

BrandBook *Feature*

Softer *Cruising*

The future holds a softer, gentler cruise industry

What does the future hold for the cruise industry? How do we add value for guests and to destinations, and how does cruising become a more sustainable way of travelling?

Sharing his insights with us is:

Per Eriksson

Sustainability Director at Tillberg Design of Sweden

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Per Eriksson
Sustainability Director,
Tillberg Design of Sweden

Per Eriksson - background

Per Eriksson has been Business Director at Tillberg Design of Sweden (TDoS) since 2015 and is a driving force behind and key advocate for the sustainability agenda in the company.

Per has a wealth of experience in architecture and design and he has founded several companies with a focus on low energy and sustainable architecture. In addition, he has worked as a Project Manager for Médecins Sans Frontières in Uganda, setting up local HIV health clinics.

Per's comprehensive background from the business world is combined with an academic experience as researcher and lecturer at Chalmers and Lund Universities.

Per is an enthusiast and optimist; with this approach he likes to find and present proposals for innovative and creative solutions that offer green and sustainable alternatives to that which is currently available. He is pleased to contribute to debates and conference sessions on sustainability in the cruise industry.

The future holds a softer, gentler cruise industry

“We want to find ways to maintain what we like with our lifestyle but with less cost for the planet. I believe that measures that we take now for economic reasons are also more sustainable in the long term. I think the cruise industry will have to do more with less.”

Per Eriksson shares with us his thoughts on delivering guest value and becoming more sustainable to accommodate future cruise guests. He challenges fundamental structures and ways of thinking in the industry as he believes they can be a barrier to innovation.

Per believes and hopes that the future holds a softer, gentler cruise industry.

Guest Value - we want to feel good

Per Eriksson sees the Covid-19 situation as an opportunity. For many years, the focus in the cruise industry has been on expansion. Slowing down provides the opportunity to reflect.

In the wake of Covid-19, Per foresees that the cruise industry needs to become more efficient; to deliver the same or improved guest experience with less effort. This is also what the industry should do in terms of sustainability:

“We want to find ways to maintain our lifestyle but with less cost for the planet. I believe that measures that we take now for economic reasons are also more sustainable in the long term. I think the cruise industry will have to do more with less. Less with respect to the weight of the ship and the amount of materials used. If we want a more efficient ship this will also affect the size of the ship and energy used. I cannot really see this sustainability challenge getting any smaller in the coming years. I do think that we do need to find ways to operate with a lighter touch.”

It is obvious to expect that it will become harder to sell cruises in the future. Per argues that, as a tourist, you want to see many destinations while enjoying the comfort of staying in the same hotel room. This is a strong selling point for the cruise industry but it does come at a price. This price is paid in greenhouse gas emissions. As the need to reduce impact on the climate grows, guests will become more aware of the impact of their choices on their individual environmental footprints.

Many ship owners are launching programmes to improve relations with local communities, supporting, for instance, social or environmental initiatives at various destinations.

Supporting local communities

Cruise operators and destinations are starting to work together to safeguard the very qualities that make the destinations notable. The friendly atmosphere, the

beautiful beaches and the clean water are assets which need to be preserved. And the cruise lines themselves can be valuable resources in this development.

An obvious place to start is by turning off generators to cut emissions when in port. All new cruise ships can do this, yet only a few ports are able to deliver the electric power needed. This is an example of how cruise operators and destinations are intrinsically co-dependent.

Hybrid ships with good battery capacity are less dependent on the destination for power. If cruise ships were to make their hotel operation more energy efficient, there may be a chance that they could be run by battery or a smaller power supply.

As a good example of giving back to the destinations, Per mentions river cruises sailing in remote areas where they do not have medical facilities:

“If the ship offers medical assistance, it would be a much more popular topic at the destination. Some cruise companies are working on that now to become more socially and environmentally sustainable. This is a way to cooperate with and be of value to the destinations.”

Being an asset to the destination could support the sustainability strategy and a better image for the cruise industry.

Another tool could be to offer energy efficient cruises. The cruise industry has a need and incentive to save energy. This may be combined with creating a unique guest experience.

Local and slow hospitality

With the Covid-19 situation there has been an interesting development: local and slow hospitality. With the implementation of travel restrictions, itineraries have become more local, avoiding border crossings. Ships are sailing shorter distances, speed is reduced and energy consumption is down. One could argue that guest experience is enhanced, since sound and vibration from the engines are reduced. Per mentions the fact that cruise lines have such slogans like ‘France is beautiful... from the sea’. In times past, the cruise industry would have cruised the world over, offering you the cruise of your life in remote destinations. Yet, with travelling having been limited, people are now discovering treasures hidden just around the corner.

This is likely to have an impact on cruise offerings, even post-COVID 19. Per is confident that when there are no travel restrictions, people will start travelling long distances again. However, there is now the chance to explore what’s on the doorstep. This could mean that instead of doing a long weekend in Barcelona, for instance, you are going to choose something a little closer to home.

Some advice from Per Eriksson is to find out more about what is in slow and domestic cruising. Maybe this could be an upsell:

“Is there any way we could sell that story to the

guests? Could that be an added value? Because, if we can, it means less vibrations, less noise, better air on the top decks and using less fuel. So, if you could sell that to your guests, it would make a world of difference. It would make it so much easier to have better performance. We only have to reduce speed and find an offer that the guest values. That would be a smart way forward. Super easy."

Even before the pandemic there was a trend toward smaller ships and this trend is likely to be even stronger in the future. Per argues that people want to see something unique. There is this sense of an exclusive experience, the top-end of hospitality. A very large cruise ship has a hard time giving you this with 4-5000 other people, all having that same 'unique' experience. If you want to bring something unique, bring value that people are ready to pay for; this is easier on a smaller ship. It also means that you are able to access smaller locations, which is welcomed.

Local and slow cruising along with smaller ships can be ways to save energy. An additional way can be to focus on hotel operations.

Optimise hotel operations

It takes a lot of energy to move a cruise ship but surprisingly, much of the fuel consumption is related to operation of the hotel. We can learn a lot from land-based hotels and resorts.

Per Eriksson argues that looking at a cruise ship as a hotel with a ship under it, would support a greater focus on the optimisation of energy consumption in hotel operations. Now, the performance of a hotel from a sustainability point of view is overshadowed by the ship's performance. The sea-based hotel should be just as good as any hotel on land.

By far, the most important element to focus on in respect to energy savings in hotel operations is ventilation. A cruise ship uses a lot of energy to keep the interior cold. According to Per, it is the simplest things that will have the greatest impact. Look at how 'passive houses' are built, for example. As he says, there are lots of things that were done following the oil crises in 1972 that still have not been implemented on cruise ships.

Per believes that looking into optimising the hotel operations would be beneficial both from a sustainable point of view and in terms of guest value:

"If a cruise ship is not moving it would be good if it could turn off the generators to have the ship silent. 30% or even more of the energy used pertains to hotel operations. The initiative for ship owners is a double win: save money and improve the brand. I think that it is a value that you feel good about yourself and your choices. That is a guest value that you can sell. There is both a saving and earning opportunity in this."

Looking at the hotel aspect of a cruise ship from a sustainable point of view means looking at cruise ship interiors.

Designing in a more sustainable way

Thinking of interior design, overall, there is no

difference between land- and sea-based hotels. The considerations are the same; you must avoid the same restricted substances and resources.

Recycling materials is a major theme in a circular economy. Although there may be technological possibilities for recycling materials, the systems to deal with it are not necessarily in place. A way to think more sustainably in refits, could be to postpone them because of environmental concerns. Right now, cosmetic refits are being postponed but this is not for ecological reasons, rather for economic ones, Per argues.

At Tillberg Design of Sweden, they seek out renewable, recycled, and certified materials. In the process, they take both ends of the life span of a design into consideration, as they are involved in both new build and refits. As designers, they specify what materials should be used when building or refitting a ship. By choosing recycled materials, they support suppliers who are investing in circularity.

Another important issue is to avoid VOC emissions. These are often caused by flame retardants; they are not only bad for the environment but also affect the indoor air quality in the hotel. On cruise ships, another important element for materials is the weight, which influences both fuel consumption and the ship's stability.

Light is an additional design parameter. By designing ships in a way that allows natural light to enter, it saves electrical light and improves the quality of that venue.

At Tillberg Design of Sweden, they are always thinking about what could be done better. Besides of looking at what suppliers can provide, they think of the interior design itself, a 2nd generation of the interiors:

"It could be an upgradable design where we only change some materials or we give it a new appearance in a simple way. It could be re-designing but keeping 80 or 90% of the materials. However, this is also something that requires the acceptance from the ship owners and that the overall design concept allows us to keep these materials."

However, this approach is complex. In a refit of a series of ships, Tillberg Design of Sweden investigated the possibility of using things from the first ship, upgrading them in some way, then using them on the next ship. However, the logistics of that is hard. Per imagines, that the solution to this could be looking at waste handling in a larger perspective and partnering up with companies that specialise in recycling and upcycling materials. The learning in this specific project was, that it can be complex to do from one project to the next.

Certainly innovation calls for new ways of thinking and new ways of working together.

Innovation calls for bold ship owners or new ways of thinking

Fundamentally, the way projects in the cruise industry are set up makes innovation difficult. As Per Eriksson explains:

"Normally, when you define a project, from the start you would set up three parameters: size, number of passengers and cost complexity based on a certain reference ship. The reference ship is really making it hard because the reference ship is history. It is not the future. So, if we want to be innovative, move towards the future and develop the industry the reference ship is counterproductive. It is that simple. We have three defining things and one of them says 'don't be bold'. We need to change this way of thinking and find another way to define a price instead of this cost complexity early in the projects if we want innovation."

Per argues, for instance, that if someone wants to build a large cruise ship powered by sails, there is not really a reference ship. This makes it difficult to agree on a price with the current approach. An investor must be quite daring with the financing of such a project. And according to Per, this does not really encourage innovation because the risk is too high.

In the land-based business, green buildings are prioritised to a higher extent. And more 'green ships' are being built. This is good for the brand and is future-proofing the investment, making the incentive great. But then come the costs. How do stakeholders define the costs of the project early on? And how do they minimise the risk? These questions make it harder. As Per puts it, "you need to have a bold shipowner to have a bold ship."

To move innovation, Per calls for a much better collaboration and working across boundaries. The challenges are complex and demands a good and open dialogue throughout the process.

With reference to innovation and collaboration, Per mentions 'Black Pearl', a sailing superyacht. This yacht has black sails, the primary source used to move the ship. The machinery is a hybrid between sails, batteries, and engines. It uses a minimum of fossil fuel and when it is sailing, the propeller turns into a generator. 'Black Pearl' is naturally not a big cruise ship. But it is not a small ship either. In conventional cargo shipping they are looking into working the same way. This development is coming. Moving things on water, by sail, is not rocket science - it has been done for thousands of years.

What Per Eriksson finds especially interesting in this project is the need for collaboration to make a totally new concept work. This is the state of the art - a benchmark for the world to see.

Innovation and collaboration are key words for architects and interior designers who, by nature, love to design and figure out new ways of doing things.

Make sustainability an intellectual, creative challenge. Sustainable thinking is much more fun if you put your motivation energy into the process, as Per Eriksson describes:

"If you are a designer, you see things all the time where you consider how this could have been done in a smarter way. The cruise industry is a rather conservative industry and sustainability is disrupting the business. You cannot look at the reference ship to

see the sustainable properties of the next generation of ships. You want the next generation, not the previous.

Therefore, you must challenge the framework. That is where I find my emotional motivation in this. It makes good sense to work towards sustainability, there is no one disputing that. But the desire to do this comes from the urge to do something that no one has done before. Having to figure out a new way to do it or a way around the problem. That is where the fun is! If someone says this cannot be done, then you really start thinking. It can't just be limiting, it has to be an intellectual, creative challenge."

**The cruise
industry
will have to
do more
with less.**

Per Eriksson
Sustainability Director,
Tillberg Design of Sweden

More*Inspiration*

We welcome you inside our exciting world of carpet creation!

In our brand book you will find information about and inspiration for carpets for the hospitality industry.

Moreover, you can read about interior design in the context of the megatrend sustainability and how this can be linked to creating a great guest experience.

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