

Goop, “That Girl,” and the Evolution of Wellness as Luxury

How the high-end wellness market is evolving and what luxury brands need to know



When we talk about the high-end wellness market, Goop, the upscale wellness brand fronted by actress-turned-lifestyle guru Gwyneth Paltrow, usually comes to mind as a dominant example of the rise of commodifying wellness with luxury branding during the early to mid-2010s. Fast forward to today, the latest iteration of the wellness culture is the “that girl” aesthetic, a trend originating from, you guessed it, [TikTok](#). Per [Refinery29](#), “That girl’ isn’t just healthy, she’s professionally successful and looks her best at every moment. She wakes up every morning at 5.30 am so she can seize the day and her nails are always uniform, manicured, and eternally chip-free.” She’s the spiritual daughter of the girlboss and Goop, and thanks to the decentralization of influence brought by social media platforms, any wellness-minded influencer could theoretically become the Gwyneth of their social sphere.

“That girl” embodies a new kind of luxury lifestyle, as evidenced by the sheer amount of resources it takes to perform such wellness practices. Not only does she have the time and money required to prepare the perfect iced matcha latte, she can also afford to spend time ensuring that matcha latte is aesthetically pleasing for her social media posts.

Naturally, there has been [backlash](#) against the “that girl” aesthetic, given the effort, time and money it takes to participate in the trend, and the fact that much of the related content — as well as the dominant aesthetic of the wellness industry in general — is predominantly thin and white, and has a [persistent habit of appropriating Black and brown cultures](#). Even prior to the pandemic, this version of wellness culture had clearly reached a saturation point, as a new form of conspicuous consumption with the veneer of it being for health reasons.

Given these fraught conditions, engaging in the wellness space today may pose new challenges for luxury brands. That said, the reevaluation of wellness culture, as well as the luxury consumer’s evolving priorities, offer brands an opportunity to meaningfully connect with their audiences and foster a deeper sense of purpose.

Holistic Wellness as a Brand Philosophy

Given that, brands should ensure holistic wellness — which is inclusive of mindfulness as well as medical health, fitness, nutrition, appearance, and sleep — is part of their brand philosophy, and consider how their brand can meaningfully impact their consumer’s wellness. Chopard’s “Stay Happy” campaign endeavored to help consumers “cultivate [their] share of daily happiness” and offered lockdown-friendly activities to encourage creativity and mindfulness. Manolo Blahnik implemented a similar Smile Initiative, in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation, which showcased the famous designer’s garden, family recipes, favorite books and films, etc. to raise mental health awareness.

As social distancing and lockdown restrictions have relaxed, the luxury audience’s interest in wellness travel naturally has seen a resurgence, and as such, a number of specialty retreats have opened, emphasizing safety alongside rest and relaxation. The Ranch Malibu launched its weeklong “The Ranch Private” program, tailored for small groups looking to retreat into nature via private hikes, outdoor fitness classes, and daily massages. More recently, Celebrity Cruises announced that its partnership with Goop would set sail in October, which will include a roster of Goop’s wellness experts including an intuitive energy healer, a dancer and movement creator, among others. These experiences certainly embody luxury, but for the affluent audience, the value is in the immersive wellness experience and sense of community that total immersion offers. That being said, with numerous Covid-19 variants arising, the safety of travel will likely continue to be questioned, even if the travel itself is centered around health and wellness.

As such, luxury brands have an opportunity to further connect with their audience in the digital realm. For many luxury consumers, wellness spaces are deeply intertwined with their sense of community and belonging; the *Guardian* has suggested that, for some affluent millennials, the gym has replaced the bar or nightclub as a gathering place. While a sense of community may have flourished at the juice bars in Equinox lobbies, pandemic-driven gym closures made that nearly impossible. Digital wellness communities have filled that void; Peloton is an expert at building a digital community. With the platform encouraging you to dole out virtual high-fives to fellow riders, and instructors offering “speed dating” rides, it’s no wonder that its community is so highly engaged.