

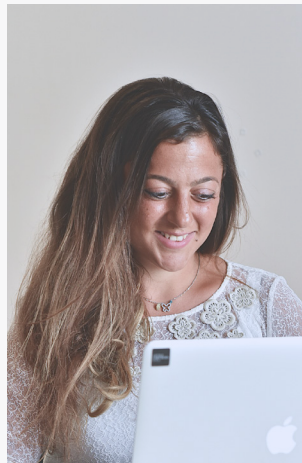
THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE

EPISODE 05

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE: L.E/MIAMI'S EXPERT
BUYER PANEL SPILLS THE TEA ON WHAT TRAVELLERS
ARE LOOKING FOR – NOW, AND IN 2021

PANELISTS:

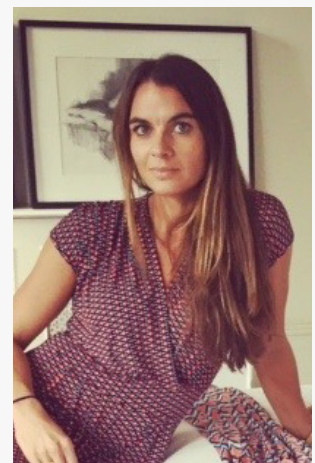
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In the good-news drought that's been 2020 so far, here's a ray of hope for our industry: buyers are receiving bookings again. And that's not just hearsay, as the all-star L.E/Miami buyer panel revealed in Part I of our dedicated episode.

Representing the leisure, corporate and entertainment markets, with a diverse international client base, the panel's one-hour conversation ranged from the logistical (reopening restrictions) to the audacious (jetpooling, anyone?) Skim the scoop below.

01.

Hotels, buyers want to hear from you.

The message was unanimous: as travellers take tentative steps towards booking trips, hotels and suppliers need to be more transparent with agents than ever before. “We need to manage expectations with clients, and hotels need to help us do this,” urged Jason. For our panel, it’s as simple as adding visible guidelines on your property’s website, clearly outlining what is available and open (from kids’ clubs to dining options), what is currently restricted, and simple logistics such as which entrance to use. Making the hotel experience crystal clear from the jump will make for satisfied clients and happy buyers. Win-win.



02.

(Room) size matters more than ever before.

With dining options likely to be restricted to in-room-only, and privacy a number one concern for many, our buyers’ clients are anticipating spending more time than usual inside their hotel rooms. Consequently, room size – and amenities such as terraces, balconies, and private pools – are becoming increasingly in-demand. It depends on the client, but couples especially are asking about room size, reported Rebecca. And with many schools closed for the foreseeable future, families are looking to private or hotel villas where interactions with other guests can be kept to a minimum for all family members.

03.

Flexible cancellation policies will benefit everyone.

It cannot be stressed enough: lines of communication between buyers and suppliers need to be more open and honest than ever, particularly when it comes to the thorny issue of flexible cancellations. All our panel reported an uptick in bookings for the immediate future, i.e. this summer – but so far, clients are less keen on scheduling trips for the end of the year or early 2021 due to continued uncertainty around COVID-19, and fears of being unable to cancel these trips. A flexible approach is critical to ensuring bookings. “We buyers, can be a driving force, asking our partners to be more relaxed on penalties,” explained John. “It’s all about starting a dialogue.”

05.

2021-22 will be the year of the bucket-list trip.

Over almost four months of lockdown, travellers have never had so much time to dream of their next destination. But many are holding that thought for a little while longer, opting for stays close-to-home to allay fears of air travel. Based in England, Rebecca and Katy are seeing their clients book UK or Ireland-based trips, or slightly further afield in rapidly reopening France and Spain. While it may be much more difficult to tick off a bucket-list trip in 2020, our panel predicted next year (and 2022) will see a surge in soul-searching, wellness-driven, once-in-a-lifetime vacations. “Given everything that’s happened, we will see changes in what people want to see and learn about,” forecast Jason. “People will pursue wellness and health as a lifelong pursuit,” added John. “Relaxation, building immunity and continuing to protect conservation interests will be the key drivers of bucket-list travel.”



04.

People will pay more for privacy.

From ‘jetpooling’ – friends clubbing together to fly by private jet – to private islands, travellers are finding new and unexpected ways to stay safe and maintain social distancing while fulfilling their desire to travel. Many of John’s clients are focused on increased security,” he revealed. “Those with previously healthy budgets still have them, alongside a mentality of ‘once I’m able to travel, I will’.”