

Breaking the Cycle of Standardization: A Blueprint for Regenerative Hotel F&B.

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Executive Summary:

Hotel Dining is Facing an Epidemic: What used to be a nostalgic part of hospitality has deteriorated into a cold transactional routine that no longer meets the needs of today's guests. Reiterating the stereotype that hotels' food and beverage outlets are lacklustre and out of touch. This white paper examines 3 key developments of how hotels' F&B outlets can be reshaped to meet guest expectations and behaviour:

Consumption to Connection: The demand for food experiences with an emotional, personalised, and culturally relevant component.

Spatial Optimisation: The need for flexible and multi-functional spaces that can optimise guest movement.

Regenerative Futures: The shift from traditional sustainability concepts toward more hospitality frameworks that emphasise delivering net-positive outcomes for guests, communities, and ecosystems.

These developments expose the underlying reasons why guests are increasingly abandoning hotels in search of authentic experiences and localism. Businesses should respond to these challenges by reinventing F&B not as an automated procedure but an authentic and meaningful experience. Each development is examined through three critical lenses: how it sways guest decisions, the real-world challenges it poses for hotels, and the innovative trends paving the way for its adoption.

By understanding these, hotels can move beyond being bound by traditional methods and conceptualize food and beverages as an invaluable resource and not just a service. Hotels that capitalize on these will no longer provide meals but unique experiences for guests.

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Intention with Food and Beverage Outlets:

If you were to ask travellers why they rarely eat in hotels, they will often say the same thing: “Why would I?” For decades, hotels have treated food and beverage (F&B) as something to be 'managed' rather than imagined. The result? A world tour of identical cheeseburgers, club sandwiches, and Caesar salads, proudly replicated from Hong Kong to Helsinki (SuitePad, 2023). What began as a strategy for consistency has resulted in a lack of authenticity, with hotel profits being driven by rooms rather than restaurants, reducing food to a transactional necessity (Pakpahan et al., 2024). As Sloan (2019) notes, the cultural meaning of food is increasingly ignored, an observation any traveller can confirm after encountering the same menu for the fifth time in a week. Studies confirm this standardization is structural, as global chains prioritise uniform menus because they are efficient, low risk, and operate at low cost (Jones, 1999).

Meanwhile, guests have adapted to a new standard. After getting ready in the morning and creating an itinerary for the day, guests leave the hotel and do not return until the late evening, as it is the adopted belief that hotels are simply meant for keeping your belongings safe and a good night's sleep. This stems from the idea that local cafes and restaurants simply feel more authentic. As they offer emotional resonance, stories, and a sense of belonging. Hotels, on the other hand, often offer room-temperature predictability.

This whitepaper examines how hotels can break this cycle by engaging with three concepts reshaping guest expectations today: basic human needs, spatial optimisation, and regenerative futures. These lenses reveal why traditional hotel F&B is falling behind, where opportunities are being missed, and how hotels can transform dining from a “checking the box” requirement into a meaningful experience. To understand how hotels can begin this transformation, it is essential to examine the trends that are already reshaping the industry, revealing where guest expectations are shifting, and the emergence of the new era of hospitality.

Current Trends within the F&B Sector and Their Impact:

The combination of numerous components, including but not limited to Gen Z entering the workforce, post-pandemic social response, and new spending habits are three strong forces reshaping hospitality. By analysing and implementing the trends of mixed-use social and networking space, limited-edition experiences, and a new way of consumer spending and pricing (Nieminen, 2025; Accor, 2025), they will be able to benefit from these changes.

Coworking, as defined by industry leader WeWork, (2025), is a term used to describe a working arrangement in which people from different teams and companies come together to work in a single shared space. Although to some, coworking may be described as paying a very expensive gym membership for a glorified coffee shop. But if this were true, why are coworking spaces up 700% since 2011? These spaces create an environment for emotional and social needs amplified by today's lack of human connection. Since the pandemic, there has been a significant decrease in human connection, ranging from work life to dining experiences (Smith & Lim, 2020). They also offer F&B outlets ranging from fine dining to simple cafes that drive additional revenue for the company and consumer assurance (Gerdenitsch et al., 2016). Examples of this concept can be shown through 3 different

market price points of “The Social Hub” for the mainstream market, “SoHo House” for the premium segment, and “The Ned” for the luxury clientele. Although each is marketed towards a different sector, all 3 concepts share commonalities of creating shared space for work, dining, connection, and comfort for individuals to connect.

In other segments of F&B, there has been a significant increase in “Pop-Ups” identified as a short-term restaurant that operates for a short time to offer a unique dining experience or promote a brand and limited-edition restaurant concepts (Square 2025). Through the use of social media marketing, limited, and one-off experiences, they have driven short-term sales in F&B outlets while having low risk and cost. Consumers, especially Gen Z, are attracted to these brand collaborations, and the limited availability of it mentally makes guests feel “they must experience it before it is gone”. The ironically titled PopUp Bagels is a prime example of the low risk and rapid growth of Pop-Up concepts (Hamstra 2025). What started in a home kitchen during the pandemic has turned into a national brand with several locations catering to thousands weekly.

There is also an emerging market of young adults who are willing to spend more money on high-end luxury experiences than the generations before them. Despite not having significant financial stability, research shows that young consumers are willing to spend more on exclusivity, scarcity, personalized service, and prestige of the brand (Sundram et al., 2025). These factors are transferable across many industries, from jewelry/luxury goods, experiences, dining, and cosmetics.

These 3 trends are simple concepts that, when scaled and applied, can have a dramatic effect on customers’ feelings and influence their decision-making around hotel F&B. The origin of these trends can be further analyzed through the breakdown of basic human needs, spatial optimisation, and regenerative futures.

From Consumption to Connection: The Craving for Emotions in Hotel F&B

Today, guest expectations surpass generic hospitality and demand a diverse composition of emotional, cultural, and psychological needs. Modern travellers increasingly search for experiences that satisfy their well-being, promote social connection, and reflect their personal and ethical values. For hotels aiming to elevate their F&B offerings and build long-term loyalty, it is essential to meet these needs.

Research shows that there is a rising demand for both hedonic (pleasure-driven) and eudaimonic (purpose-driven) dining experiences (Clergue, 2025). Lei et al. (2024) demonstrate that perceived personalization, when guests feel the service reflects their unique preferences, significantly increases satisfaction and engagement levels. In addition, a study on Spanish four-star hotels shows that while high-quality facilities will remain fundamental, human interaction and service orientation are equally crucial to the shaping of the overall guest experience (Baquero, 2023). Collectively, these findings bring attention to the fact that fulfilling basic human needs has a direct impact on guest decision-making within the hotel F&B environment.

Current trends in the industry such as health-focused menus, interactive culinary activities, and personalized in-room meals are increasingly available to align with guests' psychological and ethical expectations (SABA Hospitality, 2025). Responding directly to human needs by providing a sense of individual care and autonomy increasingly influences the decision-making process to dine within the hotel or elsewhere. By placing basic human needs at the centre of each F&B strategy, hotels can transform their dining services from a functional offering into a personal and emotionally meaningful experience for the guest. But there's a catch: guests don't just feel emotions, they flow through them, in the same way they flow through spaces.

From Static to Strategic: Optimizing Every Square Meter

In hospitality, where the experience is the product, space quietly decides whether guests engage or walk straight past. A well-designed F&B space invites use; a poorly designed one sends guests elsewhere, regardless of how good the food may be. Spatial optimization can significantly enhance F&B performance, while its absence reduces visibility, flow, and ultimately demand. Yet despite rising real estate and operating costs, many hotel F&B outlets are still designed as if flexibility were optional, clinging to layouts of the past.

The result is predictable and well-documented: hotel F&B spaces sit underused for large portions of the day, a problem identified by Kimes 2004 and consistently confirmed by more recent industry reports CBRE 2022; JLL 2025. Solving this is less about adding space than using it intelligently. A useful parallel can be drawn from NASA's spacecraft design, where every square meter has to earn its place through multifunctionality. Applied to hotels, the logic supports adaptable dining rooms, breakfast areas, and event spaces, shifting throughout the day, borrowing from pop-up restaurant and modular buffet concepts that respond to guest volume, timing, and programming. When space adapts to demand instead of resisting it, F&B outlets gain flow, relevance, and strategic value.

Flexibility comes at a cost: greater operational complexity. Reconfigurable spaces demand coordination, training, and precise timing. This is where design stops being about looks and transitions to performance. Increasingly, multidisciplinary teams combining architects, interior designers, and equipment specialists are redefining what F&B spaces do. Technologies such as digital twins, VR simulations, and generative AI make it possible to test layouts, predict guest flow, and stress test operational scenarios before a single table is moved. This reduces human error, accelerating the path to ROI (Segura Cedrés, 2025; Simio, 2019; Otsuki, 2025; Pijls, 2023). Tools such as Delicia AI further show how staffing, timing, and resource allocation can be synchronized with spatial design. In this context, spatial efficiency is not an aesthetic upgrade; it is a survival strategy and guests respond to it with remarkable consistency.

From Green to Generative: F&B that Provides More than it Consumes

The dark and often overlooked fact is that the majority of hotel F&B sustainability is approached as a marketing exercise rather than as a structural commitment. For real impact, hotels must go beyond reducing harm and transition towards adopting regenerative approaches. Regenerative hospitality involves actively restoring social, ecological, and

economic systems through locally embedded practices that pursue net-positive outcomes for host communities and environments and guests (Inversini et al., 2024; Laurent & Martin-Rios, 2023). Based on regenerative development, this model establishes place-based relationships, stakeholder participation, and co-evolutionary dynamics between people and ecosystems (Kreb & Zwaal, 2024). The shift in strategy is in line with the changing expectations of guests, increasingly guided by ethical, social, and environmental values in their dining choices. Regenerative F&B addresses this by rooting experiences within local food systems through local sourcing, food projects, and cuisine workshops that enhance cultural identity and build community resilience. Instead of offering routine dining, hotels craft purpose-driven experiences imbued with genuineness, meaning, and a sense of place—one that also morphs F&B into a source of emotional and cultural value.

Implementation of the regenerative models is a rather complex and resource-consuming process, which demands long-term investments and a change of management. Nevertheless, emerging best practices related to circular gastronomy, immersive guest experiences, and environmental integration prove that this change has already started. When F&B becomes purpose-driven instead of obligation-driven, hotels experience higher satisfaction and loyalty of guests, deeper engagement, while positively contributing to local communities and ecosystems. Thus, regenerative hospitality stands for a strategic change in the way value creation by hotels exists for guests, for places, and for business itself—rather than some sort of a checklist or branding activity.

From Transaction to Transformation: The Six Senses Model

Six Senses is a luxury hotel brand that has built its identity on doing what most hotels only claim to do: combining high-end hospitality with real regenerative practices. By developing guest-centered and locally informed practices into promising formulas, Six Senses has shown that the generic F&B can actually become something guests remember. Take Six Senses Uluwatu in Bali: instead of hiding behind meaningless sustainability slogans, they implement organic gardens, zero-waste packaging, local employment schemes, and community development programs (Prabowo, Dewi, & Setyawan, 2022). These initiatives position the resort as a net-positive system that is not only trying to “do less harm,” but actually produce beneficial ecological and social impact. Meanwhile, they can also tackle basic human needs by providing culturally aligned dining experiences, proof that purpose and pleasure can, in fact, coexist.

Six Senses uses strategic links between basic human needs and regenerative hospitality principles by integrating “farm-to-table” as not just a marketing gimmick. Their F&B outlets integrate locally sourced ingredients for guests to enjoy healthy local meals and use spatial design to turn guests into active participants, through workshops, garden tours, and culinary experiences. Their approach proves that impact-driven, locally informed, and guest-centered F&B models are not idealistic fantasies; they are operationally feasible and commercially smart. The resort increases satisfaction, fosters repeat visitation, and reinforces brand loyalty. In other words, Six Senses shows that purpose-driven hospitality does more than look good in a sustainability report, but turns F&B from a functional necessity into an emotionally reminiscent experience.

From Vision to Reality: Challenges to Scaling Hotel F&B Innovation

In a perfect world, it would be great to have hotels properly optimize space, with a human-centric and regenerative focus, but these elements do come at a high cost. The unfortunate truth is that financial pressures and short-term performance expectations further discourage the experimentation required for adaptive spaces. Combined with scalability challenges of taking a concept and applying it in numerous places. Often prevents innovative F&B concepts from moving beyond isolated pilots.

The implementation of technology creates a challenge because it plays out differently across local and chain hotels. Chain hotels will often benefit from purchases made within the center of the organization and creating a capital resource that supports a large-scale rollout, but these same systems can limit local adaptation (Ruiz-Fernández, 2024). These same hotels often lack the funding and supplier networks needed for broader regenerative or tech-driven changes (Hamza, 2025). With this in mind, hybrid pathways, such as flexible brand activity or regional sourcing partnerships, are key to advancing regenerative and human-centred F&B across the industry.

From Obligation to Opportunity: The Future Role of Hotel F&B

Yesterday's standards will no longer please today's guests in hospitality. The industry is experiencing a new world; where repetitive experiences, vanilla menus, and putting a sign on the outside of the restaurant that reads "farm to table" is simply not enough. If hotels want to retain guests in their outlets and change the narrative of what food and beverage offerings have become; they must understand that guests travel to obtain meaningful experiences but are met with standardised and impersonal F&B.

This lack of performance presents a crucial opportunity for transformation and creation of a new system to rethink F&B not just as a service, but as a substantial part of the guest journey. Hotels must take these trends and concepts, and not just learn from them but adapt and mold to them. Significant financial and timely investments will be involved, but when applied studies show that these investments are beneficial. Across Europe, industry reports suggest that in the first half of 2025, F&B revenue per occupied room grew by 3.8%, outpacing overall hotel revenue growth, while RevPAR in Spain rose 6.9%. These numbers tell a story: hotels willing to invest in creative, elevated F&B experiences are not only meeting rising guest expectations, but they're also seeing real financial results.

Although there is risk involved with change and radical adaptations, the alternative is far worse. Guests will continue to seek dining options outside of their hotels, and F&B outlets will collectively become a product of the past. As much as there is personal gain for hotels to implement these concepts, it is imperative that there is movement across the industry as just a few voices is not enough to alter the global image of cheeseburgers and caesar salads.

Managing this shift requires hotels to view F&B as their most valuable platform for storytelling and loyalty. However, the true catalyst for this change won't be a corporate memo or a budget line, it will be the influx of a new generation of hospitality talent, who bring the digital fluency, creative mindset, and purposeful ambition to turn this vision into a tangible, profitable reality. We are ready when you are!

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