

**BRINGING GLOBAL BRANDS TO THE
BUSH – A NATURAL CHALLENGE**

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Once upon a time in a place far, far away, out on the wide open plains of the African Savanna, a thoughtful traveller finally found what she had been looking for. She knew she had found it, her definition of 'luxury': silence, untouched sights and 100% natural scents.

In so many ways, the moment was one that stopped time. Immediately, feeling free, the realisation comes: *this is luxury*.

It's not about price. It's not about polish, it's not even about glitz or gifts.

It's about the ability to be still, be here, be silent. Feel the release.

It is about, simply put, being in the bush.

These are the moments that luxury brand hoteliers, operating in some of the farthest off places in the world, seek to create – that feeling of freedom. Freedom from technology, freedom from trimmings, freedom from daily pressures, freedom from noise.

And importantly, freedom from expectations of anything but being 'here'.

This move from the tangible to the intangible, stuff to meaning, has been called out by BCG as a critical trend in luxury.

"The growth of certain categories of luxury such as alcohol and food, and travel, hotels and yachting signal that consumer values are transitioning from having to being, from extrinsic to intrinsic and from conspicuous to meaningful. This brings the "having to being" frame of mind among affluent consumers to reality."

For luxury hotel brands, it is about purity of experience as a perfect reflection of the luxury brand experience.

BRAND EXPRESSION, UNBRANDED

A bush resort, like a beach resort or one nestled in the snowy slopes of a breathtaking mountain range, is where the challenge of branding can often come to the fore. How does a brand create a clear impression, directly reflecting its promise, when spaces are best left blank?

How can an impression be made when unwilling to press a symbol, a sign, a signature onto a place, especially when the product is created not by organisational innovation teams, but instead by Mother Nature?

How can a property find the balance between business brand and natural beauty?

Kenya's Olare Mara Kempinski <http://www.kempinski.com/en/masai-mara/olare-mara/welcome/>, a tented luxury camp in the heart of the Maasai Mara's 35,000 acre Olare Motorogi conservancy proudly part of the global luxury brand hotel group, Kempinski, is one such elegant example.

There alongside the majestic 'Big 6' (the traditional Big 5: Lion, Leopard, Buffalo, Rhinoceros and Elephant, plus the Maasai), the property discreetly hosts awestruck guests fulfilling their lifelong dream of an African safari, often, if not always, at a level of delight far beyond the guest's expectations and scope of vocabulary of awe-based

adjectives. At the heart of their 5-star offering is an innate understanding of what 'luxury' really means for safari travellers from across the world investing their precious holiday time and dollars into a long held dream, and how to make that connect naturally to the brand.

As expressed by Manish Nambiar, the General Manager of Villa Rosa Kempinski in Nairobi and the Olare Mara Kempinski in the Maasai Mara - a unique pairing of city and savanna properties for his leadership portfolio,:

“What unites all Kempinski properties are our values and the fact that we are not a hotel chain, but “a collection of individuals” who all adhere to the same uncompromising level of luxury service. We are not confined to a cookie-cutter formula on how to deliver our service, but one that leverages on the value that the local experience brings.”

It is the celebration of the local experience, and the role that the brand can discreetly play, that creates the magic for guests, and therefore allows the lifelong, emotional connection to be made back to the brand. Kempinski made it happen, branding made visible where most meaningful.

Nambiar continues:

“True luxury is about lasting experiences. Travelers are hungry for memories, and experiences that cannot be bought. Having a sundowner in the bush with the sunset in a formation that shall never occur the same way again, presents a unique and rare moment, tailor-made for you as a result of the efforts of many. Travelers appreciate the real and virgin nature of the terrain and endless wilderness in juxtaposition to the world-class Kempinski service.”

BRAND HAND IN HAND WITH MOTHER NATURE

Importantly, part of the brand's presence and profile comes through its playing a part in the Olare Motorogi conservancy itself – an aspect further increasing guests' appreciation of the brand, having been so overwhelmingly moved witnessing firsthand its natural wonder, and seeing so clearly the exceptional efforts made by Kempinski to work with Mother Nature to protect all that guests travel the world to experience.

As shared by Nambiar,

“Our camp prides itself in its contribution to the conservancy, and is an active participant in practices that safeguard the environment and ecosystem. Conservation of the wild demands an adherence and respect for nature, which means an understanding that some things are best left unaltered by man. We have to work around those confines. For example, our tents are subdued in colour to be both mobile and camouflaged in the Savannah. Animals have the right of way across all areas of the camp. And the less overt, invasive modernity the better (though guests will have electricity and Wi-Fi connection thanks to the power

supply harvested from solar panels). Our outdoor showers on deck are certainly a conversation starter.”

It all forms part of the greater guest experience, be the guests tourists travelling to the camp in search of the perfect safari holiday, or wildlife strolling within the campgrounds in search of a tasty twilight graze on the dewy grasses.

Smiling, as though almost reflecting on personal experience, the GM adds,:

“A guest’s nights will be accented with grunts from nearby hippos, and echoes of distant lion roars, reminding them that they are in the heart of the bush – in signature style of Kempinski luxury with the finest of linens, most elegant of amenities, and our wonderful oversized claw-foot bathtubs – but definitely in the bush!”

And for that precious moment, in that place, as silence is broken by the most natural of African nightlife noises, with the guest’s heart beating and smiling in thrilling tandem, that is luxury!

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