

STAYing the course

Author : Katie Deighton

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'I want Airbnb to be a community-driven superbrand' says CMO Jonathan Mildenhall as he sets his sights on content curation

<https://youtu.be/SmUq2bXyfXY>

Airbnb's inclusion of guidebooks in the latest version of its app is the first step in a much bigger plan to expand into the realm of content curation, according to chief **marketing** officer, **Jonathan Mildenhall**.

The guidebook offer, which launched in April and [coincided with a new campaign: 'Live There'](#), draws on knowledge from **Airbnb** hosts and features local tips on the best restaurants, bars, attractions and off the beaten track ideas.

The product could very well be one of the first steps sideways for **Airbnb**, which **Mildenhall** claims is pulling in a huge influx of photos, film, recommendations and opinions from both its users and hosts.

"The content ecosystem around travel, host recommendations and guest experiences is going to mushroom significantly over the next year or so," he predicted. "Travellers are creating more. They're taking pictures, they're more active on **social** media, they're engaging with all of the different experiences they're having. We're going to have to develop capabilities to curate all of this content."

While **Mildenhall** could not confirm what form this curation might take in the future, but paid media may well form a part.

"I want it to be a community-driven super**brand**," he said.

"I want the community to really shape the narrative and tell their own experiences of our platform. I'm going to need to develop proper curation systems so that I can curate the best of this community-generated content and start putting that out into the world through paid media. Curating the very best content from our community is one of my top priorities."

Airbnb hopes this user-generated content, which **Mildenhall** believes can exist as “video, **social** media, **Snapchat**,” and beyond, will be born from the **brand**'s premise of “living local”; staying at **Airbnbs** in neighbourhoods rather than tourist traps and experiencing the life of the locals, rather than traipsing off to the traditional guidebook sights.

The mainstream option is for **Mildenhall** a symptom of the current tourism industry's sickness. “Travellers are staying in the same place and seeing the same things and traveling on the same buses because the industry is addicted to volume,” he commented.

To amplify the 'Live There' option, **Airbnb** has released a new series of short films set in Tokyo, Paris and LA, depicting various demographics exploring the cities. More are expected to be released over the coming six months.

The spots will hit the usual channels, but for the first time the **brand** will be rolling them out through addressable TV.

Mildenhall explained: “They can help us understand who’s actually in front of the TV set so I can serve up bespoke content to make sure that the **Airbnb** expression is optimised for the audience that’s watching.” So, for instance, an LGBT household will be served [the LA ad featuring a gay couple](#), and a household of millennials will be shown [the ad starring young friends exploring Tokyo](#).

The challenges faced by the **Airbnb marketing** team are by and large based around tensions of being a global company **advertising** an extremely local product.

“Lesson number one for any marketer that’s building any **brand** is product consistency,” said **Mildenhall**. “We don’t have that. We have exactly the opposite, with a vast range of different homes on offer.”

The solution for the **brand** is not to hand out work to native agencies and develop a raft of highly localised creative. Rather, it is keeping its **design** and messaging consistent, but adding colour in the form of the local hosts - or more specifically, its ultra hospitable 'superhosts'.

“When we’re developing campaigns the first thing we think about is: ‘Who are the superhosts in each city?’,” **Mildenhall** added.

“In every single **Airbnb** ad that you see, anyone showing someone around is a genuine hosts in a genuine homes.

“But being human, humanity, human values, human experiences - that's the common factor of **Airbnb**.”

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