



*Making Waves :
Rethinking Spa and
Wellness Design for a
Modern Era*

The White Paper
Accor Well-Being

WELL / BEING

Making Waves in Wellness

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Foreword

by Emlyn Brown

Global SVP of Well-Being, Strategy, Design, and Development at Accor

As hoteliers, we understand the impact of creating extraordinary spaces that uplift the soul and nourish the senses, setting the tone for experiences that leave our guests feeling better for having stayed and spent time with us.

The purpose of the Making Waves: Rethinking Spa and Wellness Design for a Modern Era white paper is to educate, inspire, and share some of the innovative ways that Accor and its world-leading hospitality brands are approaching wellness design at our spas and spaces throughout our worldwide network of hotels and resorts. The contents of this white paper emphasize the priorities for well-being that we believe are most relevant now and demonstrate how Accor is advancing innovative ways to deliver wellness through many of our brands.

By integrating wellness-focused amenities and services, hoteliers can enhance guest experiences and loyalty, differentiate themselves in a competitive market, and drive significant revenue growth. It is our hope and our intention that the insights in this white paper will support these efforts, as we all seek to create more impactful wellness spaces and places.

We invite you to explore the exciting frontier of wellness design – a space where vision and innovation can truly make a difference to the well-being of the world.

“If we treat our spa design with the same level of planning, expert consultation, and consideration for the overall guest experience that we do with restaurant design, we will change the game.”

Anne Becker Olins / Accor

“Nowadays, people won’t come to a hotel if there is no wellness element. Wellness becomes that important profit driver – a top-line and a bottom-line driver.”

Sonal Uberoi / Author, The Wellness Asset.

Wellness has become a primary driver in the hospitality industry. Accor's research of 7,500 consumers across six countries revealed that wellness is a priority for 79 percent of its guests.

This dovetails with the findings of industry experts, such as Skift's 2023 Luxury Traveler Survey, that revealed 80 percent of travelers say well-being influences their travel decisions, and the Global Wellness Tourism Economy report found that wellness-focused design elements can improve guest well-being and increase revenue for hospitality businesses.

1

Who is your avatar?

The guest-centric approach to wellness design

To create an award-winning well-being experience, we begin by defining our avatars. Who are the guests we want to attract? What are their fitness routines and wellness regimes? What devices and apps do they use? What gives them a sense of comfort and support?

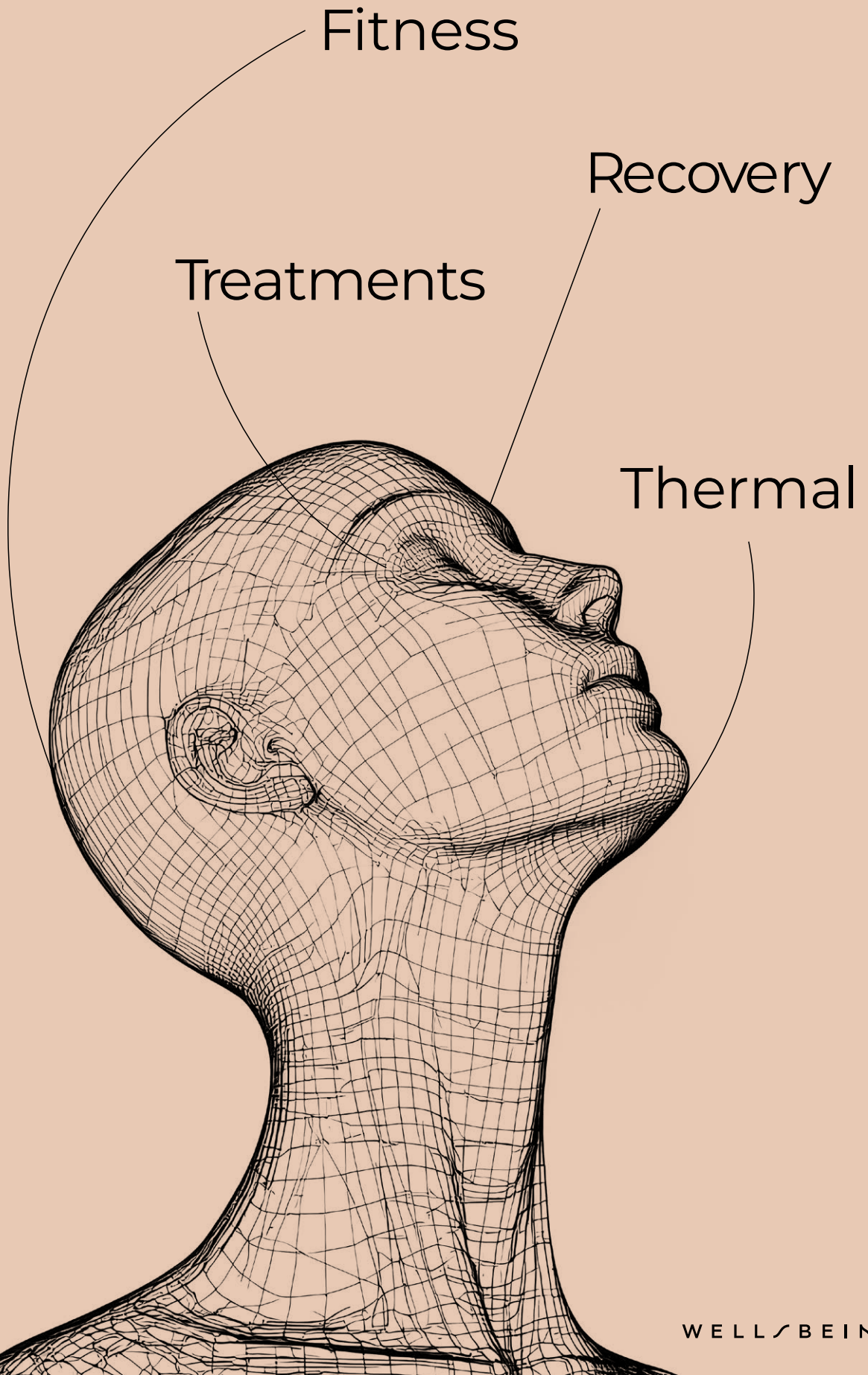
Too often, design conversations begin with ‘what is the norm’ for spa design – rather than questioning, challenging, and understanding how the guest will encounter the space. The avatar approach is vital to creating spas and fitness experiences that stand out in a crowded market and inspire return visits.

We are often working far in advance – with several years between design concept and spa or fitness center opening. With our avatars in mind, we must consider what signature elements will stand the test of time and which elements are flexible, that we can evolve and adapt to meet the changing interests of our avatars over time? Understanding the life cycles of our avatars helps us to maintain relevance across demographics and generations – future-proofing our designs.

The avatar would also include your assessment of the guest spending power, propensity to book treatments, their length of time they will stay at the property and profile as a guest (business or leisure traveller) – to create a 360-degree understanding of your guest.

At Accor, our hotel spas and fitness centers are no longer designed just for hotel guests. We strive to create living, thriving, neighborhood hotspots, infused by a mix of locals and visiting guests.

At the center of our design decisions
is a clear image of our guests and a
thorough understanding of how they
will move through our spaces
through nutrition, digital and design.



Fitness Studio at Fairmont Royal York Hotel

“You have people who love weights, people who love cardio, people who use mats. How can we make the spaces less intimidating, more friendly and inviting? We start with defining who is the guest. Then we ask, how they will train? That transitions to the concept and the journey, which leads to lighting, sound system, and materials. Strangely, the last thing we decide is the equipment.”

Marie Soliman / Bergman Design House



2

Think thematically

Moving from amenity-driven experiences to thematic guest journeys

The hotel spa has long been viewed as an extension of the broader hotel, but today we seek to create fresh designs that demarcate the space and welcome guests into a unique environment. Ideally, the spa complements the hotel design, rather than copies. Once inside, we use design elements to create further distinction between key zones, guiding the guest journey through arrival, fitness, thermal, treatments, and recovery.

A traditionally functional gym can be transformed into a thematic concept with deeper thinking. Rather than zones based on modality, we focus on the energy level that each area delivers and what elements can be adjusted. These include factors such as natural light versus artificial, non-slip or quieter flooring, and how colors and textures interplay. Next, consider the flow and how your avatar will move around the space and transition from one area to the next.

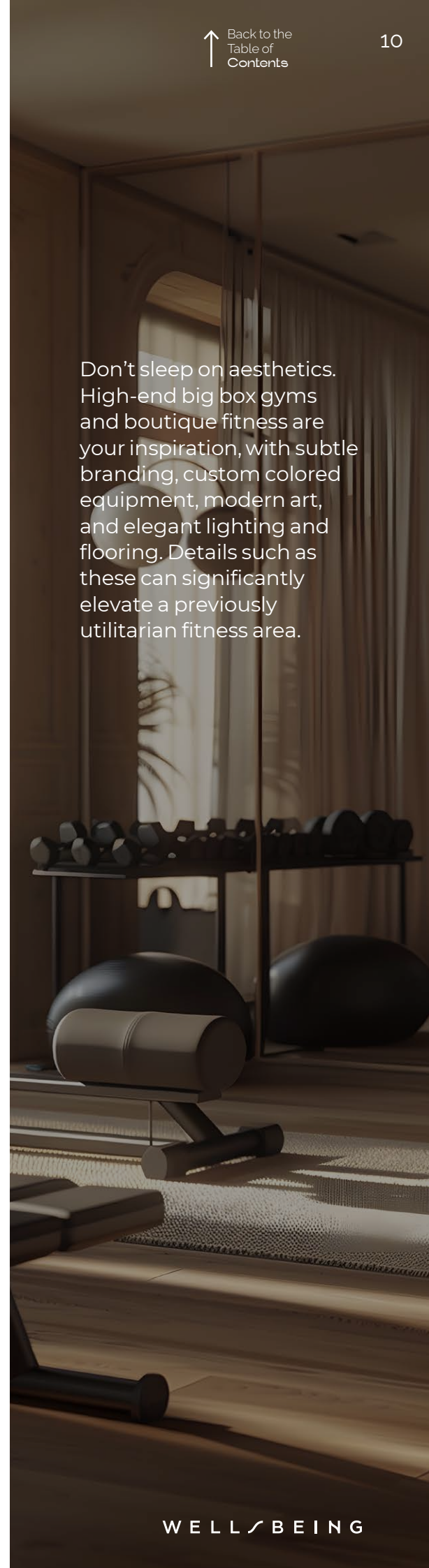
SENSE OF ARRIVAL Softening the energy at arrival helps guests gently acclimatize. Earthy or neutral shades, low lighting, and noise-dampening textures can create a welcoming vibe.

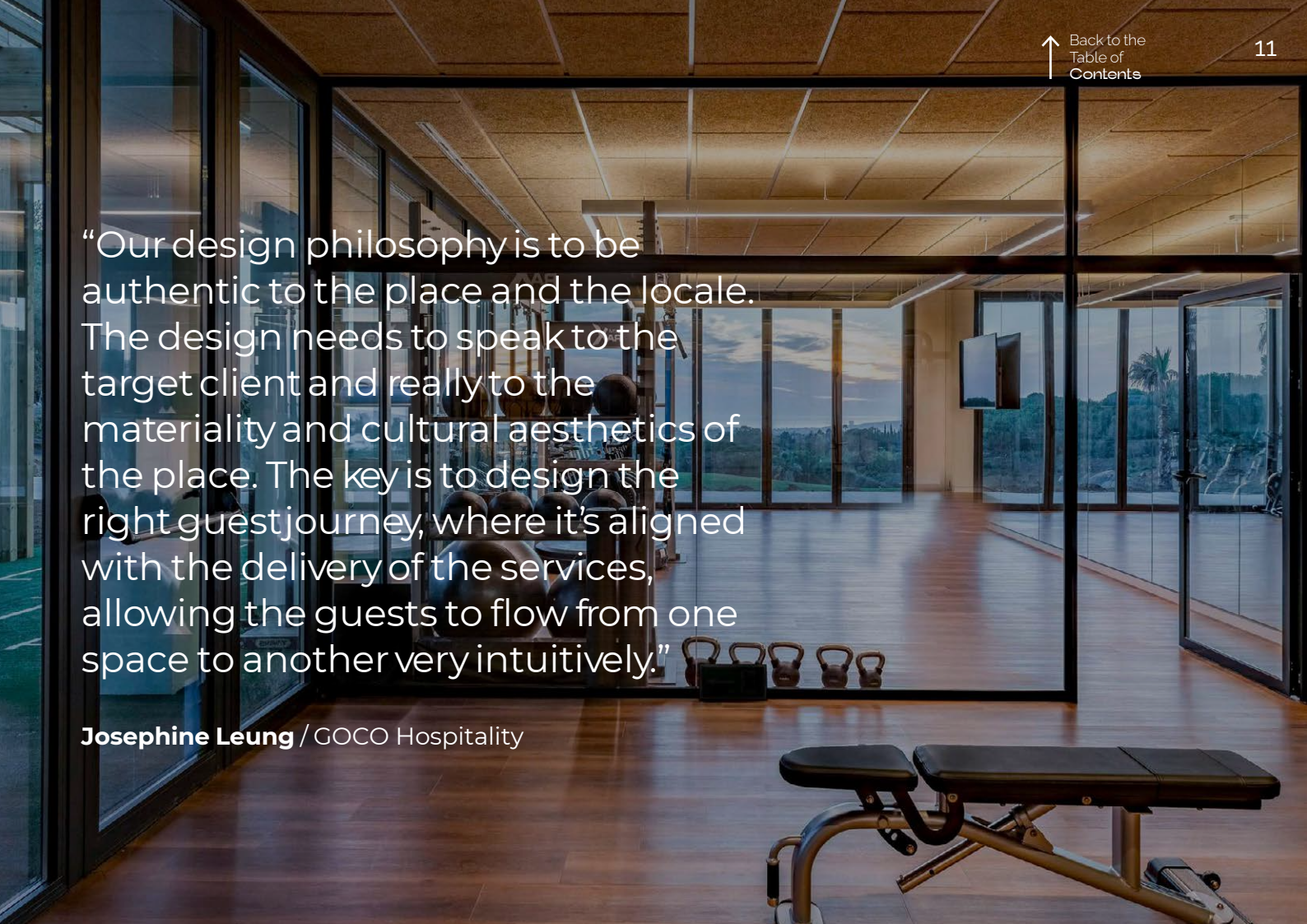
CIRCULATION Renderings on paper don't always work smoothly for guests. Walk it out - circulation and effective transition spaces can make or break your guest experience.

MATERIALS Choose textures conducive to movement - noise absorbing floors in the spa, rubber floors in the gym. Wall surfaces change the energy of different zones.

LIGHTING Red or blue lights can be energizing. Too white or too bright can feel harsh and clinical. Choose warm white light that is bright enough to move safely and see in the mirror.

Don't sleep on aesthetics. High-end big box gyms and boutique fitness are your inspiration, with subtle branding, custom colored equipment, modern art, and elegant lighting and flooring. Details such as these can significantly elevate a previously utilitarian fitness area.





“Our design philosophy is to be authentic to the place and the locale. The design needs to speak to the target client and really to the materiality and cultural aesthetics of the place. The key is to design the right guest journey, where it’s aligned with the delivery of the services, allowing the guests to flow from one space to another very intuitively.”

Josephine Leung / GOCO Hospitality



3

Sweat the block plan

A failure to plan

The area program and the block plan are the key to a smooth development process and a trusted result.

By struggling with details in advance, and working out problems early on, we have much easier transitions into concept designs and schematic designs.

This is an area where the Accor design team excels. We move at pace and have a myriad of exciting projects underway.

Yet we continue to push ourselves – can we sweat that area program and the block plan a little bit more?

Can we question our block plan with our architecture team and our designers, again? And maybe again?

This repeated process is essential to ensuring we authentically bring our concepts to life, adhere to the needs of our avatars, and get that guest journey right.

A little more pressure on the block plan is particularly rewarding once we move into the more complicated areas of schematic design. The confidence of a locked-in block plan gives us the liberty to shift our focus to creating the vibe with touchpoints of art, furnishings, and décor.

“The spa is like a Swiss watch – a series of many fine movements and moments. A guest will encounter several mini journeys, from arrival to treatment. So when we envision a thematic journey and curate the emotional touchpoints, we must be in tune with the multitude of things happening along that journey”

Emlyn Brown / Accor

Step-by-step process bringing block to reality?

1. Gather Requirements and Plans
- ↓
2. Site Survey and Measurements:
- ↓
3. Develop Initial Concepts
- ↓
4. Define Guest AVATAR
- ↓
5. Create Area Program
- ↓
6. Stress Test the assumptions.
- ↓
7. Identify Zoning Needs
- ↓
8. Flow and Circulation
Guest mapping.
- ↓
9. Focus on back of house support and delivery. Stress Test your planning.
- ↓
10. Adjust for Accessibility and Ergonomics
- ↓
11. Include space for MEP planning.
- ↓
12. Translate Zones into a Block Layout
- ↓
13. Refine and Iterate
- ↓
14. Final checks before you present.
- ↓
15. Client Presentation and Approval

4

Learn to let go

Releasing the outdated and unprofitable

The key to delivering on a vision is to be very clear about what that vision does not include. The rule is: nothing is off limits. Question everything. From our vantage point, there are three elements we have identified as safe to remove from our spa designs.

First, salon and beauty services in hotels tend to be unprofitable, underused and inhabit 80-100 sqm of space that could be better aligned with the wellness journey. We can add more value for our guests by booking them with top quality local service providers.

Second, for years there has been an expectation to add 50 sqm of yoga space to hotel gyms, and it is rarely used. Let's fold that studio into the gym and create a strong 225-sqm fitness area with a creative and immersive exercise experience. Or repurpose it for recovery treatments.

Third, save the juice bars for hotel F&B. Unless we have created a very large-scale well-being destination where there is café space for guests to meet up and linger, there is no advantage to bringing F&B into the spa and well-being center.

Many of our hotels can aim to free up some 175 to 180 sqm of space which can be repurposed with more profitable, more experiential elements that align with the spa and wellness design. This leads to better returns, lower waste, and fewer costs for hotel owners.

“You don't have to have everything, everywhere. You can be highly focused on a selective guest segment. Excel in that segment, become known for it. When you focus on excellency, you'll build a loyal customer base. Understand your guests well, because your guests know exactly what they want.”

Ingo Schweder / GOCO Hospitality

Treatments must be profitable A simple rule is that a treatment, or any service offering, must be profitable. If a treatment does not make money at a destination, don't do it. Be wary of spa design plans with numerous treatment rooms, but no amenity, no fitness, and no Aquatonic or thermal. A space of 400 sqm is enough to create a compelling self-guided thermal and fitness experience, requiring no staffing, while delivering a strong wellness and well-being outcome for guests.



5

Not the size but how you use it

We can do a lot
within 1000 SQM

Historically, hotel spa and well-being space has been designed based on the size and the scale of those facilities – the number of treatment rooms and the various areas of service. Now, however, we are more mindful about square meter use and construction costs.

Notwithstanding our position on space as a luxury when it comes to thermal wellness areas, our design teams advise caution when it comes to huge spa developments. We can actually do a lot with 1,000 sqm.

When we see spa proposals over 1,000 sqm of space plus pool – we must question the value. Is there a business imperative for a design at that scale? Are we oversizing our facilities? What do we need to be effective for our avatar in this location? This should dictate the options for size and use of space.

A very solid business plan is necessary to overcome the costs of an oversized space. Where we do have that business plan, along with proof of concepts, we can and do build spectacular spaces over 1,000 sqm.

According to RLA's Wellness Real Estate Report 2024, "the biggest gainers last year were hotels with minor wellness plays, generating less than \$1 million or 10% of revenue from wellness. These stood out with an impressive 26% increase in average total revenue per available room, or TRevPAR."

The 250-square metre spa at Le **Saint Gervais Hotel & Spa** – Handwritten Collection invites guests to immerse themselves in an oasis of relaxation. Facilities include an indoor pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, and three dedicated treatment rooms. The spa partners with [Comfort Zone], to provide innovative, long-lasting wellness treatments tailored to each guest's unique needs, from revitalizing facials to personalized body treatments.

Spa at **Swissôtel Tbilisi**

“A smaller space allows you to achieve a more powerful guest experience. A lot of spas are oversized these days. But with a limited amount of space, that’s where you can create a strong and cohesive guest journey. You use every single square meter of space and it’s all very crisp, clean, and contemporary. You can still have the thermal experiences and the treatment rooms – in a concise and beautiful way..”

Josephine Leung / GOCO Hospitality



6

Not your parent's gym

How the delivery of exercise is shifting

Among a world of generic cardio driven weight rooms, there is huge opportunity to surprise and delight guests through strong fitness design and a smarter, more modern approach to equipment selection and layout. As strength training and fitness forms have evolved, our hotel fitness centers are making space for more movement based zones.

Guests are free to explore individualized equipment, such as free weights, kettlebells, ViPRs, jump ropes, exercise balls, foam rollers, or stretching bands. We provide mats with ample room for Pilates, yoga, stretching, warming up or cooling down.

We are also prioritizing space for recovery and longevity technology – cryotherapy, compression, infrared, lymphatic drainage, HyperIce, Normatec, and more. Healing and fuel recovery are essential to a holistic wellness program.

Our goal is to create space for guests to customize their experience and keep up their fitness routines while traveling. We equip them with the advantage of leading-edge tools and technology, while immersing them in the comforts of our hospitality brands.

“When it comes to wellness and recovery facilities, we do not want guests left to their own devices, picking the low-hanging fruit and the things they’re not too scared of, because it’s the journey and the consistent use of these bits of technology that ultimately yield a quality effect. They must also be combined with fitness, lifestyle coaching, and nutrition to get the outcome that they want.”

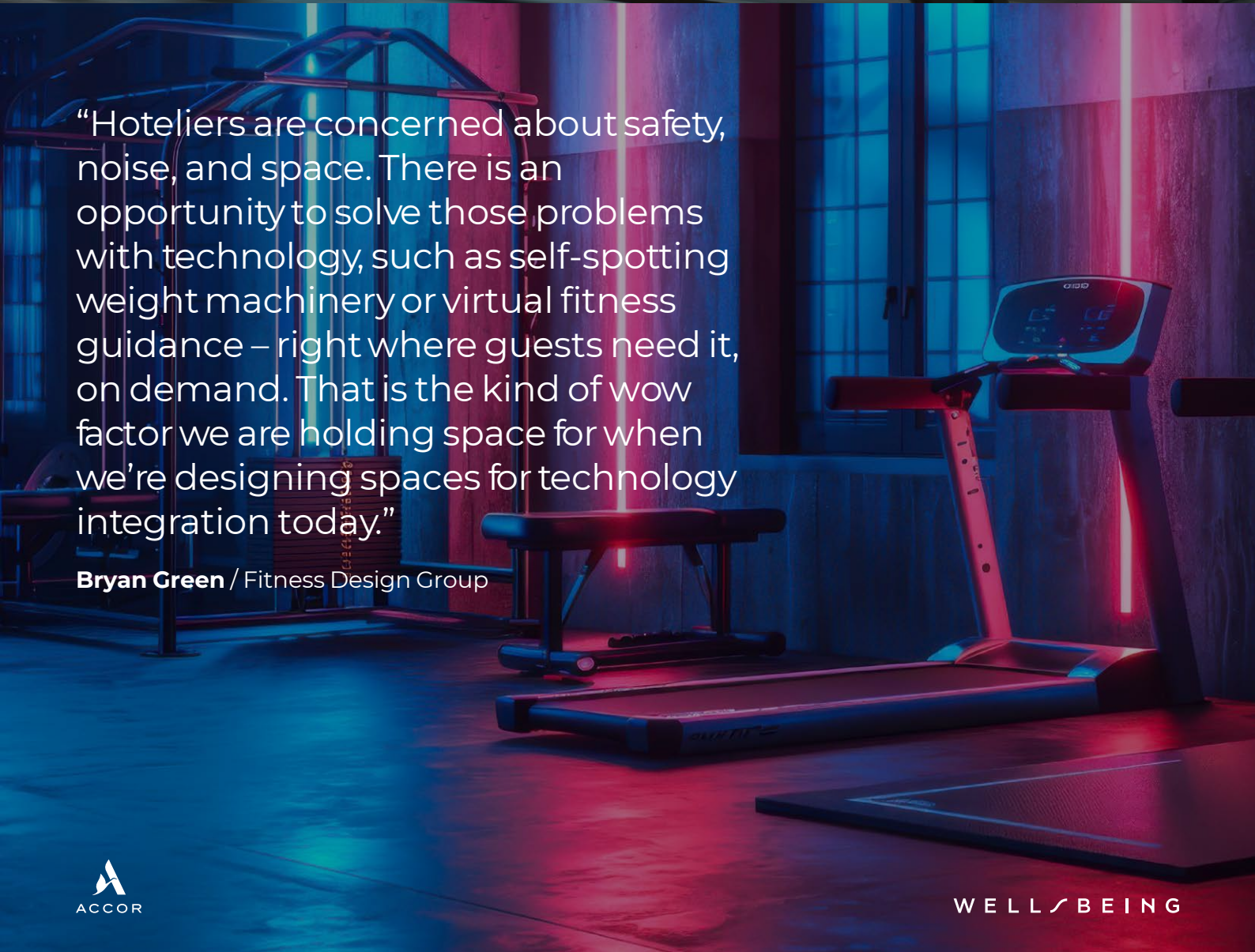
Harry Jameson / Pillar Well-being

Accor’s research reveals that across its urban and resort locations, an average of 25% to 30% of guests will visit its hotel fitness areas, versus 5% to 7% who visit its spas.



“Hoteliers are concerned about safety, noise, and space. There is an opportunity to solve those problems with technology, such as self-spotting weight machinery or virtual fitness guidance – right where guests need it, on demand. That is the kind of wow factor we are holding space for when we’re designing spaces for technology integration today.”

Bryan Green / Fitness Design Group



7

Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT)

Wearing our heart monitors on our sleeves

Providing an innovative virtual or digital experience that allows guests to integrate their own devices can be profoundly impactful. Accor is continuously exploring ways to connect with our guests through partnerships with health and fitness providers such as Cronometer, Peloton, and Technogym.

Some of the ways we can support the 'bring your own device' culture is with docking stations alongside mats and free weight areas; allowing AirPlay and Bluetooth access to big screens; and equipping bikes and cardio machines with smartphone holders. We also see the potential of enabling guests to connect with our fitness environment through personal devices such as smartwatches, Oura Rings, and Whoop.

«We match the physical with the virtual, so if your guests bring content for a specific modality – such as bar training – you need the requisite equipment to match. That creates a much more immersive experience and a different type of digital experience than they would typically get at home.»

Bryan Green / Fitness Design Group

Many of our spa environments, such as the **Fairmont Spa at the Claremont**, have a policy of no mobile devices. While health tracking and activity monitoring in the fitness area is a priority for many guests, it is also important that we provide spa or recovery areas that encourage presence, mindfulness and of course, respect privacy concerns.

Almost one in three Americans uses a wearable device, such as a smartwatch or fitness band, to track their health and fitness, according to the [2023 Health Information National Trends Survey](#). Another [2023 study](#) by Morning Consult found 35 percent of US adults use wearables, while two in five US adults use health related apps on their smartphones.



8

The lingering places

Emotional well-being where it matters most

At Accor, our design process guides us through an evaluation of the space, revealing the areas where guests spend the most time. We look for the areas where guests linger, where they intuitively take time to pause or rest, such as relaxation lounges, thermal and pool areas, certain fitness zones, and arrival or reception areas.

Spa guests wear robes and sip tea as they await treatments, often without phones to occupy their attention. In the gym, they rest between sets, letting their gaze fall where it may. At the pool, they rest along the edge, or lie on a chaise and observe. In each case, whether they encounter emotionally uplifting views, or bland walls, is up to the design team.

With thoughtful collaboration between owner, brand, architects, and design team we can create powerful and intentional moments of well-being for our guests that might otherwise be overlooked.

“We design spaces that create an emotional response – truly meaningful moments or authentically ‘found’ experiences. Sometimes our guests share those encounters on social media. Our designs then become amplified and our return on investment is the significant resonance they have in terms of reach, driving occupancy and rates and everything else. We don’t design for social media, but we can certainly reap the benefits of social marketing.”

Anne Becker Olins / Accor

There is an assumption that spa design is all about treatment rooms – a notion that our design teams challenge. Guests spend most of their treatment time at rest, with eyes closed. Shift the focus from visual design to the stimulation of other senses, enhancing the feel of the room through scent, sound, textures, and temperature.

"Transformative room" at
Pullman Singapore



"When you design an experience, you first need to think about guest well-being. We have this strong ambition in our design, not only in the spa or fitness rooms but in the entrance, the lobby, the guestroom, the back of the house. It is translated in the space organization, the bed quality, the choice of materials, the colors, the sound, the lighting, biophilia. Everything matters. Anything that helps trigger happiness, laughter and joyful living and strong experiences is clearly part of well-being."

Damien Perrot / Accor



WELL/BEING



In larger spaces, we have the luxury of making a more significant emotional impact. At **Pullman Power Fitness - Montparnasse**, a lighting installation at the entrance to the gym creates a massive prism effect. As guests pass in front of it, or stop and jump into the air or dance among the light, their bodies are immersed in the colorful refraction. The smile-inducing, endorphin-boosting installation uses just a simple concrete wall, prism light, and the guests who enter and exit the fitness space.

“For a joyous moment, at the entrance of the gym, you become art - reflecting your mood, your posture, your dance, your moves. After your training, you leave and witness the shift, as once again your spirit is captured in the art. You are art, and that is the whole concept.”

Marie Soliman / Bergman Design House



9

Guiding the journey

Using design to create energy flow and well-being

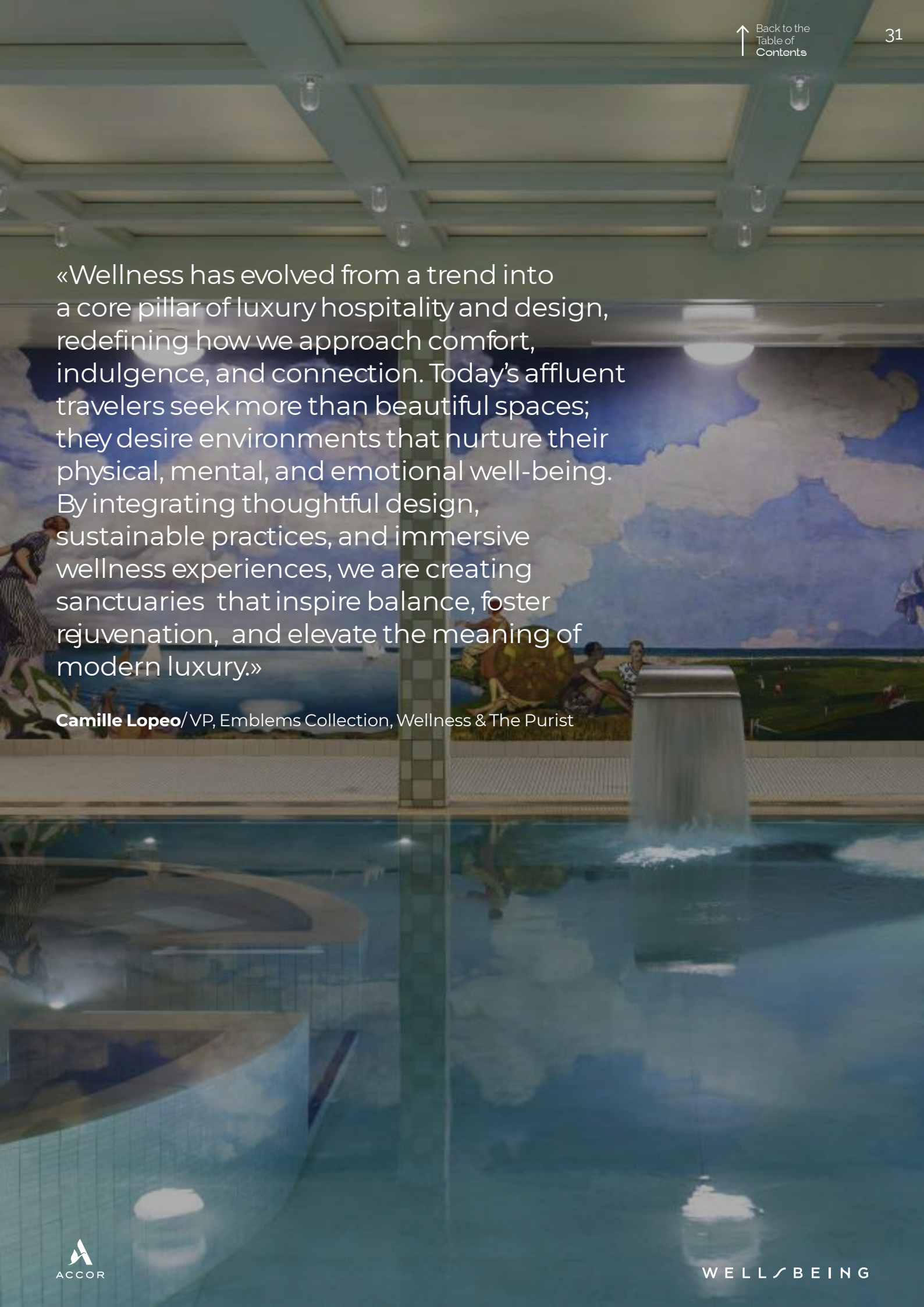
A thematic design journey is expressed through mindful elements that work together, such as architecture, artwork, natural light, greenery and décor. We carefully observe how guests transition between rooms and experiences – ensuring we uphold the design experience during those wayfinding or ‘in between’ moments.

These design elements do not have to be costly or grand in scale, they are merely touchpoints along the guest journey. In this way, we can contribute to an emotional or physiological reaction, raising or lowering energy levels, as guests enter a space or embark on a certain activity.

“We are ushering guests to those very brief moments of openness, where emotional experiences can resonate. On a massage bed in the spa, facing downward, the mind is open to creating associations with other stimuli. Maybe the floor has an element that relates to the spa’s thematic journey. Later, on the locker door, another motif. Creating a narrative is about connecting moments with the right messages in the right places.”

Tal Danai / ArtLink





«Wellness has evolved from a trend into a core pillar of luxury hospitality and design, redefining how we approach comfort, indulgence, and connection. Today's affluent travelers seek more than beautiful spaces; they desire environments that nurture their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. By integrating thoughtful design, sustainable practices, and immersive wellness experiences, we are creating sanctuaries that inspire balance, foster rejuvenation, and elevate the meaning of modern luxury.»

Camille Lopeo/VP, Emblems Collection, Wellness & The Purist

10

Club, not spa

Creating community with club culture

In our quest to build hotels for local communities and not solely for hotel guests, Accor continues to push the boundaries of traditional fitness and wellness facilities.

Boutique gyms, global fitness brands, and club-based membership programs create several advantages for our hotels.

- Higher, steady and predictable revenue streams allow us to make deeper investments in advanced health and wellness technologies.
- Consistent stream of guests creates demand for more personalized experiences and more fulsome group fitness offers.
- Greater ability to expand employment opportunities with less risk integrates the hotel more closely with the local market and community.

“Opening the doors to the community is having a big impact in how Accor designs and develops our hotels. Creating street access and building in the opportunity for a membership base helps us deliver on our owners’ visions. It also enriches the experience for hotel guests when they can mix and mingle with people who live and work in the neighborhood.”

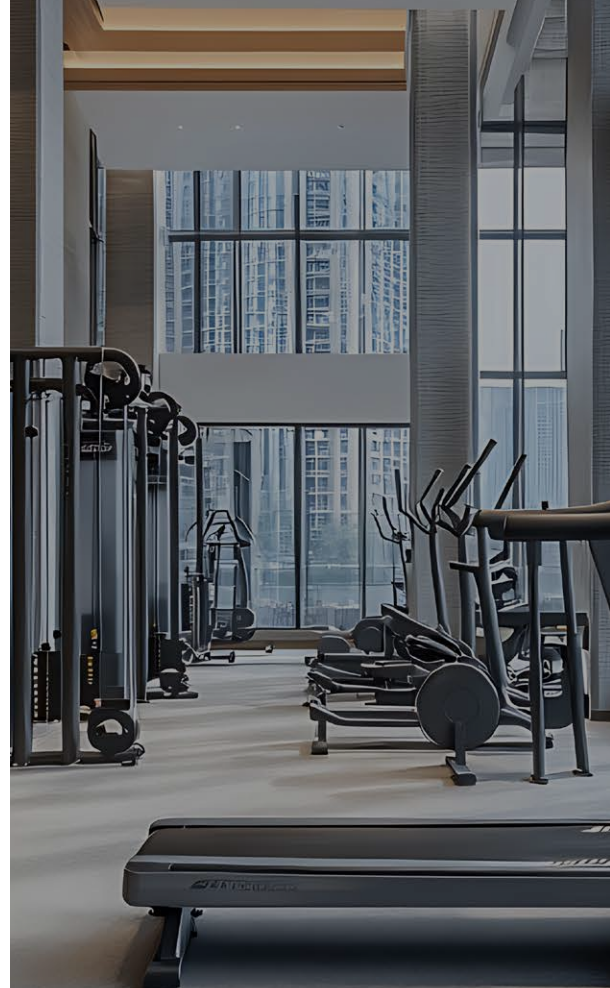
Agnès Roquefort / Accor

Design Impacts

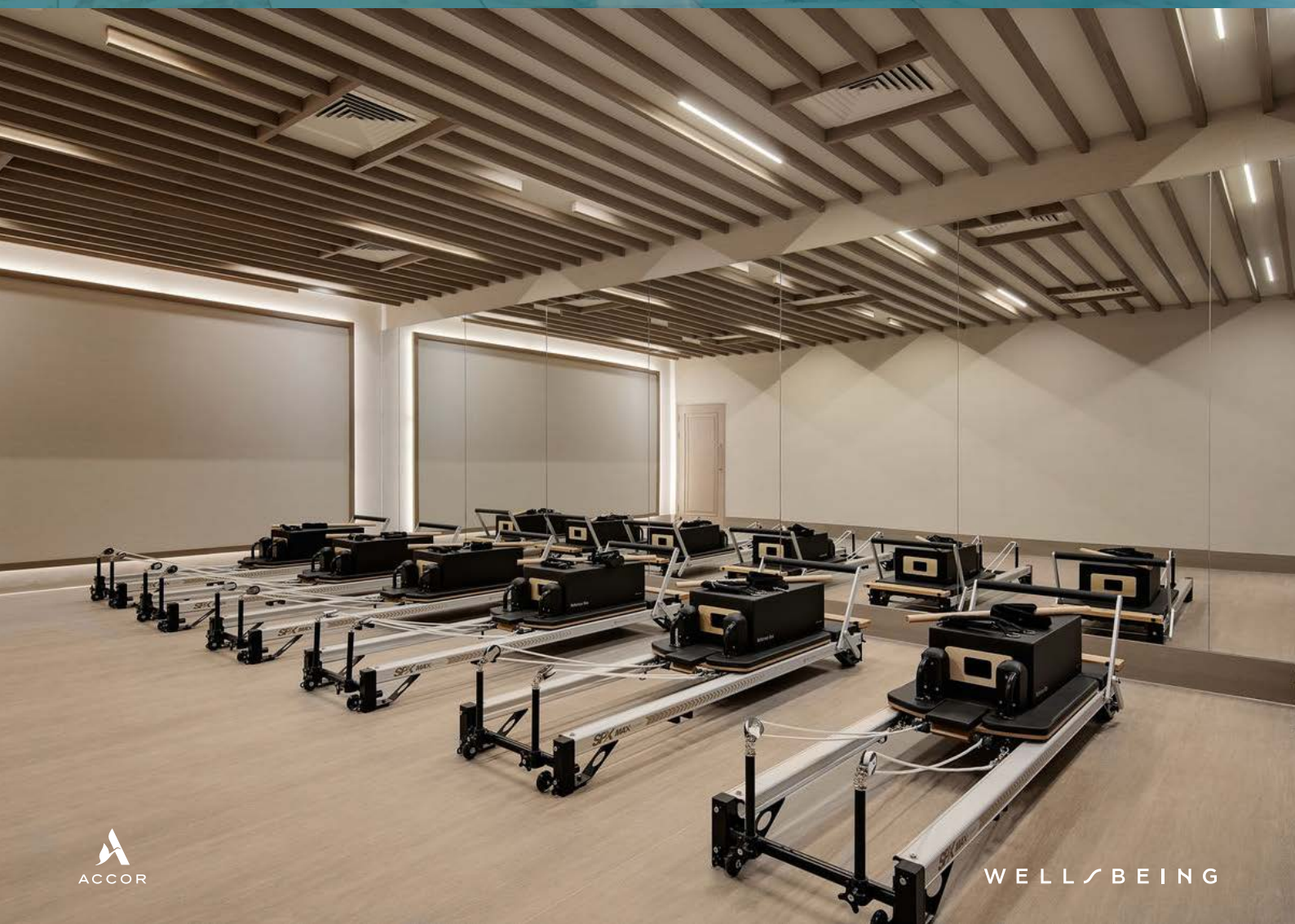
- Larger space & more equipment
- Diverse programming
- More showers & lockers
- Street access
- Membership benefits

Advantages

- Recurring revenue model
- Future-proofs our concepts
- Encourages guest ‘stickiness’
- Local vibe adds energy
- Boosts community ties



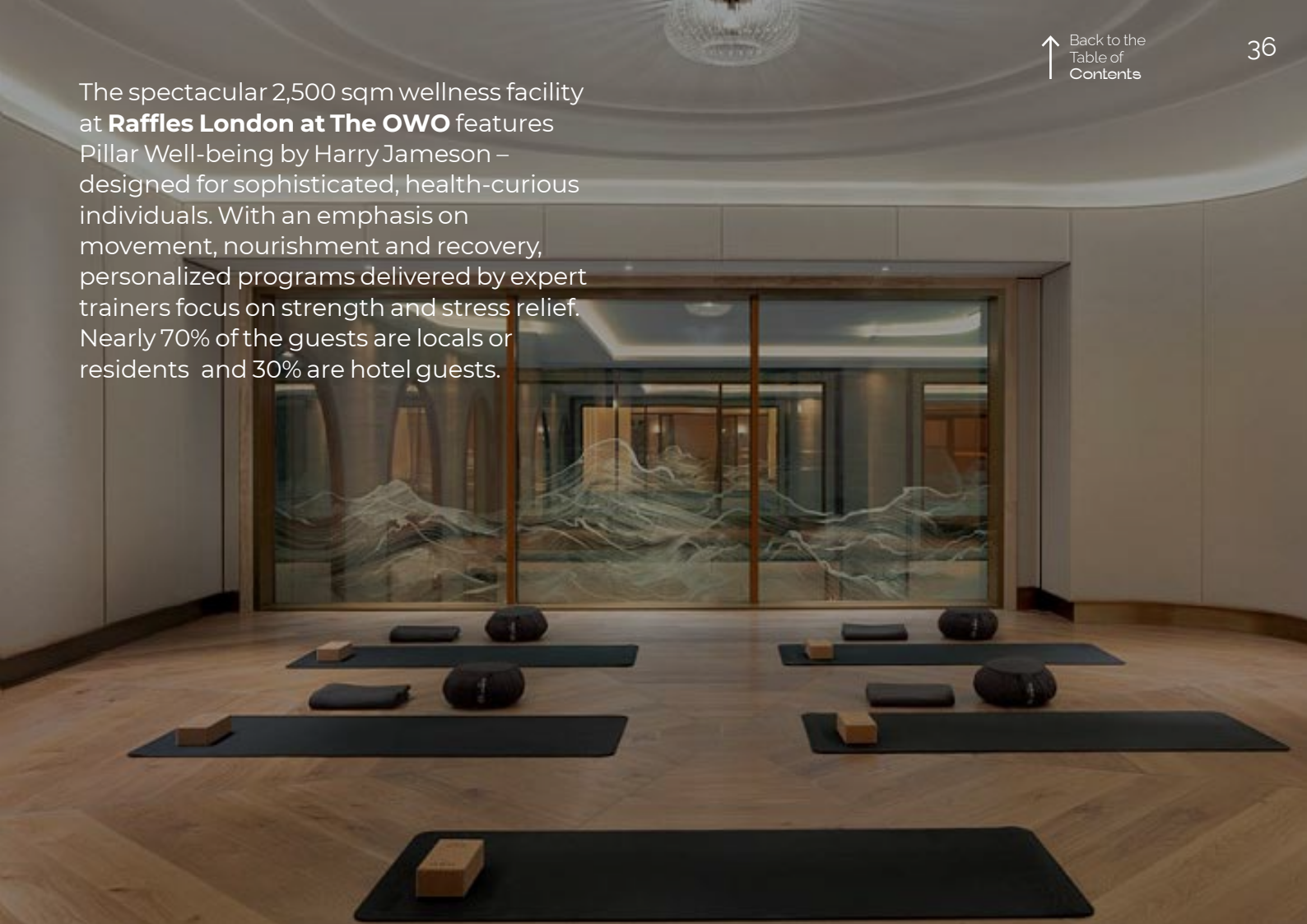
Fairmont Windsor Park is one of the leading destination spas in the UK. The 3,500 sqm luxury wellness facility offers a holistic approach to well-being with spa, fitness, pool, nutrition, physiotherapy, and chiropractor. Private memberships and immersive three-to-five-day experiences attract health-conscious guests both locally and internationally.



Spa memberships are a significant trend, driven by a societal desire for self-care, relaxation and holistic well-being. [ISPA's 2024](#) spa-goer survey, 96% of respondents hold an annual subscription and a third have spa memberships. For hoteliers, this presents an opportunity to diversify revenue streams, enhance guest experiences and foster long-term client relationships.

[Journey, September 2024](#)

The spectacular 2,500 sqm wellness facility at **Raffles London at The OWO** features Pillar Well-being by Harry Jameson – designed for sophisticated, health-curious individuals. With an emphasis on movement, nourishment and recovery, personalized programs delivered by expert trainers focus on strength and stress relief. Nearly 70% of the guests are locals or residents and 30% are hotel guests.



“Designers talk a lot about the ability to disconnect people from daily life by giving them something unexpected. It’s in those moments of surprise and wonder that people drop their tension and think of things they would not normally consider. It opens a creative window. At Raffles London at The OWO, guests open a set of double doors and there is a beautifully-lit, sweeping staircase that descends into the pool area. At the mid-point of the double-height space, the huge arches come into view – this is where guests stop, awestruck. The intervention of that staircase is a complete luxury – it’s taking up prime London real estate space with a completely indulgent feature – and that is part of the Raffles character as well.”



Jo Littlefair / Goddard Littlefair

11

The «we» of wellness

Social bathing and sweat culture



The rise of hot and cold plunge circuits reflects a growing interest in holistic wellness and natural therapies. These ancient rituals are being revived by a new generation of spa-goers who enjoy the social aspect of gathering to sauna, swim, bathe, and view it as a healthier alternative to socializing in bars or nightclubs. Whether it's communal bathing, swim clubs, or pool parties – water creates inviting opportunities to gather and enjoy social experiences and moments of profound well-being.

Research confirms this growing desire to gather, connect, and enjoy a sense of community while engaging in health and wellness pursuits. Mindbody reports that in the US, 43% of consumers view community as very important part of wellness experiences; while American Gen Z and millennials are most interested in the community aspect of wellness, with more than 25% saying they focus on wellness to feel connected with others.

“Younger generations are really a target for us. We need to make wellness experiences inviting for them, develop a program so the spa is accessible for them. We can provide the support for young people to have a better quality of life, inspiring them to eat better, exercise and sleep better. We have a role, even if a social role, to play in that.”

Ghislain Waeyaert / Bbspa France

Tips for modern bathing experiences:

- strong thematic design
- guided thermal journeys
- ample space for socializing
- sauna at center stage
- cold plunge for longevity
- explore new modalities
- blend indoors with outdoors
- mixed gender experiences
- create a vibe that resonates

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, renowned for its naturally abundant destinations, has long understood the value and virtues of creating extraordinary social wellness experiences around natural advantages, such as glacial lakes, saltwater pools and hot springs. Watch for the debut of several purpose-built sauna and bathing concepts, such as the new eco-friendly thermal wellness bathing spa at **Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise**, and the upcoming private members' day spa at Fairmont Hanoi, featuring traditional Asian bathing rituals, steam and sauna.

Swissôtel Çeşme elevates the thermal bathing experience with its array of wellness offerings, deeply rooted in the natural healing powers of mineral-rich seawater. The hotel's signature Thalasso pools, naturally heated by geothermal magma, provide a therapeutic retreat known for alleviating ailments like rheumatism, arthritis, and muscle tension. These immersive, mineral-packed waters combine the restorative elements of nature with a sophisticated thermal design, creating a wellness journey that complements the steam rooms, saunas, and holistic fitness amenities. An outdoor ice bath brings a refreshing contrast to the warmth of the Thalasso pools, embodying the power of thermal transitions to invigorate both body and mind.

Nestled within lush, landscaped gardens, the 5000-square-meter Pürovel Spa & Sport at **Swissôtel Wellness Resort Alatau Almaty** offers an expansive wellness experience designed to immerse guests in pure relaxation and revitalization. The facility offers authentic Turkish hammam, steam rooms, and saunas, along with both indoor and outdoor thermal pools.

"Movement in nature has a significant role on decreasing the physiology of stress - what we call biophilia. We're seeing the rise of cold water and wild swimming for many good reasons. Cold accelerates the nervous system for a calming effect, and when we're in nature, our bodies recognize that. The scenery plays a role in telling the brain, you're somewhere where you should be recharging and recouping."

Oliver Patrick / Co-Founder of Future Practice

12

Get cozy with thermal expertise

Navigating the complexities of thermal of MEP

Swimming pools, steam rooms and saunas are a given, but how do we take these elements to the next level to achieve a thematic, self-guided wellness journey? How do we transform an amenity into a profit center?

Bringing a hotelier's thermal dreams to reality requires the guidance of a thermal MEP specialist. The importance of working with mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineers with specific experience in thermal and hydrotherapy technology, cannot be overstated. The complexity of these projects requires highly specialized capabilities in planning, construction, and thermal engineering.

The cost of working with a specialized thermal MEP team right from the start is small compared to the cost of fixing damage that inevitably occurs without MEP guidance in the planning and construction stages. When it comes to thermal projects, there are no minor problems – only massive impacts to profitability and guest experience.

Thermal MEP factors

- **Spatial planning** – achieving a balance of space for thermal, amenities, and lounge, with awareness of how much time guests spend in each area
- **Material suitability** – from the thermal conductivity of the floor finish in the sauna to the specialized humidity-resistant finish on the HVAC side of the walls
- **Ventilation and drainage** – how air and water flow into the property, how they circulate, and how they are expelled
- **Guest safety** – underfloor heating not only feels good on bare feet, it helps evaporate water on floors, reducing the risk of slips and falls
- **Energy efficiency** – innovating with sustainable solutions such as solar power, geothermal heating, heat exchangers, steam room and hammam exhausts, water-saving pool filtration, and pool covers

“When it comes to thermal planning, space equals luxury. This is especially true if you have a mix of hotel guests and members. If the area feels crowded, or there is insufficient lounging room and guests can’t find somewhere to sit between their circuits, or they end up standing around not knowing what to do or where to go, they will feel uncomfortable and won’t return.”

Don Genders / Design for Leisure

The Guide to Hydrothermal Spa & Wellness

Development Standards
(4th edition)

is an essential primer on the latest trends, technology and benefits that hydrothermal bathing offers and the best ways to incorporate these features into gyms, fitness centers, urban bathhouses or hotel spas.

13

The pool redux

Rethinking the all-purpose hotel pool

For decades, the ubiquitous hotel pool has enjoyed an uncontested existence. Invariably, all-purpose hotel pools were built in the range of 20-25 sqm by 10 sqm, or 200-250 sqm of space. Given this substantial amount of real estate and expense, it's worth questioning, how can we do this in a better way?

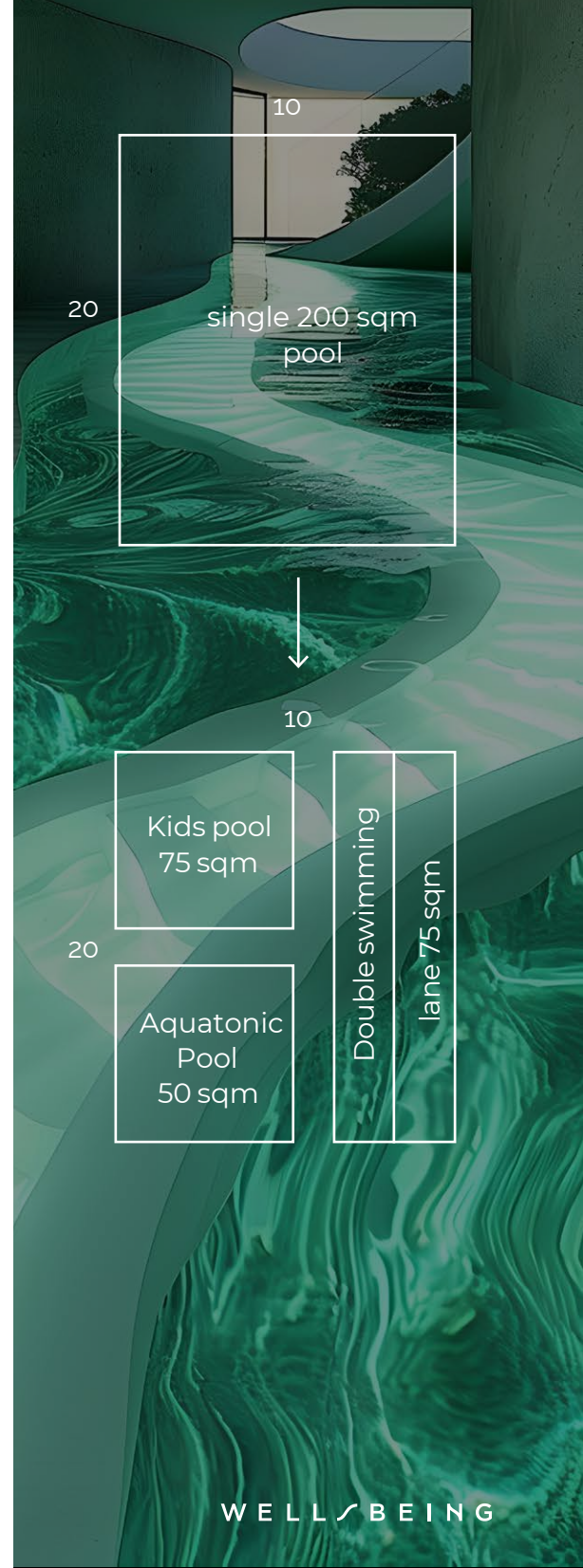
The answer lies with the avatar. Who is the ideal guest and how are they using the pool? Accor's research indicates that less than 1% of hotel guests are interested in lap-based lane swimming. Most want a pool for the chance to take a dip, cool off, and lie alongside it.

Families, however, use hotel pools extensively with their children. Yet are those pools built with the needs of families in mind? Are the depth and size appropriate? Are we offering space and separation for child-free guests? Could we create a more animated and enriching pool experience for everyone? These are questions that must be asked.

“Our pools are a vital area of hotel design and should be positioned as anchors around which we create experiences of holistic well-being and social wellness. We must consider how to tailor our pool experiences to keep them relevant for current and future generations of guests.”

Emlyn Brown / Accor

Imagine taking a single 200 sqm pool and transforming it into a 75 sqm kids' pool, a 50 sqm Aquatonic pool for adult relaxation, and a 70-80 sqm standard pool for swimmers. Profoundly improved guest experiences.



When it comes to the spa experience, kids and the spa don't often mix well together. Most spa experiences are designed for guests 18+ and wellness facilities for adult guests must be focused to maximize the guest experience and profitability. While well-being is a priority for everyone, great experiences for kids and families can easily be created outside the confines of the spa. For example, **Raffles Maldives Meradhoo** provides Children's Butlers to keep kids entertained with a plethora of activities throughout the family's stay. Day guests at The **Fairmont Spa at the Claremont** receive three hours of complimentary childcare at the Kids' Club, so parents can make the most of their spa experiences. At **Novotel London Canary Wharf**, notoriously hard to please teens will undoubtedly appreciate the hotel's indoor pool with its cool psychedelic murals on the walls.



The Purist Retreat & Spa at Cures Marines de Trouville – Mgallery is an exclusive luxury wellness concept that enriches the hotel's traditional thalassotherapy experience and invites guests to elevate their health and well-being through a combination of care, movement, nutrition and sleep.

"The Purist embodies Accor's response to a growing expectation of our guests, looking for both physical and mental well-being. Rooted in 4 complementary pillars - beauty, nutrition, sleep and movement - this holistic approach redefines wellness 'codes, catering to a demand for transformative retreats. Designed with a strong CSR commitment, The Purist seeks to take care of its guests just the same way it takes care of the environment and local resources. Since it became a reality at Les Cures Marines Trouville – MGallery Collection, the Purist has already proven its success and relevance to our consumers' new expectations, and I am thrilled to see it's been nominated for Spa of the Year Europe at the World Spa & Wellness Awards 2025."

Maud Bailly / Accor



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Optimizing Design for Operational Excellence

Ease of delivery
is everything

As all of us in the hospitality industry well understand that the labor challenge is one of the biggest issues we face. Traditionally, spa has been a high-labor-cost, lower-margin business. Today, we have two issues: the increasing cost of labor and the lack of staff.

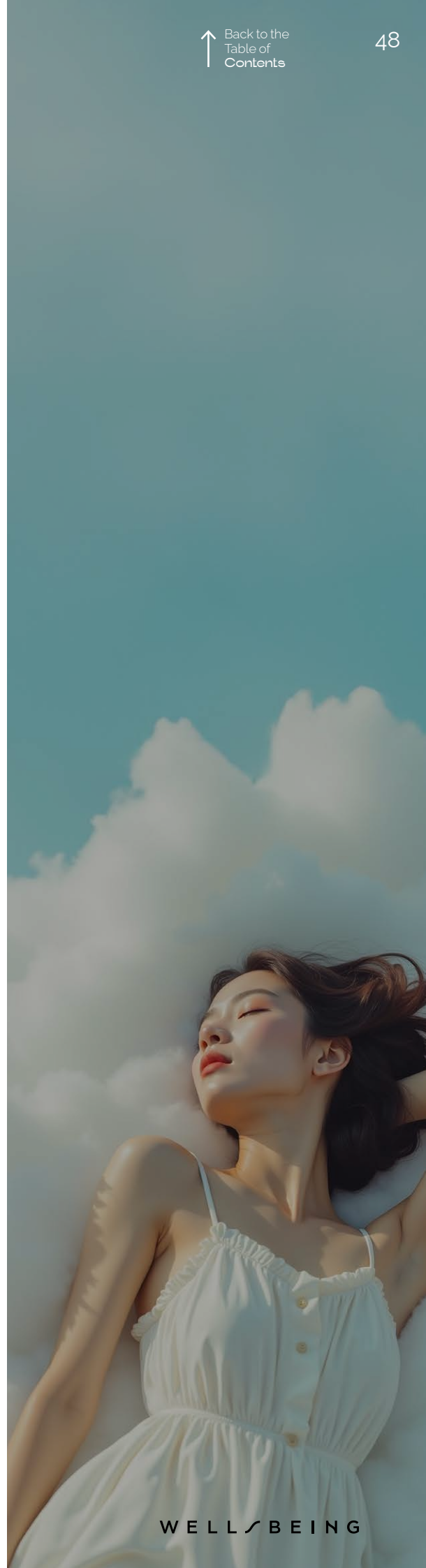
As a result, we cannot keep building facilities that rely on a substantial labor component. In terms of programming, we must pivot towards delivery that is more self-guided, more experiential, and more tech or AI supported. From a design perspective, we need to create zones and program areas that are less reliant on staffing.

Thought-starters:

- Can we move products and merchandise into spaces that require less staffing?
- What are some ways we can reduce the need to staff a key area?
- Is there a more effective approach to back of house and how we can make that more seamless?
- Can we create more self-guided experiences within fitness or thermal areas?
- Are we able to automate arrivals with self-check-in technology?
- Can we have a more streamlined approach to tech when it comes to treatment delivery?
- How can we incorporate more tech-driven experiences?

“We must balance human connection with the use of non-human aspects. We have increasingly sophisticated consumers – who walk into a fitness space and train on their own because they know what they want and how to achieve it. They are already self-guiding and co-creating their experiences in our spaces. So how we adapt, manage, and train our staff is being driven not only by the labor shortage, but also by consumers keen to co-create their own experiences.”

Sonal Uberoi / Spa Balance Consulting



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Wellness design guides

Hotel owners and developers who work with Accor's design team have access to our proprietary series of wellness design guides. We have created comprehensive guides for each of our brands, along with performance specification documents that support our efforts to realize exceptional wellness and well-being design.

Each Technical Spec Document for Wellness contains over 350 pages of technical specifications. These guidebooks provide best-in-class documentation for our teams to use with owners and designers to achieve outstanding spa, fitness and wellness concepts.

The content includes best practices, references, and benchmarks that will help in advising and supporting our colleagues, our partners, our suppliers, and our hotel owners through the design process.

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Partners & contributors

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