

# HOSPITALITY AND F&B UNFILTERED

## LIFE-LED<sup>®</sup> INSIGHT 2026

OUR ANNUAL GUIDE FOR CREATORS  
OF PEOPLE INSPIRED EXPERIENCES



# OUR TAKE ON 2026

As we move deeper into a decade defined by rapid technological advancement and renewed questions of trust, people are seeking genuine experiences, transparent interactions, and technology that enhances rather than replaces human connections.

Our report will show how the insights from our report in 2025 manifested in real world experiences delivered by brands, and how these are influencing our situations, traits and desires throughout 2026.

We will focus on the key insights driving human behaviour in 2026 through the lens of **Humanity Unfiltered**, a perspective that values authenticity, care and connection and explore how this might affect the way brands show up. Providing practical suggestions for creating brands and experiences that are relevant, resonant and real in 2026, a year that is about growth, optimism and opportunity.

We hope there are takeaways that are interesting and useful, and that there are some moments of inspiration to make us all wonder 'what if'.... Thanks for reading!

The I-AM Insight Team.



# MACRO TRENDS

As we move into 2026, the macro trends shaping consumer behaviour remain consistent but their impact is deepening.

Easing **economic pressures**, rapid **advancements in AI** and rising expectations around **wellbeing and sustainability** are reshaping how people live and decide.

At the same time, time-scarcity and growing **political unrest** will drive a shift towards more considered, value led choices.

Together these forces signal a move towards more human-centred ways of living and will guide people towards a world that feels grounded. **Humanity Unfiltered** captures this change where value is found not in perfection or excess, but in what feels authentic, sustaining and meaningful.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Consumers now expect brands to take real, transparent action. Environmental responsibility is the baseline, not a bonus.



## POLITICS

Global instability is fueling caution, pushing people toward brands that show reliability, transparency and social responsibility.



## ECONOMY

Despite easing pressures, value seeking remains. Spending decisions are more deliberate and considered.



## WELLNESS

Time pressure and modern lifestyles are pushing wellbeing higher up the priority list. People are investing more in practices that support balance and quality of life.



## TECHNOLOGY

Advances in AI are making digital interactions more intuitive and personalised, turning seamless experiences into the norm.

# HUMANITY UNFILTERED

**IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, AUTHENTICITY BECOMES COMFORT,  
AND TECHNOLOGY FINDS ITS ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE  
HUMAN EXPERIENCE.**



A growing desire for authenticity, emotional honesty and genuine connection is emerging as people navigate an increasingly uncertain world. Geopolitical tension, economic pressure, climate concerns and rapid technological change continue to reshape how people live, work and relate to one another.

In response, consumers are becoming more selective about what they engage with. Perfection driven narratives and hyper-curated identities are losing relevance, while vulnerability, transparency and imperfection are emerging as signals of trust. People are seeking products, services and experiences that recognise the realities of everyday life and support them within it.

Expectations of brands are shifting. Empathy, responsibility and emotional intelligence are becoming essential as consumers look for support rather than aspirations.

Technology remains central to daily life, but its role is evolving. Rather than competing for attention, the most meaningful innovations work quietly in the background, easing decisions, enhancing wellbeing and enabling connection without adding to overload.

Together, these forces are shaping new behaviours in 2026 that prioritise integration over excess, functionality over hype and meaningful human experiences over surface level innovation.

# HUMANITY UNFILTERED FOR HOSPITALITY AND F&B

The next competitive edge isn't more tech or more noise, it's emotional steadiness and genuine human value.

As guests become more selective with their time, money and attention, the emphasis shifts from:

- Overstimulating interiors
- Gimmicky menu concepts
- Tech for tech's sake
- Trend-chasing pop-ups

Towards:

- Spaces that feel calm and grounded
- Articulation and expression of a clear brand purpose
- Consistent quality
- Staff who feel present, not scripted



# WHEN SERVICE IS QUIETLY SEAMLESS

**There is a role for invisible, frictionless service.**

Technology shouldn't dominate the experience but should quietly improve it, it should remove stress not add stimulation.

In F&B this could look like:

- Seamless reservations (no friction, no confusion)
- Clear wait times
- Smart systems that reduce errors
- QR codes when helpful, not forced
- AI that personalises quietly, not aggressively

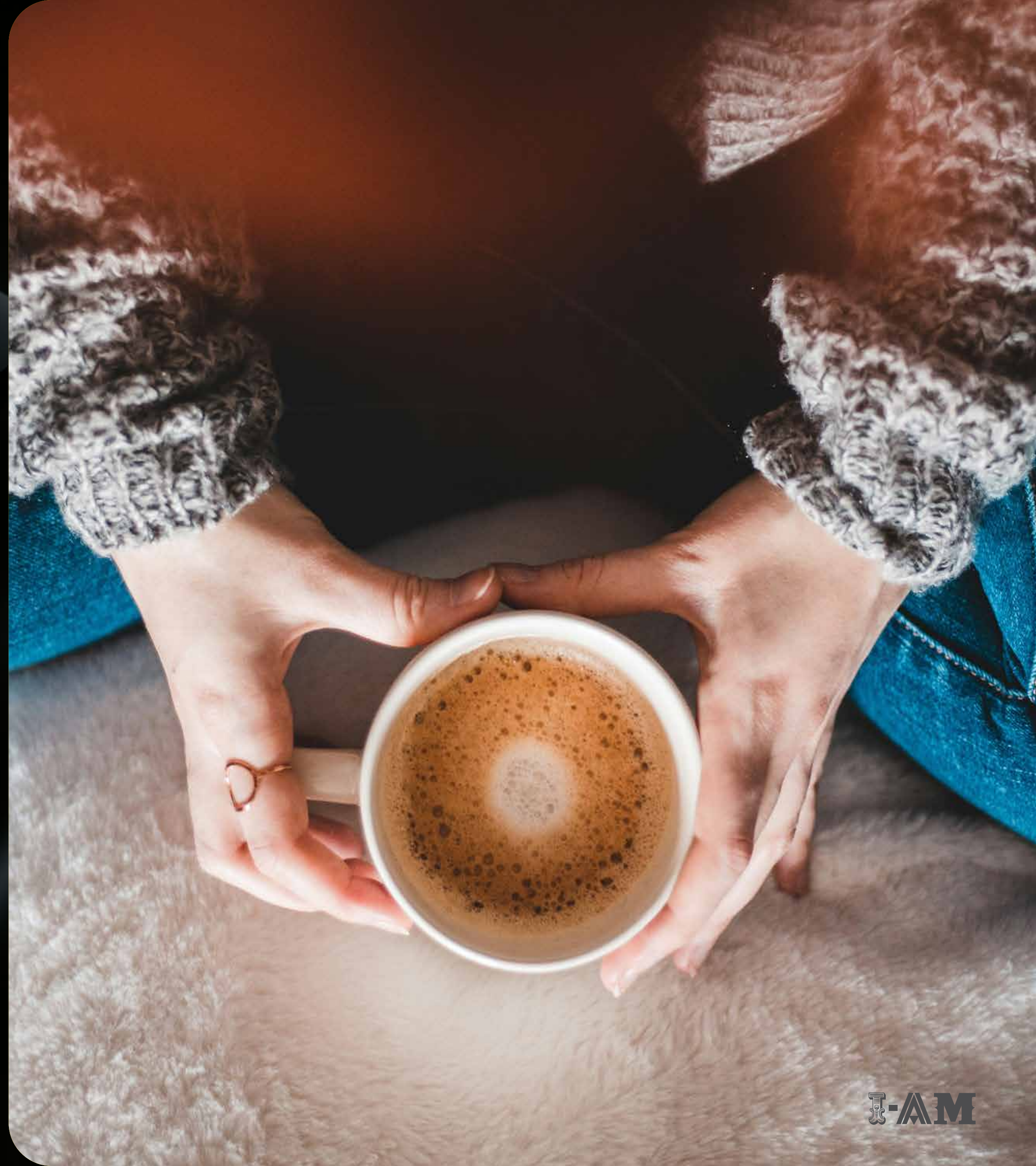
# CARE AS STANDARD

**Wellbeing is front and centre, not a niche offering.**

Wellness is shifting from “spa day luxury” to everyday infrastructure.

This might mean adjustment in menus to focus on digestion and energy, gentler acoustics, calm lighting, emotionally aware staff and spaces that allow people to feel safe.

This isn't about being a wellness brand, it's about reducing stress as a baseline.





# DESIGNED TO RESTORE

**Reset inwards, instead of distracting outwards.**

Guests don't just want entertainment anymore, they want restoration as well as inspiration, even when they eat out.

This doesn't mean leaving creativity and experience behind, it means offering more depth. Perhaps a renaissance of 'slower' dining formats (faster ones still playing their role in the right place), encouraging conversation with communal tables, integration of nature and clear storytelling around the purpose and provenance.

Reducing on-the-surface sensory overload in favour of enrichment and elevation.

It's not creating something 'instagrammable' but enabling customers to pause and connect.

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# SUBSTANCE OVER SPECTACLE

**From Performance to Presence.**

Hospitality brands have been operating in performance mode, tending towards:

- Loud branding
- Viral campaigns
- Over-designed spaces
- Constant novelty

The shift is toward:

- Reliability & transparency
- Inspiring, enriching & authentic experiences
- Emotional steadiness
- Human warmth

Not loud. Intentional.

People Inspired Experiences



# STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR OPERATORS IF YOU'RE RUNNING A RESTAURANT:

- Simplify the menu. Focus on what you're the best at.
- Make sourcing transparent and honest.
- Invest in team training that's holistic. Empathy as well as expertise.
- Design for operational excellence: The right service style and speed to reduce team & customer stress and create moments of delight.
- Reduce noise, visual clutter and distraction, dialing up confidence, inspiration, and relaxation.

# STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR OPERATORS IF YOU'RE RUNNING A HOTEL:

- Remove unnecessary friction in check-in/out, while designing for an uplifting first & last impression.
- Prioritise sleep quality and sound control. Rest is the core product.
- Offer programming that restores (walks, workshops, slow rituals).

Not: “How do we impress guests?”

But: “How do we make their lives feel lighter while they're with us?”



# WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

Leading brands are already responding to this shift, rethinking how hospitality can support rather than stimulate. These examples demonstrate how calm, clarity and human connection are being built into the core experience.



# KISAWA

## MOZAMBIQUE

### Nature, in balance

Set across a vast stretch of coastal forest, dunes, and untouched beachfront, this sanctuary is shaped by a deep connection to both landscape and culture. Private residences are positioned with generous space between them, creating a strong sense of seclusion while maintaining a quiet rhythm of service, wellness, and exploration. Design draws on local materials and craftsmanship, blending into the natural surroundings rather than standing apart from them. Experiences draw directly from the surrounding landscape, from time spent on the water to slower, more restorative wellness rituals, shaping a stay that feels deeply connected to its setting.



# ZOKU

## EUROPE

**Where work meets home.**

Reimagining the traditional hotel stay by bringing accommodation, co-working, and community into a single, fluid environment.

Designed for longer stays, it offers flexible loft-style spaces that support both living and working with ease. Shared areas act as social and professional hubs, encouraging interaction between residents, creatives and travellers throughout the day. With a focus on practicality, design clarity, and human connection, it creates a rhythm of stay where daily life and work naturally overlap, allowing independence and community to exist side by side.



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# CASA FOSCOLO

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

**Heritage, reimagined**

Casa Foscolo is shaped by the interplay of historic architecture and contemporary design, where original details sit alongside modern elements to create a continuous dialogue across time. There is a slower, more reflective rhythm to the experience, where space is given to observe, pause, and absorb the layered character of the building. Inspired by the spirit of local gathering, its interiors are enriched with texture, art and visual detail, encouraging quiet exploration and discovery. Through exhibitions, events, and creative collaborations, it extends beyond a place to stay, becoming a platform for artistic exchange and a point of connection within the neighbourhood.



People Inspired Experiences

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# PUBLIC RECORDS

NEW YORK, USA

## A shared rhythm

Bringing together music, food and gathering within a space shaped by listening and exchange. Part record shop, venue, café and bar, it moves fluidly between day and night, hosting DJ sets, live performances and informal moments of connection. A focus on sound and atmosphere invites presence, where people come together through shared interest rather than fixed purpose. Open and collaborative, it is grounded in community and shaped by the rhythms of those who pass through it.





# BLUE BOTTLE COFFEE

USA

Ritual, refined

Centred around the ritual of coffee, these spaces invite a slower, more intentional start to the day. With a focus on craftsmanship, simplicity and quality, each café is designed with a calm, minimalist aesthetic. By transforming an everyday habit into a considered experience, it shifts coffee from simple consumption to a moment of connection to the process, the product and self.



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# KLOÉ HOTEL

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Stay, with character

Shaped through creative collaboration, with contributions from local artists, designers and makers. Each room is its own distinct space, while shared areas encourage a slower, more social rhythm of stay. Alongside its café and communal spaces, it fosters a sense of connection that extends beyond the private room, inviting guests into a broader cultural context. The experience feels personal and expressive, where design, community and everyday living come together in a way that is both thoughtful and lived in.

People Inspired Experiences



JAM



# TRUNK (HOTEL)

TOKYO, JAPAN

**Where culture connects**

This hotel functions as both hotel and social hub, where hospitality extends into community and creative exchange. Alongside its rooms, it opens its public spaces to events, gatherings, and everyday interaction between locals and travellers. Cafés, bars, and lounges act as shared environments rather than defined zones, encouraging movement and connection. Through ongoing programming and collaborations, it maintains a sense of cultural activity that feels lived in rather than performed.



# 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1. Calm over chaos**  
Guests are choosing grounded, purposeful experiences over noise and novelty.
- 2. Invisible tech wins**  
Technology works best when invisible. Simplifying decisions and experiences without dominating it
- 3. Wellbeing as standard**  
Hospitality should reduce stress and support how people feel, not position wellness as a luxury
- 4. Depth over distraction**  
More meaningful, restorative experiences are replacing surface-level moments.
- 5. Presence over performance**  
Warmth, reliability and authenticity matter more than hype.

**LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE BRANDS AND EXPERIENCES THAT BUILD DEEP, AUTHENTIC HUMAN CENTRED CONNECTIONS, TO FORGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMERS AND ELEVATE YOUR BUSINESS.**

**PLEASE GET IN TOUCH IF YOU WOULD LIKE A CONVERSATION ABOUT OUR INSIGHT, A CHAT OVER A COFFEE, OR IF YOU WANT TO SHARE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE.**

**GET IN TOUCH**

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