable diseases, researchers and scientists are in agreement: there isn't a one-size-fits-all fix. Not long ago, we believed our genetic makeup was predetermined and simply a biological reality; however, the emergence of epigenetics has shown that our genes are fluid and are shaped by our behavior (such as diet, exercise, stress management and other lifestyle and environmental choices). This means what we *do* is much more important than our genetic map. Kenneth R. Pelletier, PhD, MD, author of *Change Your Genes, Change Your Life*, and a keynote speaker at the 2018 GWS, paraphrases

Shakespeare's Hamlet when explaining the power of epigenetics: "The fault lies not in our genes but in ourselves."

### Democratization of Medical Testing

Traditionally, genetic testing, blood analysis and other testing for the purpose of personalized diet/nutrition advice were reserved for specific medical, cultural, dietary or allergy issues. Today, sophisticated personalized nutrition recommendations based on affordable, self-administered tests are accessible at relatively low costs (and will only keep getting more affordable). In addition, the emerging science of nutrigenomics—the study of how food affects our genes and how genetic variations affect the way we react to nutrients—has been propelled forward by technological advances that enable the measurement of key biomarkers almost in real time (think: ingestible sensors, DNA profiles constructed from saliva samples, and devices to draw blood at home without needles). Combine this with today's ready access to big data and it's clear why dozens of personal nutrition companies promising to transform our health and wellness through the power of food have emerged in the past few years, and why many well-known brands, such as WW (formerly Weight Watchers) and even Lean Cuisine (which trialed a DNA-based diet plan in 2018) are focused on delivering personalized programs/products.



*Kenneth R. Pelletier, PhD, MD, author of *Change Your Genes, Change Your Life*, and a keynote speaker at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit*

*Giovanni Mario Pes, PhD, MD, and senior researcher at Italy's University of Sassari, presenting at the 2018 Global Wellness Summit*



### Living Longer, Healthier

The desire—and seeming wherewithal—to live longer, healthier lives is a huge driver of this trend. Recent research around longevity and mortality, including the famous Blue Zone Projects (regions of the world where people live much longer than average), has shown that there *is* a “secret sauce” to living longer and that food, nutrition and movement (none of the Blue Zone folks actually schedule “exercise”) play a key role. Giovanni Mario Pes, PhD, MD, and senior researcher at Italy’s University of Sassari, told GWS delegates in his address at the Summit that, though he originally assumed genetics was the key to living beyond 100, his on-the-ground research in Sardinia, Italy, (the first identified Blue Zone) showed that genes are only 25 percent responsible for lifespan and that lifestyle factors make up the rest.

This knowledge has given rise to a growing awareness that healthy eating is central to health and wellness (including disease prevention)—something we’re seeing played out every day as quality-produced food usurps convenience, packaged foods among consumers. Perhaps it’s not surprising that a [recent study](#) of UK millennials born in 2000 revealed they were less likely to drink, smoke or take drugs and much more interested in nutrition and overall wellness. ‘Generation Sensible’ has grown up with wellness and technology in their DNA<sup>2</sup>.

### Diet Exhaustion and Confusion

Overly curated/engineered and faddish diets have created nations of food neurotics, and, when taken to the extreme, this obsession for “clean, healthy eating” can become an eating disorder (orthorexia). Then there’s the fact that traditional “diets”—whether commercial or homegrown—aren’t often sustainable and, sadly, have been proven to negatively impact metabolism, ultimately causing dieters to put on more weight than they’ve lost<sup>3</sup>. Add this to studies proving that food *quality*—not quantity or calorie counting—leads to sustainable weight loss and it’s no surprise that consumers are searching for evidence-based solutions for their long-term health and wellness. A vivid example of this trend comes from Weight Watchers’ recent rebranding to “WW International,” including the tagline “Wellness that Works.” In short, weight loss isn’t the goal, health is, as explained by CEO Mindy Grossman at the 2018 Summit.

Personalized diets can also end the frustration among wellness-seekers who commit to difficult lifestyle changes (such as omitting dairy, coffee or gluten) in the oft-times false hope that it will lead to weight loss or feeling better when, in fact, those drastic changes may be completely wrong for their bodies.



*Ascertaining your personal nutritional needs requires both blood samples and DNA swabs—in the future, gut microbiome analysis will take personalization even further. Photo courtesy: Habit*

### Research Says...It Works

Though it's early days in personal nutrition research, preliminary studies have shown that individuals are more likely to stick with personalized nutrition advice based on DNA, blood biomarkers and genotypes (a positive offshoot of our craving for the hyper-personalization of everything?). For example, a 42-week study of 100 Habit users found that women lost an average of eight pounds and men an average of 12. Weight loss is not the central goal, health and wellness are, but, as Habit's Grimmer says: "When people eat in harmony to their body, a natural result is weight loss." The same study showed a positive increase in the consumption of nutritious foods and a reduction in those things many of us can do without: sugar, trans fats and salt.

Another US-based personalized nutrition company, InsideTracker, has published a landmark, [peer-reviewed paper](#)<sup>4</sup> aggregating data from more than 1,000 consumers. The results were impressive: personalized nutrition recommendations optimized key markers of health, including blood sugar, cholesterol and

inflammation. Harvard geneticist David Sinclair, co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for the Biology of Aging, chairman of the InsideTracker scientific advisory board, and a co-author of the paper, said: "I can imagine people looking back one day wondering how was it possible that people modified their diet blind to what was going on inside, and only went to their doctors once a year for a checkup or after they became sick."

This is fast moving science that is developing and improving in real time. And, because some first-movers moved a little too fast to put a stake in the ground without providing any real guidance on what personalized genome analysis means to the end user, there has been some backlash. In fact, one of the most popular genetic testing companies out there, 23andMe, ran into trouble with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for giving consumers health-related predictions without any guidance or interpretation. However, after working closely with the FDA, 23andMe has been approved to report on an increased risk for 10 genetically identifiable diseases, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.



Epigenetic expert Dr. Pelletier warns that DNA testing is only one piece of the complex personalized nutrition puzzle: “There are four components necessary to make this kind of genetic analysis work: genome tests from the likes of 23andMe offer up probability statistics based on genes; complete blood chemistry reports show how an individual’s biology reacts to foods; a gut microbiome (or intestinal tract) analysis to show how the body processes nutrients; and, perhaps most importantly, a health coach to help you interpret what it all means.”

Pelletier points out that the most relevant component to personalization likely resides in our microbiome. However, we still know very little about the trillion of cells residing in the intestinal tract—or the exact interaction they have with the receptors in our brain and hearts. The good news is that technology and science are working at breakneck speed, and the mysteries of the microbiome will likely be solved in the next 5–10 years.

In short, personal nutrition can only make good on its promise if we have a whole picture of our biology, including a “prescription” of actionable steps for achieving our best, most well selves. The exciting news is that solutions are quickly moving that way...and more advanced ones are on the horizon.

### **Tailor-Made Nutrition is Open for (Big) Business**

Personalized nutrition is big business—and estimates say the market will reach upwards of \$11.5 billion by 2025<sup>5</sup>. This isn’t too surprising given that the market for specialty foods aimed at the many emerging “food tribes” (those who exclusively define themselves by following very specific diets, such as paleo, ketogenic and vegan) has exploded in recent years. Just one example: Gluten-free products were nonexistent a decade ago and, in 2017, the global market was valued at over \$4.7 billion<sup>6</sup>.

Dozens of companies have emerged to help us personalize our health and nutrition:

- In the US, Habit has been around the longest—which means it also has gathered the most

data on personalized diets. The company is delivering one of the most comprehensive, scientific solutions on the market today. How does it work? The test kit comes with DNA swabs, pinpricks for blood samples, a measuring tape, and something called the Habit Challenge Shake to measure how your body processes foods—all of which are done at home. (Habit says it will add microbiome testing once it becomes more effective.) Once processed, your personalized report will show you how your body handles carbs, fats and protein and let you know, among other traits, your predisposition for weight gain, caffeine sensitivity and lactose intolerance. Then, it caters to your nutritional needs by delivering personalized recipes (a partnership with AmazonFresh makes ordering ingredients simple), and you can take it to the next level with a dedicated registered dietitian to coach you along. Habit’s app lets you find your food tribe (it literally matches you to similar bio bodies), and a partnership with Fitbit lets customers further track their progress.

- At least two start-ups, Israeli-based DayTwo and US-based Viome, are already harnessing microbiome data to drive personalized diets. Research shows that people react differently to the same foods—especially their blood-glucose responses. If untreated, high blood glucose can result in preventative diseases such as obesity and diabetes. The two companies are pulling their data from different microbiome databases, but the results have been extremely promising. And, as we learn more about gut health, expect these two companies to become much more visible in personalized nutrition.
- InsideTracker (US) is focused on measuring the 40 biomarkers in your blood that its scientists have determined provide the best indicators of your overall health and then giving you a personal plan to modulate them with diet, supplements, exercise and lifestyle changes.

*Nestle has already launched the “Nestle Wellness Ambassador” program in Japan, a personalized nutrition supplement program that prescribes capsules of nutrient-rich teas and smoothies to its 100,000 users.*



- Nutrigenomix is available in 22 countries and is a start-up from the University of Toronto (Canada) delivering personalized nutrition advice and physical activity recommendations based on genetic profiles.
- DNAFit and FitnessGenes (both from the UK) are much more interested in your genetic makeup to determine the most effective workout for you as well as providing nutritional advice to achieve your goal and any supplements that might help.

One of the most exacting personalized health companies is Thorne Research, which has been providing dietary and lifestyle recommendations with nutritional supplement intervention to practitioners for years and works closely with the Mayo Clinic on wellness research. The company has long supplied elite athletes with testing and supplements to enhance their performance and has acquired WellnessFX, a company that has been at the forefront of providing personalized consumer testing and insights. Recently, Thorne announced it will launch Onegevity Health to take personalized nutrition to the next level. Onegevity will provide genetic, microbiome and metabolite tests, as well as new molecular measures of aging and skin health, and will leverage Thorne's partnership with Drawbridge Health for its expertise in pain-free blood sampling technology.

### Re-evaluating Nutritional Values

With all the evidence telling us that the recommended daily allowance of nutrients is completely individualized—despite what governments might require food companies to put on their labels—there is a need to know more about what *exactly* works for our bodies. Instead of a whole dietary and physical activity overhaul, some solutions look more toward making sure your body is getting the nutrients it needs.

Nestle (not necessarily a company associated with nutritional values) has been working on its “Nestle Wellness Ambassador” program for a couple of years. The program combines DNA and blood testing with an Instagram-like component to recommend specially formulated supplements. Users send photos of their food and, with the help of artificial intelligence (AI), consumers are prescribed capsules for nutrient-rich teas or smoothies that are very similar to those used in Nestle's Nespresso machines. There are already 100,000 users in Japan.

Gatorade is also getting into the game with personalized sports hydration. Using a chip-enabled skin patch, the professional-level Gx “smart” bottle measures and tracks an athlete's hydration (including sweat!) to deliver just the right fuel and nutrients.

Baze is a California-based company that is focused on personalized vitamins. Its website says, “9 out of 10 Americans are deficient in at least one essential nutrient. Marketed to enthusiastic food tribe (such as, gluten-free, locavores and raw) members who might worry that they don’t get a balanced diet, Baze takes baseline tests and sends consumers what they need, retesting every three months.

### Technology, AI and Apps

All the personalized nutrition companies come with their own smartphone apps to help consumers manage their nutritional data, talk to one another, access recipes or fitness coaches, and, of course, track their own personal results.

Other technology to aid in personalization is the recently released Pinto app, which can analyze photos of meals or products to offer up nutritional information to make it easier to understand what’s going into your body. The app uses artificial intelligence to assess how well a meal or a product fulfills an individual’s specific nutrition plan—whether it’s a diet you’re following or allergens you want to avoid. Another app to help with your personalized diet is Calorie Mama AI—just snap a photo of the food you’re eating, and the app will let you know the calorie count and nutritional value. Even governments are getting in on helping consumers understand what it is they are eating. Britain’s National Health Service Change4Life food scanner looks at labels to tell users sugar, salt and saturated fat levels.

Lumen is a new device and app that focuses on hacking your metabolism in exchange for your breath. Lumen uses a CO2 sensor and flow meter to determine how your body is burning fuel and then an app that it says will take the guesswork out of your personal nutrition.

It’s rumored that Google is continuing its foray into health and wellness with a new personal coaching program in the works. The concept is probably a no-brainer given all the data it has at its fingertips: AI will be used to recommend workout routines, meal plans and other wellness advice.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

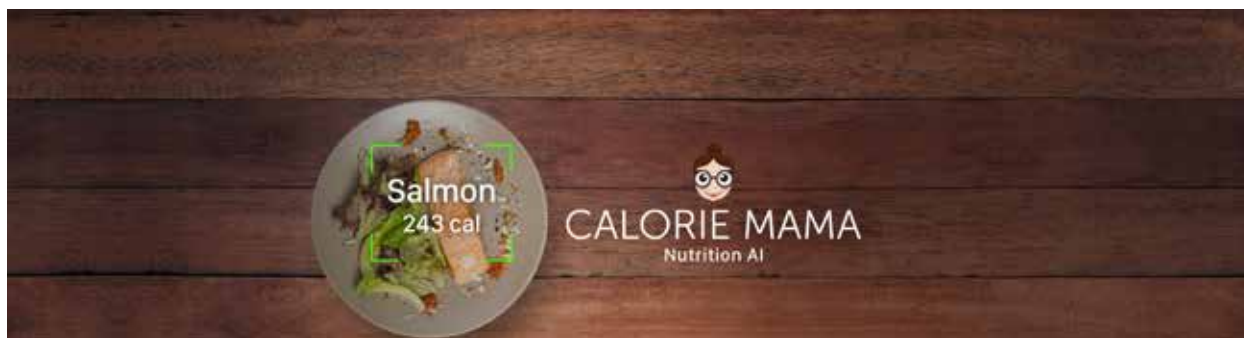
#### Personalized Nutrition Everywhere!

Your smart refrigerator may soon be alerting you to the foods you need to buy to keep your personalized diet in check, while food delivery services will start specializing in catering to your exacting personal needs.

And, when heading out to eat, you will no longer have to fret about going off your personal diet. Already, in the UK, Vito Mojo restaurants have partnered with DNAFit to deliver personalized meals, while US-based Habit has already trialed a workplace program working in tandem with company cafeteria chefs. In the near future, we could walk into any restaurant and provide a saliva swab and/or painless blood sample to have foods designed to our nutritional needs—or, better yet, you might bring in your private DNA data on a thumb drive or allow access to it via a database.



*Gatorade is also getting into the game with personalized sports hydration. Using a chip-enabled skin patch, the professional-level Gx “smart” bottle measures and tracks an athlete’s hydration (including sweat!) to deliver just the right fuel and nutrients.*



*Calorie Mama is an app that integrates Instagram-like photography with AI to determine the calorie count and nutritional value of the food you eat.*

Unsurprisingly, in the hospitality wellness space, personalized nutrition and fitness programs already abound—but you can expect this trend to go far and wide to personal fitness boutiques, day spas and gyms. Numerous destination spas already take saliva swabs from guests before arrival, matching up all-inclusive meals and fitness regimes to their personalized needs. Canyon Ranch (US) has an extensive program that even stretches to dining with a personal nutritionist to gain real insights, while the Mandarin Oriental in Hong Kong and Careys Manor in the UK both promote their relationships with DNAFit for helping guests develop their personalized plans; and Cal-A-Vie in California works with WellnessFX to help guests navigate their personal needs. VIVAMAYR in Austria has been emphasizing personalized programs for over a hundred years, and the luxurious SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain was founded on personalization at every level.

#### **Workplace Wellness Gets More Personal**

Though workplace wellness efforts have had some pushback in the past for monitoring and tracking an employee's every move, personalization has the potential to offer greater appeal as more and more workers entering the workforce see the value in personalized plans for their overall wellbeing. In Singapore, Smartfuture is bringing personalized health into the workplace. The tech company plans to install 20,000 health checkup kiosks in offices by the end of 2019, measuring key health metrics like BMI, blood pressure and blood glucose. Based on results,

workers will receive personalized diet and fitness recommendations as well as the option to consult with a wellness expert over the phone or in their homes.

#### **Further into the Future**

Having detailed information about your genome, biomarkers and microbiome (gut health) will only be empowering if you understand the data and know how to use it. Because of this, we anticipate a need for a whole new kind of personal coach: epigenetic coaches. Apeiron ([www.apeiron.academy](http://www.apeiron.academy)) is already certifying epigenetic coaches to help individuals make the right lifestyle modifications (food, fitness, stress) to optimize their health. We expect wellness businesses to begin having epigenetic coaches on hand.

In the not-too-distant future, we anticipate that the insurance industry will capitalize on the access to all this personal nutrition and fitness data (clearly with consumer consent) by combining the data points and creating personalized health and life insurance plans to reward healthy behavior with more affordable premiums.

We are only at the tip of the iceberg in terms of understanding the microbiome (gut health), but, in the near future, we will know much more of what the enormous ecosystem inside each of us is telling us, including how much exercise you really need, whether meditation is really good for you, how our bodies react to specific nutrients, and, of particular interest to fighting off disease and illness, how our bodies react to pharmaceuticals.



More scientific proof and evidence that personalized nutrition really works will bring this trend mainstream—in conjunction with a much lower cost of entry as testing becomes ubiquitous. Finally, as we begin to understand that reconfiguring our own genes is not only possible but also bears positive results for our descendants as well, we will begin to act on this to ensure the health and wellness of future generations.

## ENDNOTES

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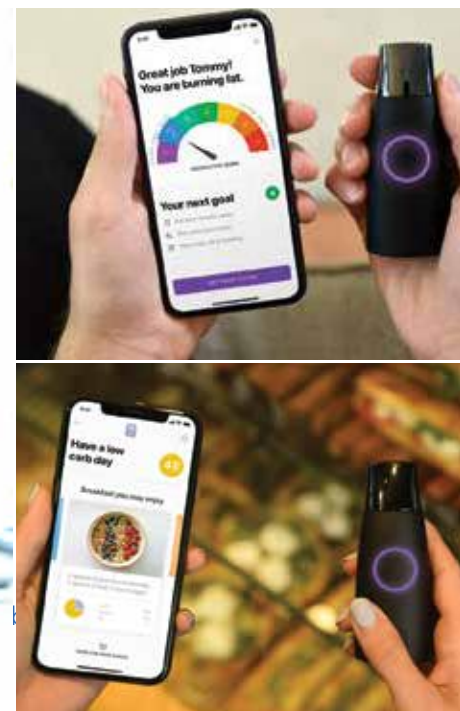
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*Lumen is a device and app that claims to hack your metabolism in exchange for your breath. A CO<sub>2</sub> sensor and flow meter determine how your body is burning fuel to help take the guesswork out of what you should eat.*



A person wearing a dark jacket, a grey beanie, and glasses is looking up at a large, glowing paper lantern they are holding. The lantern is made of crumpled paper and has a small flame inside. The background is dark and filled with many other glowing lanterns, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

**Death is a growth industry, and how we care for people at the end of their lives is one of the biggest challenges the world faces. Photo courtesy: Reimagine End of Life Festivals**



## TREND #8

# Dying Well

**It's called the "death positive" movement, and everything around dying is getting radically rethought—from making the experience more humane to mourning and funerals getting reimaged to people actively exploring death as part of a mentally healthy life. Finally, a "better death" is becoming integral to the idea of a "well life."**

***By Beth McGroarty***

It's difficult to write a wellness trend with "death" or "dying" in the title. Most people think, *oh no...bummer...not relevant to me...I'll skip*. That response would be symptomatic of our modern culture where, despite the fact that every minute 100 people around the world die, the act of death has become intensely sterilized, hidden, lonely and scary. If until the early 20th century people died at home surrounded by loved ones, Western medicine has since made it a coldly clinical affair in a hospital or nursing home. In addition, the funeral industry co-opted the management of our dead - and with a decline in formal religion, communal healing rituals got lost. And two very modern forces are complicit in creating an increasingly death-denying society:

1. A Silicon Valley biotech industry that now aims to "cure death" and radically extend life
2. The wellness world itself, with its insistent stay young, do-this-and-don't-age messages

We talk ad nauseam about anxiety's impact on our wellbeing, but our collective death anxiety is so great we can't even seem to broach the topic. It's a problem so stupendous that it sometimes seems that the only thing we humans do is actively shut our eyes to the one fact about life: We all must die.

The repressed always returns, and perhaps because our attitudes and practices around death have gotten so urgently unwell, we're suddenly seeing major change: the rise of what is being dubbed a "death positive" movement that is reimagining pretty much everything around death and dying—from better ways to experience it to the invention of new rituals around how we mourn and memorialize people to people actively exploring death and spiritually diverse cultural death traditions—as part of any mentally "well life."

People are rethinking the way we care for people at the end of life, realizing that we can have it

go well or badly. So, we see the rise of a new practitioner, the death doula, who fills the gap in care between medicine and hospice, families and fear—and who is dedicated to giving people a better, more meaningful and peaceful death. Funerals are becoming less gloomily formal and funereal and more deeply personal—from the rise of celebratory “living funerals” to the return of creative home funerals. There is radical experimentation with how we dispose of and consecrate our dead, such as the surge in all kinds of eco-friendly green burials that “replant” us in nature. There are so many more platforms and workshops meeting people’s hunger to just talk about the topic, such as the global rise of death cafes. More people are exploring alternative wisdom and practices around death from cultures worldwide, whether guided death meditations at a Zen Buddhist Center or studying the ancient Stoics’ death acceptance techniques or just downloading the WeCroak app, which serves up daily Tibetan meditations, reminding us that we’re going to die. People are even traveling to have the caring and spiritual death they seek.

The media can dismissively state that “death is hot right now,” but we’re seeing signs of a desperately needed awakening about how the silence around death hurts our lives and our world—and how we can work to restore some humanness, sacredness and our own values to the death experience.



This trend was inspired by the announcement at the Global Wellness Summit (GWS) of the new Global Wellness Institute’s Healthy Aging Initiative, spearheaded by Amy McDonald, owner of wellness consultancy Under a Tree, and Liz Terry, CEO of Leisure Media & Well Media. Its mission is to drive practical, positive change in the way people age and die. As McDonald put it, “The wellness world has been obsessed with ‘living well,’ and the relentless focus has been all about staying beautiful and young. But we now must tackle dying well—not only to help people accept the reality but to make this monumental life transition somehow better—or how can we lay claim to ‘wellness’ at all?”

## FUELING THE TREND

### As formal religion declines, new rituals around death arise

While a 2018 [Pew Research Center global survey](#)<sup>1</sup> shows that most people around the world still claim a religious identity (such as Christian or Hindu) formal religious practice is on the decline. And there is a striking age gap: out of 106 countries studied, adults under 40 are significantly less likely to be affiliated with a religious group than those over 40, and the gap is big in Europe and North America, and with nations like Korea, Australia, Japan and the Scandinavian countries having some of the most striking gaps.

The world is becoming more secular and agnostic, and with formal religions not “handling” as many of our deaths as they used to, new rituals are rushing in. More people are adopting a “hybrid” spirituality, where you might do the Jewish family

*“The wellness world has been obsessed with ‘living well,’ and the relentless focus has been all about staying beautiful and young. But we now must tackle dying well...or how can we lay claim to ‘wellness’ at all?” -Amy McDonald, 2018 Global Wellness Summit*

*Photo courtesy: Reimagine End of Life Festivals*



holidays and also practice yoga or meditation. Harvard Divinity School researchers Casper ter Kuile and Angie Thurston have dubbed this phenomenon religious “unbundling,” which refers to people now picking and choosing elements of different spiritual traditions—and they have even explained how belonging to a wellness studio, such as [CrossFit and Soulcycle](#), functions as a religion for their members. Thanks to the Internet, people are increasingly gathering more ideas about spiritual traditions (and hence death traditions) from a variety of places, and it’s giving rise to a more individualized (sometimes make-it-up-as-we-go) approach to how we want to die.

### **The medicalization of dying and a lonely, aging population have made for too many terrible deaths**

If tending to the sick and dying (and the funeral) were handled in the home until the 20th century, since then, especially in the West, caregiving for the dying has taken a terrible dive. Death has become medicalized: We die in the cold environment of hospitals and nursing homes. And while hospice care rose in the last decades to provide pain relief at home over our final weeks, it serves a tiny percentage of the world’s population. The intense urbanization of the world (more than 50 percent of us now live in cities) adds to the disconnection and loneliness of the old, sick and dying, with so many more people dying alone. In aging Japan (where one in four people are over 65), this sad reality is so common that it has a name, “kodokushi,” or “lonely death” (where people’s bodies are not found for weeks). A popular Japanese magazine sounded the alarm in 2017 that there are “4,000 lonely deaths a week” in the country. With too many people dying unhappy and inhumane deaths, finding a better way is taking on a new urgency.

### **Baby Boomers moving into death years and refusing a bad end-of-life**

The oldest of the baby boomer generation (born 1946–1964) are now in their 70s, and, if they have been the generation that redefined aging and pioneered the wellness movement, they are also now poised to redefine dying as they face their own mortality—from what end-of-life care looks like to

what the future of funerals and burials will be.

### **A “never-die” Silicon Valley & never-age wellness market on collision course with healthy attitudes toward death**

Two recent forces are exacerbating the death-denying culture we increasingly live in. One is a series of high-tech start-ups, mostly from the global Silicon Valley, that aim to “cure death” and radically extend life. The second is a wellness world that increasingly sells a life that’s an eternal pursuit of never aging and not dying.

Most of us see the headlines about the Silicon Valley billionaire investors who are now bent on “curing death”: that vocal new breed of “longevity entrepreneurs” that see death as just another code to be cracked, with new biotech ventures aimed at delivering very, very long lives in the not too distant future. Their approaches are too diverse to cover here, but one excellent overview is the *New Yorker’s* [“Silicon Valley’s Quest to Live Forever.”](#) Billions upon billions are being spent. Mark Zuckerberg launched a \$3 billion initiative to obliterate human disease. PayPal founder Peter Thiel, who likes to say he’s basically “against death,” has poured piles of money into life extension start-ups. Oracle founder Larry Ellison has plowed hundreds of unnecessary evil or person millions into anti-aging research. Google launched the biotech company Calico (which secured \$1.5 billion) to “solve death,” but reports are that they’re doing what scientists have already been doing for decades: testing molecules on mice to see if they extend lives. United Therapeutics is working on growing new organs from people’s DNA. The controversial company Ambrosia Medical, specializing in young blood/plasma transfusions to reverse aging, is set to open its first clinic in Manhattan in early 2019. The independent National Academy of Medicine is awarding \$25 million for breakthroughs that “end aging forever.”

There are technologists bent on using AI and robotics to extend our “life” and “minds” indefinitely: Elon Musk has argued we need to become cyborgs to survive the coming robot uprising, and his brain-computer interface

company Neuralink wants to create a new era of transhumanism; the 2045 Initiative has a mission of uploading our personalities into an artificial brain when we die to live on as virtual holograms floating around space—but somehow still thinking.

The *New Yorker* notes that every announcement of a research breakthrough on reversing aging so far has been followed by setbacks. Some are closer to reality (and to market) than others. Unity, a biotech with investors such as Jeff Bezos and Thiel, is the pioneer in eliminating senescent (or what they call “zombie”) cells, which spread chronic inflammation in the body and are related to things such as dementia and cognitive decline. Their trials show their treatments delay cancer and increase median lifespan (in mice) by 35 percent. Their first human trial is underway, but their solution wouldn’t hit the market for at least seven years. With the gene-editing tool CRISPR, scientists are more confident that we’re on the cusp of a disease-eliminating, anti-aging gene therapy era—and Harvard researchers have identified 45 promising, live-very-long gene variants, including from people who have lived to 110. Some already-here approaches with promising research: taking Metformin, the diabetes medication that may reduce DNA damage and keep cells healthy or Rapamycin, an immunosuppressant that keeps aging cells regularly reproducing.

### **The wellness world: complicit in denying aging & death**

Over the last couple of years, the wellness world has been taken to task for many things, from being too wealthy to too white. More recently, the criticism is sharpening around how its marketing of constant self-optimization and anti-aging cures is compounding the fear of aging and death. Sheldon Solomon, professor of psychology at Skidmore College and one of the thinkers that forged the Terror Management Theory in the 80s, which argues that our conscious and subconscious death anxieties drive a lot of what we do, recently put it quite<sup>2</sup> baldly: “Wellness is a 21st-century secular belief system that, psychologically speaking, is fundamentally directed at avoiding death anxiety...Because,

in part, it’s convincing oneself that the right regimen of diet and exercise will either keep you perpetually young or... perpetually alive.” This critique is also front-and-center in cellular biologist Barbara Ehrenreich’s provocative, honest 2018 book, *Natural Causes: An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer*, where she argues that the two defining factors of modern life, a perpetually medicalized existence (endless tests, etc.) and a commercialized wellness world that equates health with virtue, are conspiring to make us radically unprepared for aging and dying... turning it into some kind of unnecessary evil or personal failure.

Most people in the wellness world would reject the position of Silicon Valley technologists crying for a world where “death is optional,” and would argue instead that the point of exercise, healthy food, social connection and stress-reduction is to not only live longer but to be more well while we do live. (And there’s ever-increasing medical evidence that those pillars extend life.) But whether you aim to live to be 100 or 1,000, almost nobody is digesting the profound social, economic, moral and environmental issues that will arise if much longer lives become the norm. The Earth is already running out of resources, and climate change is at the disaster stage. Will it become a choice between our long lives and reproduction (mandating zero population growth)? What is a world without new generations and ideas? Who takes care of all these old people? Where will they live? How can social welfare and Social Security be sustained? We already have a wealth inequality crisis, and given the likely price tags of these life extension technologies, will we live in a world where only the rich don’t age? Which cosmetic procedures are already making a reality? Why would we spend our money and energy on radically extending lives when we aren’t even investing enough in people’s quality of life as it is: in healthcare, education and a clean environment? The surgeon Atul Gawande, in his important book *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, which is about controlling the narrative of one’s own life until the very end, argues that more

meaningfully “solving” the “problem” of death would mean funding improvements in palliative care and making people’s end of life more comfortable.

To understand how we arrived at our moment where death is denied and feared in unprecedented ways, both the medical and wellness worlds need to grapple with their complicity. With medical advances now pushing to dramatically extend life, and a wellness world that promises you can stay “forever young,” the problem has only ratcheted up. The death-positive movement, we predict, will only keep rising as a corrective backlash.

## ASPECTS OF THE TREND

### Rise of the death doula—dedicated to delivering you a better death

Death has become medicalized, hidden and lonely. Medicine does its best and then is finished with you; hospices provide much-needed palliative care, but a yawning support gap exists. We need more caregivers that give the dying their full attention and companionship and work to meet their unique physical, emotional and spiritual needs during their extraordinary last days or months, in essence, to deliver people a better death. It’s a painfully pressing cultural need, and to meet it, a new class of wellness practitioner—the death doula—is fast arising.

The concept was born in 2003 when a NYC hospice social worker named Henry Fersko-Weiss was frustrated by the care medical staff were able to give dying patients and their sad, stressed-out families. He saw what birth doulas (an ancient Greek term that means a woman servant/helper) did to help women during childbirth, so he created the first professional training program to teach death doulas (also called end-of-life “midwives,” “transition guides” or “end-of-life integrative nurses”) how to provide the right emotional support and environment for dying people. And now the death doula movement is hitting tipping-point traction in more countries around the world, such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Brazil and Mexico, for starters. Ellen Goodman, famed newspaper columnist and founder of the Conversation

Project, a powerful platform dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care, has likened<sup>3</sup> the rise of death doulas to the earlier movement for natural childbirth, noting, “Birth was perceived as a medical event, and then in came the women’s movement. It wasn’t doctors who changed the way we give birth... It was women who said that giving birth was a human event...Dying is a human experience. We’re trying to put the person back into the center of the experience.” Death doulas are like death coaches and are trained to deliver continuous, kind and honest support before, during and after death occurs. And while the spectrum of what they provide varies, they’re essentially inventing new—and restoring lost—positive and personal rituals around dying, creating a special space around the event. A crucial aspect of what they do (whenever possible) is to actively engage the individual dying in the process, not only by helping them do soul work, such as talking to them about their fears and anxiety (which no one ever does), but also helping them plan what they most desire in their final days. They ask a whole lot of questions. What spiritual traditions do you embrace? What music do you like? Do you want to be in the hospital or your bed at home? Who do you want beside you as you’re dying? What exact kind of funeral do you want? What exact kind of burial or cremation? Are there any “bucket list” experiences I could reasonably do with you? Even, how do you want your social media handled at your death? Death doulas report that people are far more likely to tell them these things than they would friends or family.

Death doulas are also super focused on helping the dying create living legacy projects so they take a creative role in the stories they leave behind. They help them create artistic things, such as memory books and boxes, audio and video recordings, letters, interviews, collages and scrapbooks, so they can review and process, and leave behind, who they really are. They often serve as scribes and communicators, from helping the dying make amends with estranged friends and family members to writing letters to loved ones to be read at a future wedding day or birthday.



*The rise of death doulas are an important aspect of the Dying Well trend, inventing new—and restoring lost—positive and personal rituals around dying. INELDA end of life doula, Doug Simpson, shares a powerful moment with his patient Marilyn.*

Death doulas not only sit with the dying and bear peaceful witness, but they also create rituals and experiences to soothe the dying. Respecting each person's spiritual background, they recite prayers and contemplations—from Hebrew psalms to Buddhist death meditations. They play music (which has such good evidence of benefit for sick and dying people), light candles, hold hands, and watch sunsets. Because many death doulas come from careers in the healing arts, they often deliver much traditional wellness to help with anxiety and pain: memory-triggering and calming aromatherapy, massage, meditation, conscious breathing exercises, reiki or guided visualizations that can take the dying hiker or surfer on detailed journeys through the forest or on the waves. And death doulas provide powerful support to family and friends: communicating what the patient wants, giving the family time to rest, keeping people informed of their status, and helping them with grief.

Some doulas are paid by the hour or by a retainer or are free volunteers, and relationships can last days, weeks or months. Some have private

practices, while others work with hospitals or, increasingly, hospices. And there are ever more doula training programs and businesses launching around the world. The first to train and certify professional death doulas was the nonprofit International End of Life Doula Association (INELDA), whose directory connects people to doulas in the US, Canada, Mexico and Brazil. Other training programs include the Art of Dying Institute, International Doulagivers Institute, Lifespan Doula Association (LDA), Quality of Life Care, the Doula Program to Accompany and Comfort, the Conscious Dying Institute and End of Life Doula-UK. Australia's death doulas have taken action to gain national government accreditation in 2019. In the US, the University of Vermont's College of Medicine just became the first university to offer a Doula Professional Certificate program, and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in Washington, D.C. formed an end-of-life doula council in 2018—a sign that doulas are really being recognized. Given the keenly needed service they provide—making each death better, more meaningful, and more human—it's no surprise that each of these organizations reports a big uptick in inquiries about hiring doulas and doula training. We're going to see demand spike for what the death doula concept can provide wherever people die, whether at home or in a hospital. And Fersko-Weiss of INELDA thinks that some insurance companies will start to offer partial reimbursements for their services, just as they have for birth doulas.

And more people are doulaising-it-themselves, including in our own organization. As Nancy Davis, GWS chief creative officer and executive director, noted about her own recent experience supporting her mother's death: "Without knowing it, I was a death doula to my mother. If you love someone and want to help at the end of their life—and if that person is lucid and still in control



of their own narrative—then it's a deeply positive experience. I felt the end of my mother's life was her parting gift to me—a last lesson in love, respect and fearlessness. I arranged for visits from family and friends; coordinated emails, texts and video chats with dear ones far away; acted as scribe for my mother's various wishes; helped organize and itemize her treasured belongings and who should receive what; and slept in the room with her at hospice. Hospice was another great gift—a caring, easy and loving atmosphere, where my mother felt at peace. I asked my mother if she preferred to die at home (to arrange in-home hospice), to which she replied, 'Oh no! That's so creepy for the neighbors.' Being so active and present for her final act was a profoundly moving experience for me."

#### **From death cafes to death fests: A hunger to just talk about it**

If modern culture is the first to pathologize any interest in death, now there are many more places and platforms to finally come together and have a real conversation about it. So many blogs, podcasts and YouTube channels explore all aspects of death, such as young, LA-based, celebrity mortician Caitlin Doughty's no holds barred YouTube series *Ask a Mortician*, which dives into things such as how corpses decompose and attracts hundreds of thousands of viewers. There are many events, such as Doughty's "death acceptance collective"; The Order of the Good Death, (whose mostly millennial members are academics, artists, funeral industry professionals, etc.), which hosts a number of events around the world, such as Death Salons that explore ways to "prepare a death phobic culture for their inevitable mortality"; or the weeklong Reimagine End of Life Festivals held in NYC and San Francisco, with hundreds of workshops, performances and exhibits all exploring death. More cemeteries are becoming places of both fun social gathering and death exploration. For example, Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn hosts cocktail parties, performances, moonlit tours and yoga classes and is home to *Morbid Anatomy*, which hosts art exhibits, lectures and conversations on how death and culture intersect.

And nothing is more globally accessible than Death Cafes, a formal movement forged in London in 2011 in the basement of the home of a man named Jon Underwood, who created the concept of people coming together to drink tea, eat cake, and talk pointedly about all things death and dying. Underwood created a website and guidelines for productive discussions, and now there have been over 7,500 death cafes held in 63 countries—from big cities to rural New Zealand and Senegal. People gather in restaurants and other spaces (they're typically free, and there's always food and drink) to talk openly about everything they want to about death and dying: from what it's like to experience to confronting our fear of it to funeral options. Attendees report there's always much laughter...that sure sign of catharsis and relief. Visit [deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com) to find the nearest to you.

#### **The radical rethinking of funerals—Less formal, fixed & funereal**

People say everything is always being "disrupted," but in the case of funerals, it's simply true. We know what happens formally in religions: If you're Muslim, your body is bathed and shrouded in white cloth before the community gathers to recite the prayer for the dead; in Jewish tradition, the family sits Shiva, where the mourning remain at home and loved ones call to pay respects; if you're Catholic, Last Rites are said bedside followed by a vigil for the deceased and a formal Mass. But as people become less yoked to formal religions or have embraced a life of more flexible spiritual identities—and as more people see the memorial as more about representing a unique person rather than a (sometimes intimidating or joyless) religious practice—funerals are being rewritten in every way possible. People are creating more individualistic, less "funereal" celebrations...a whole new world of farewells.

There's the rise of "living funerals," gatherings that celebrate a dying person while they're still alive, and where the person of honor can be part of the festivities. These are not hushed, gloomy events: The person facing death and their friends and family eat, drink, laugh and tell stories (they've even been called FUN-erals). And it would seem

to have real psychological benefits: The dying person and their loved ones can show gratitude toward each other, grieve together, and leave fewer things unsaid.

Many more people are holding the funeral themselves, with services conducted by friends and family and filled with music and personal and video tributes, even allowing Skype dial-ins from faraway friends. The new funeral is about orchestrating something that really captures that person—whether at home, an event space, a mountaintop or the beach. More people are also embracing “home funerals,” cutting out the pricey undertaker-middleman and restoring the profound physical rituals and closeness that we used to show loved ones before the 20th century. Family and friends are now preparing the body (using dry ice to extend the time before cremation/burial)—even building the casket or digging the burial site together. It’s not illegal to do, and people are improvising. Destination funerals are also on the rise, where people are laid to rest someplace in the world that they most deeply loved. (The cost of sending human remains via plane, by the way, is about the same as buying an advance ticket.)

### **A more transparent, unorthodox funeral industry**

The funeral business has had people over a barrel: What they deliver to stressed, time-strapped people has been rather mysterious and deeply uncompetitive. The average American funeral runs around \$9,000, while in Japan it can run many tens of thousands. Enter the Internet, and now comparison sites are providing a clearer window into options and prices. And some funeral companies are stripping away the language of hand-wringing gloom-and-doom to create a different, less clichéd, conversation about death and funerals.

The UK company Beyond, a funeral cost-shopping site, made serious headlines in 2018 when it ran a bunch of in-your-face ads aimed at humorously shaking up taboos around death. One involved a happy, hip, young couple running on the beach carrying what looked like surfboards, but that were instead coffins—with accompanying text like, a “one-way,” “once-in-a-lifetime” trip with “roasting temperatures” for an all-inclusive price of \$1,570. That would be a cremation. They took a lot of fire but argued, “We’re turning up the volume to 10...to say, ‘Here’s permission to talk about death.’”

*UK-based Beyond, a funeral cost-shopping site, made headlines in 2018 when it ran a series of ads aimed at humorously shaking up taboos around death.*



*For that perfect look  
on your big day*

Bespoke funeral plans  
Compare funeral directors  
Free will writing  
Estate administration

[www.beyond.life](http://www.beyond.life)





*Green, or woodland, burials are on the rise. The body is wrapped in a plain shroud made of natural fibers and placed directly in the ground or in a biodegradable coffin made of bamboo or seaweed or unfinished pine or oak or handwoven willow baskets, such as those available at Ecoffins. There are typically just simple markers, such as trees, or locations are only identifiable by GPS.*

JWT Intelligence named digital, direct-to-consumer funeral companies turning the business into something shoppable one of their top consumer trends for 2019, noting how these innovators are “reshaping long-held cultural norms surrounding death.” And they point to other big changes globally, such as how, in China, a fast-growing number of people are starting to arrange their own funerals ahead of time, and, for the first time, are picking out their caskets, urns and flowers in advance.

#### **New “burial” practices from radically green to out-of-this-world**

The ways that different cultures return their dead to the universe varies wildly. Tibetans still practice sky burial, leaving bodies on mountaintops to be picked clean, while the Caviteño in the Philippines place bodies in hollowed-out tree trunks. The US and Canada are unique for adopting embalming, a just as bizarre (if you really think about it) practice that started during the Civil War and involves replacing the blood with a formaldehyde-based fluid so the body can then be displayed in a decorative casket and buried in a concrete or steel vault in a grave. Most people in the world where customs are ancient (from Europe to Asia) embrace some form of cremation. But now, as our cemeteries become overcrowded landfills and people have become more aware of how environmentally toxic embalment, vaulted

burial and even traditional cremation is, there is a sudden inventiveness and surge in eco-friendlier (and simpler and cheaper) “burial” options. We’re seeing some seriously out-of-the-box thinking about how we want to dispose of and commemorate the dead.

#### **Replant me: Back to nature burials surge**

The embalment and nondegradable casket method of burial is an Earth killer: Every year in North America, for example, 800,000 gallons of carcinogenic and contaminating formaldehyde is dumped into the soil, along with 115 million tons of casket steel, 2.3 billion tons of concrete, and nondegradable hardwood for caskets that equals four million acres of forest—all of which take centuries to degrade.<sup>4</sup> Cremation is relatively less environmentally destructive, but estimates are that the energy required to cremate one body is equal to driving 4,800 miles—and cremation still spews toxic carbon dioxide, dioxin and mercury into the atmosphere. Cremation, in general, is on the rise, in part because of the much lower costs: Since a traditional funeral and viewing hits \$9,000, now more people are following David Bowie in his choice for a no-frills direct cremation (where ashes are simply returned to friends and family for scattering) at the cost of around \$1,000.

Yes, people are more eco-conscious now, and they’re digesting these facts, but the powerful demand for much greener burials also represents



a deep psychic need we have to somehow return to nature, to be restored after death to our place in its mysterious, eternal cycling and recycling. (Even if we left the lights on our whole life and drove a gas-guzzling SUV, we increasingly crave this natural return.) That's why green, or woodland, burials are really on the rise, where everything that goes into the ground or sea must be as biodegradable as the body. It goes like this: the body is wrapped in a plain shroud made of natural fibers (the company Vale offers personalized, artisanal ones), and the body is either placed directly in the ground or in a biodegradable coffin made of bamboo or seaweed or unfinished pine or oak or handwoven willow baskets, such as those available at Ecoffins or the Natural Burial Company. There is no concrete vault to bury, so the hole is dug only a few feet from the surface: far enough down so it's protected from animals but shallow enough so the aerobic bacteria can digest the cells. With green burials, there are typically no tombstones, just simple markers such as trees or only identifiable by GPS—and people are typically buried in unspoiled woodland rather than crowded cemeteries. In North America, the Green Burial Council has certified more than 300 green funeral homes and burial grounds and, in the UK, the Association of Natural Burial Grounds has helped create over 250 woodland burial sites.

Cremation is going green. People are insisting on biodegradable urns (whether made of Himalayan sea salt or gourds) or those from Bios Urn®, made of a coconut shell and peat that contain the seeds of the tree that you most want to become. More people are choosing “wet cremation” (or resomation or alkaline hydrolysis), which uses water and a salt-based solution to rapidly dissolve human remains, returning only ash to the family, and releases no chemicals and uses 80 percent less energy than regular cremation. It's legal in 15 US states and three Canadian provinces, with some countries in Europe considering approval now. Washington just announced it might become the first US state to legalize human composting (recomposition) which involves placing bodies in a vessel that speeds their decomposition so a nutrient-packed soil can be returned to families. So they can let their loved one re-bloom.

The green burial wave is pushing the envelope. You can buy a mushroom burial suit (such as those from Coeio) lined with flesh-eating fungi that speed up your return to nature—the choice of famed organic chef Alice Waters. You can be turned into an “eternal reef” and become part of a living ocean habitat: Your cremated remains are mixed into a cement artificial-reef formation (such as those provided by Eternal Reefs). A Swedish company called Promessa has created a way

*The green burial wave is pushing the envelope to speed the return to nature. Bios Urn®, the world's first biodegradable urn, is designed to convert your remains into a tree after life.*







*An Italian art project made waves with its biodegradable egg-shaped burial pods called Capsula Mundi. The buried body or ashes feed a tree planted directly above, creating an Instagrammable eco-memorial.*

(using liquid nitrogen and sound waves) to break down a body into compost in just 6-12 months to grow a tree or garden. An Italian art project recently made waves with its biodegradable egg-shaped burial pods called Capsula Mundi, where a buried body or ashes feeds a tree planted directly above it—the perfect (and Instagrammable) eco-memorial.

Architects and urban planners are thinking way beyond the overcrowded, segregated cemetery (and the old, one-two of burial and cremation) to completely reimagine new, eco-friendly public spaces that could revolutionize how we accommodate and remember the dead—and make them more part of everyday life. Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation DeathLAB is the visionary here, with such mind-opening projects as Constellation Park, where glowing pods that are illuminated by the organic energy given off by your loved one's biomass get suspended from a Manhattan bridge—lighting up the night skyline—so you and the entire city could experience their presence from miles away. The light from each burial vessel would twinkle for a whole year and be forever replenished by additional new “sky burials.”

Wherever you look, you see a world thinking beyond the rickety old cemetery. In a high-tech columbarium in Tokyo, ashes are stored in crystal Buddhas that line the walls, and, when visitors come, they simply type in a name and “their” Buddha glows a different color. People's ashes

are being turned into records (complete with recordings of the loved one's voice) or jewelry, such as Eterneva, which turns human ashes into diamonds. Companies (such as the Russian SpaceWay) will send your ashes off into the stratosphere, and your family can watch your final space launch on GoPro cameras. (Although that can't be too eco-friendly.)

### Exploring death becomes part of a healthy life

Experts agree that denying death causes serious mental issues, and when we bury it, it doesn't stay put. For instance, Shelden Solomon, Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski have made careers out of studying what death awareness does to our behavior and mental wellness, and in over 600 lab experiments, they've found that reminders of death affect almost everything. In a 2018 interview at [Vice](#)<sup>5</sup> they summarized their findings: “Our research has shown that (repressed death anxiety) manifests in a variety of unfortunate ways. Everything from hating people who are different to voting for people who say that they're uniquely capable of ridding the world of evil to pissing on the environment to wanting to buy more stupid stuff.” They argue that practicing acknowledging that we'll die...makes us better people and more grateful for our experiences. [Dr. Deepak Chopra](#) has argued<sup>6</sup> that the fear of death is one of the greatest forms of stress hurting human health and that understanding our inevitable death is as critical to wellbeing as good sleep, nutrition, meditation and yoga. ([The wellness guru recently noted](#)<sup>7</sup> that he's “obsessed with death these days.”) Almost every



*Architects and urban planners are re-imagining new, eco-friendly public spaces to accommodate and remember the dead. Columbia University's DeathLAB envisions mind-opening projects such as Constellation Park, where glowing pods are illuminated by the organic energy given off by a loved one's biomass. The pods would be suspended from a Manhattan bridge and twinkle for a year so you and the entire city could experience their presence from miles away. Image courtesy: Columbia University GSAPP DeathLAB + LATENT Productions*

philosophical and spiritual tradition instructs that thinking regularly about death makes us fear it less and is one of the greatest strategies for living a more authentic, meaningful life, where more joy is extracted out of every day we have. Or, as Allison Arieff of The New York Times just put it: “Our humanity—our *humanness*—is inextricably intertwined with the fact of our mortality. And no scientific fountain of youth can ever cause that to change.”

Actively exploring death and working on one's fear of it is becoming a wellness practice for more people—and many more classes and events are launching to help. At NYC's Art of Dying Institute, experts lead workshops (for everyone from doctors to death doulas but also for the general public) on an amazing series of holistic approaches for understanding death. In Los Angeles, the Sacred Crossings Institute for Conscious Dying offers death exploration classes not only for care professionals but also for anyone that wants new tools to help with death anxiety—from practices such as the life review and guided meditation-based “death rehearsals.” At the Reimagine End of Life Festivals, immersive

experiences that meld art and death are offered, from being invited into a phone booth to have the conversations you wish you had had with someone you lost to role-playing in a fictional bereavement group. Given the almost complete denial of death, especially in the West, there is little fear that we will become obsessed, melancholy goths who can't stop trolling graveyards, and the goal in training is to achieve a balance between death acceptance and happy living.

#### **Seeking death wisdom from other cultures**

Some people find wisdom about death in the religious traditions they're born to. But with more people adopting a hybrid spiritual identity and seeing their life as a constant, fluid soul-seeking, they are actively exploring the practices around death from other cultures, past and present. Just opening your mind to how incredibly different cultures of death are around the world is therapy itself. That's the point of Caitlin Doughty's book, *From Here to Eternity: Travelling the World to Find the Good Death*, which journeys around the world, from Indonesia to Bolivia, to intimately experience rituals that may at first seem wildly foreign to us, such as children sharing beds with

their mummified grandfathers or experiencing an open-air funeral pyre in Colorado. Or check out the blog *Morbid Anatomy*, devoted to the wildly diverse ways that cultures around the world experience and represent death.

For many people, Buddhist traditions around death hold a special fascination and pull because the profound awareness of death and the acceptance of impermanence (anicca)—the idea that nothing is forever and change is the only certainty—is at the very core. More people are turning to Buddhist instruction, which asks you to meditate on death and impermanence as a powerful corrective to our blinkered concern with our small and often small-minded life. The New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care takes a Buddhist approach to death and provides so much programming: from training doctors, nurses and caregivers in contemplative end-of-life care to bereavement groups helping people mourn the accepting Buddhist way to daily Zen and meditation training for all. (Training can include guided meditations that involve you, step by step, imagining your own death.) More people are exploring Tibetan Buddhism, which places an exceptionally strong focus on instructions concerning death and its acceptance. Helpful shortcuts include reading the best seller *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. Bhutanese death traditions are brought to your smartphone with the WeCroak app, which randomly pings you five times a day, reminding you that you're going to die because meditating on death five times a day in Bhutanese tradition is a path to happiness. (What a tonic during conference calls.)

More people will travel to immerse themselves in cross-cultural death traditions and experiences, a kind of “death acceptance tourism” if you will, whether to Mexico to experience the three-day Day of the Dead celebrations, where the dead are temporarily welcomed back into their families, or to the spiritual capital of Hinduism in Varanasi, India, where millions of Indians travel to die and be cremated on the banks of the Ganges (to achieve liberation from reincarnation and to pass to nirvana). Any visitor to this most holy city is

immersed in an extraordinary public, intense and beautiful culture of death that forces people from more squeamish cultures to confront the reality of death and really think. (If you want an example of transformational travel, look no further.)

### **The death-accepting ancient Stoics are trending**

Stoicism, a philosophical tradition with roots in ancient Athens but popularized in ancient Rome by Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Seneca, is attracting serious interest as a set of practices to live well by today. We use “stoic” casually to mean patient suffering, but Stoic philosophy is actually a set of life practices that involve constant acknowledgment that most things are beyond our control except the control of our minds and that trains us how to achieve calm indifference toward chaotic, cruel, frustrating and uncertain external life (how fitting for our time now). Stoicism has been described as the original “self-help” book and “Buddhism with an attitude,” and it’s majorly trending, with new books, online communities, conferences and workshops as well as being the hot mental wellness approach among Silicon Valley execs, entrepreneurs, elite athletes and politicians. (It’s somehow taken on a masculine vibe, when, of course, it’s a for-everybody philosophy.)

At the core of Stoicism is acceptance of—and strategies for managing the fear of—death. While we could never summarize the richness of these



*More people are exploring Tibetan Buddhism, which places a strong focus on death and its acceptance. Bhutanese death traditions are brought to smartphones via the WeCroak app, which randomly pings five times a day, reminding you that you're going to die. (Meditating on death five times a day in Bhutanese tradition is a path to happiness.)*



ancient thinkers' meditations on death here, the point is that a Stoic confronts the inevitability of death constantly, meditating on it in a practice called "memento mori," which involves a "death rehearsal" or actively contemplating your own death and the death of your loved ones daily. You meditate on the vastness of the universe and past and future time to put your own short life and coming death in context. You journal intensely to balance your life's books each day. You regularly simulate in your mind what you most fear. Their point: These practices not only prepare us for death, but they also make us better people. As Epictetus argued, "Keep death before your eyes each day...and you'll never have a base thought or excessive desire."

Stoicism is very much a mental wellness practice, and it makes you wonder why the wellness world is so narrowly focused on ancient Eastern traditions while seeming so blind to ancient Western ones. You can read Epictetus's classic treatise *The Handbook* or Ryan Holiday's *The*

*Obstacle Is The Way* to dig in. Both are short and accessible, or try *How to be a Stoic* by Massimo Pigliucci. Sign up online for The Daily Stoic if you want a free, seven-day dive into Stoic teachings.

### **Psychic mediums & spirit guides are having a moment**

We would be remiss not to mention how a new age of mediums, whose purpose is to bring people messages and guidance from their departed family and friends (their "spirit guides"), is very, very much a thing. Mediums, such as Tyler Henry, Laura Lynne Jackson or Erica Korman, are the new wellness gurus, and they're leading group, connect-with-the-dead happenings in cities all over. And whether you're a believer or not, anyone that has experienced them will likely feel that they function as a kind of empathic group therapy where people work out unresolved issues with those who are gone and collectively explore loss and death. Because these "new mediums" have had a starring role at Goop conferences (Goop's website has an

*Magic mushroom retreats are slowly mushrooming. There is early evidence that psilocybin has a powerful impact on the intense emotional distresses that come to those facing end of life—and will be a bigger part of the "dying well" toolbox in years to come. Psilocybin experiences at Synthesis in the Netherlands are screened by a medical doctor, a nurse is on site at every retreat to ensure people's comfort, and medical best practices are the guide.*





entire section on death and wellness), they have been eviscerated by some corners of the media as an example of the wellness world exploiting and commodifying death. But rather than snarkily dismissing the phenomenon, it obviously expresses some real need. After all, famed French sociologist Emile Durkheim in his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* wrote: “The...most fantastic rites and the strangest myths translate some human need, some aspect of life, either individual or social,” and the new spirit-guide-summoning medium experiences evidence a hunger to make sense of our beloveds’ deaths and to hash it out as a community. And the world—and the wellness world—should ponder hard why the most passionately sought-after (yes, trendy) wellness experiences right now involve the “switching on” of belief—whether shamans or crystals or mediums.

#### **Traveling to die well or to prepare for death**

The term “death tourism” typically refers to people traveling to places (such as the seven US states, the Netherlands or Switzerland) where the suffering and terminally ill can arrange medically-assisted suicide—such as the Swiss society Dignitas, which has helped over 2,100 people die humanely. But the term may start to mean more than that. GWS keynote speaker and renowned wellness-spaces designer Clodagh has stated, “If I found out I had a few months to live, I would go to a spa.” And in talking to wellness travel insiders, we found out that a rising number of people with terminal diagnoses do, in fact, do just that—either for a healing, peaceful, stress-reducing retreat before they return home to face death—or even to die there. This is not something a wellness resort will reveal or promote—we couldn’t get any names.

But there are, for instance, Buddhist centers around the world that welcome those facing death and seeking an inspired, healing and peaceful end. Rigba, an international network of Buddhist centers, has the goal of creating a “quiet revolution in the way we care for the dying,” and their spiritual care center and wellness retreat Dehen Shying at Dzogchen Beara in west Ireland, welcomes people with serious illnesses,

such as ALS, cancer and MS, (and their families) for Buddhist-grounded healing and reflection as death approaches. Sukhavati, located in the old spa town of Bad Saarow outside Berlin, is a Buddhist house of both the living and dying, offering extensive medical and palliative care services—but with the goal of putting the ill and dying’s spiritual care first and with staff intensely trained in mindfulness and compassion. At Sukhavati, everything’s geared toward helping the ill and dying find true meaning and acceptance and to die with as much dignity and as little suffering as possible. (People can stay weeks, months or years.) And one sign that more cross-pollination of ideas is happening between the traditional wellness world and the death and dying world was when Sukhavati recently invited the wellness hospitality company Raison D’Etre to their spiritual care center to better understand how to apply key wellness approaches not only to the living but to the dying as well. And Raison D’Etre took back a new inspiration to deepen its offerings to work with the elderly and ill in new projects. These are the kind of cross-pollinations between wellness and dying professionals that the world needs more of—and that will rise in the future.

#### **The power of psychedelics in facing death**

In last year’s trends report, we went in-depth on how a new flurry of medical evidence shows the power of magic mushrooms for treating everything from depression to anxiety. And we should remember that the resurgence of interest in psilocybin as a unique brain “re-setter” first grew out of studies at places such as NYU and Imperial College-London on psilocybin’s eye-opening impact on the mental wellness of patients with a terminal diagnosis. That evidence was powerful: In [NYU/Johns Hopkins studies](#), 80 percent of cancer patients showed dramatic reductions in anxiety sustained seven months after a single dose. Two-thirds of participants facing death rated the magic mushroom experience as one of the top five most spiritually significant experiences of their lives. As psilocybin researcher Roland Griffiths at Johns Hopkins put it, “I don’t want to say mind-blowing...but to a scientist, that’s just incredible.”

Since last year, the psilocybin research and action has really heated up. Well-funded COMPASS Pathways is conducting major clinical trials on psilocybin in Europe—and the FDA recently granted them “breakthrough therapy designation”—the first time in US history that a psychedelic was fast-tracked for approval as a treatment for depression. The nonprofit Usona Institute has also received FDA approval for their new psilocybin trials on depression. Suddenly, researchers are predicting that magic mushrooms will become legal medicine (not for recreational use but administered by trained therapists) within the next five years. Oregon, for instance, is pushing to place legalization on the 2020 ballot. Things are moving fast.

Magic mushroom retreats are slowly mushrooming, such as early movers MycoMeditations in Jamaica, and Alquimia-Centre of Healing Arts in Colombia. The standout new destination is Synthesis in the Netherlands, which has the vibe of a chic wellness resort and combines the psilocybin experience with wellness approaches, such as yoga, breathwork and sound meditation. Because it's so important for people undertaking magic mushroom therapy to have a safe and structured experience, it's very notable that, at Synthesis, every application is screened by a medical doctor, a nurse is on site at every retreat to ensure people's comfort, and medical best practices are the guide.

With early evidence that psilocybin has such a powerful impact on the intense emotional distresses that come to those facing a tough diagnosis or end of life, the question is, will magic mushroom wellness retreats welcome them? Synthesis, for example, is clear that it's not a “retreat for people looking...to treat a specific clinical condition” and they can't accept individuals on medication for any mental issues; their retreats are designed for people who want to generally boost their emotional wellbeing and creativity. (Although it's notable that testimonials from psilocybin users often stress that the experience fundamentally reduced their fear of death—so there is a “death benefit.”)

But for people open to the experience, professionally administered psychedelics, such as psilocybin, look to have an important future for helping people face sickness and death. We can't forget the provenance of the research: psilocybin's eye-opening benefits for the sick and dying. And in the future, we will see more clinics and retreats specifically welcoming or designed for them because the early evidence indicates psilocybin needs to be a bigger part of the “dying well” toolbox in years to come.

## THE FUTURE

Death is a growth industry. This is not a cold, calculating statement; it's an overwhelming fact. Because lifespans worldwide are growing ever longer (up 30 years in the last century), we have not only lived lives where we can delay the fact of death, but it also means a serious rise in the number of deaths is straight ahead. The World Health Organization forecasts that global deaths will jump from 56 million in 2015 to 70 million by 2030—a staggering 25 percent growth. In most developed countries, the 85–94-year-old age bracket is the fastest-growing population segment. We're both living longer and dying slower: Most of us will die from chronic diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, and suffer from a number of medical problems in our last years along with physical issues, such as pain or breathlessness, and mental wellness issues, such as cognitive decline, loneliness and a thirst for spiritual support. How we care for people at the end of their lives is one of the biggest wellness challenges the world faces.

It's important to remember that the modern culture of extreme death fearing is a pretty recent phenomenon—a blip in human history—that really kicked in with the rise of Western medicine (where death is still seen as a failed “outcome”) and by the outsourcing of the care of the dead to funeral homes. But what's so amazing is that there have been more changes in attitudes and practices in the last couple of years than there have been in the last 150. As we've seen, there's a whole new movement brewing about being

more open about death, with people actively working on their fears, pushing to make the dying process better and more humane, and reinventing the memorial and funeral. With death, almost everything is now under review, and that will only ramp up. Don't underestimate the force of baby boomers in this shake-up. They are rewriting aging, and you see it everywhere, such as Joie de Vivre founder and former Airbnb exec Chip Conley's new venture, the Modern Elder Academy (a three-acre wellness resort in Baja California, Sur, Mexico, with more coming) that aims to create a whole new category of destination: middle-aged "wisdom schools" where people learn to transition and reinvent themselves in midlife—whether rethinking their careers or grieving a loved one. This generation will insist that a good death is part of a well life.

One could argue that "wellness" is by nature an ever-shifting concept that serves to fill in what is missing and unhealthy across many sectors—whether healthcare, travel or real estate. And that it's a fast-growing market because it addresses needs unmet, with a conceptual identity by nature "supplemental." Death doulas and those creating far more eco-friendly burials are practicing wellness. The medical world has simply not put enough resources into end-of-life care and research: For example, in the UK, less than 0.5 percent of the medical research budget goes to this while the demand for palliative care is expected to rise by 40 percent by 2040.<sup>8</sup> There have been shining examples in the traditional wellness world, such as the Wellness for Cancer Initiative headed by Julie Bach that trains hotels, spas and beauty companies about how to deliver the right therapies the right way for people that have suffered cancer. (See our 2017 trend, "Embracing the C Word" to see how the wellness world is getting real about cancer.)

But the wellness space has been too focused on pushing never-age solutions and messages and needs to get dramatically more aging, illness and death inclusive. We need new wellness solutions tailored for the ill and dying and their particular conditions and states—the right nutrition; the right movement and touch therapies; the

right environmental approaches from lighting to aromatherapy; the right sleep and stress-reduction approaches, whether breathwork, meditation and brain exercises—and we need better concepts of senior living and places to age and die (in place). It's not only the future...it's the profoundly right thing to do.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, *The Age Gap in Religion Around the World*, June 13, 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/>.

<sup>2</sup> Shayla Love, "People Obsessed With Wellness Can't Accept That We're All Gonna Die," *Fighting Words* (blog), *Vice Tonic*, February 13, 2018, [https://tonic.vice.com/en\\_us/article/neqvpg/people-obsessed-with-wellness-cant-accept-that-were-all-gonna-die](https://tonic.vice.com/en_us/article/neqvpg/people-obsessed-with-wellness-cant-accept-that-were-all-gonna-die).

<sup>3</sup> John Leland, "The Positive Death Movement Comes to Life," *The New York Times*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/22/nyregion/the-positive-death-movement-comes-to-life.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Rehagen, "Green Burials Are Forcing the Funeral Industry to Rethink Death," *Bloomberg*, October 27, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-green-burial/>.

<sup>5</sup> Shayla Love, "People Obsessed With Wellness Can't Accept That We're All Gonna Die," *Fighting Words* (blog).

<sup>6</sup> "Living Well and Dying Well," *RDEBLOG* (blog), *Raison D'Etre Spas*, June 25, 2018, <https://raisondetreblog.com/2018/06/25/living-well-and-dying-well/>.

<sup>7</sup> Alix Strauss, "How Deepak Chopra, Wellness Expert, Spends His Sundays," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/28/nyregion/how-deepak-chopra-wellness-expert-spends-his-sundays.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Katherine Sleeman, "Why the World Needs to Get Ready for More People Dying," *Health* (blog), *BBC*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-43159823>.



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