

# The future of out-of-home entertainment

 By [Sabine Lehmann](#)

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Domestic and international tourism came to a previously unimagined halt over the last 18 months. As we were all required to stay at home, we made our home a cocoon of safety and security. And, if we had the spare budget, a place of fun and entertainment too. In the past, the biggest competitor for out-of-home (OOH) spend in terms of time and budget was the shopping mall.

Now, as we have invested in our homes with entertainment centres, video games, home gyms, virtual coaching, home offices and home learning centres, the biggest competitor to out-of-home entertainment is the comfortable nest that we have created. Prising people out of their homes will take some work.



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To compete successfully with in-home entertainment in a post-pandemic era, OOH entertainment options need to understand how the world has changed and find ways to give us what we want beyond the four walls of our homes. For example, the pandemic has accelerated some mega social trends such as locations-based socialisation, anxiety and loneliness, work from anywhere, and the bifurcation of leisure spend.

## **Locations based socialisation: Leaving home to connect with others**

When we do leave home it is with greater intent and with a greater amount of spend. Attractions world-wide, including in South Africa, have noted that while visitor numbers have decreased, spend on site has increased. We save up for a day out and want to ensure we have the best time with friends and family when we do leave home.

Research conducted pre-pandemic in America looked at the emotional drivers for leaving home for entertainment. It found that people leave their home-nest for a place where they can all have fun together, for a unique experience that is out of the ordinary and want something that is entertaining for both adults and children.

## **Supporting wellness and fun**

Anxiety and loneliness have been on the increase for some time and has only accelerated during the past 18 months. There has also been a trend towards understanding wellness in a holistic sense. As we look to find our own personal 'holistic happy' we seek leisure experiences that feed our mind, body and soul.

The USA Toy Association found that their biggest sellers during the pandemic were toys that helped us re-discover play, were fun for adults and children and helped us find moments of Zen. Consumers will seek leisure spaces that allow them to have fun, connect with others or provide moments of calm and serenity in a chaotic and noisy world. People are burnt-out, physically and mentally unwell. They will seek restorative spaces and places to recharge.

## **Work from Anywhere gives (some) more time for leisure**

Work from Anywhere (WFA) has increased the time we have available for leisure activities by almost an hour a day. As we save on commuting time, both to work and to meetings, we have more time available for leisure. Those with higher incomes tended to be those that had less time for leisure.

Now those same people are working from anywhere and have more time to spend on social activities. They will want a break from their home-office cocoon. Whilst this will affect restaurants that relied on business lunchtime trade negatively it will have a positive effect on local neighbourhood restaurants as people meet for coffee or take a lunchtime break.

Additionally, companies are increasingly allowing longer workcations, combining work and vacations. The lines between business and leisure travel have been blurring for some time and the WFA trend has only accelerated this.

Remote work holidays will be an expected employee benefit in the future and businesses and hotels are responding to this trend. Hilton hotels for example, now offer workcation packages providing a comfortable work environment where the family can also play. Some companies are now formally offering up to two-month workcations.

Remote work hotels are ensuring they provide comfortable workstations and creating all-inclusive packages for longer stays of up to 50 days. Cities that are able to offer good business services, a range of leisure activities and above all, great connectivity, will gain from this workcation trend.

## **Bifurcation of discretionary spend**

Leisure activities are financed with discretionary spending. Now, as consumers continue to battle job losses and salary cuts, with no indication as to when earnings may bounce back, discretionary spending has been curtailed and people are looking for cost-effective entertainment options.

The Parliamentary Budget Office reported in October 2020 that real disposable income of South African households had contracted by almost 50% in the second quarter of 2020.

Furthermore, as low-wage earners have been disproportionately affected by job losses and job cuts, the households with discretionary spend tend to be those in the higher socio-economic brackets. This bifurcation is a trend that was already underway before the pandemic.

As such, leisure activities targeting higher socio-economic groups may survive, whereas those with more cost-effective entry fees could struggle to remain open.

## ABOUT SABINE LEHMANN

Sabine Lehmann is founder and CEO of Curiositas specialising in visitor attractions and the future of tourism and leisure.

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