

# Less is more in lap of luxury

September 2 2014

---

Chandeliers, gold taps and ornate drapes are classic hallmarks of the world's most luxurious hotels, right? Wrong, according to Flinders University sociologist Eduardo de la Fuente.

Dr de la Fuente, based in Flinders School of Social and Policy Studies, says the aesthetics and architecture of [luxury](#) hotels have shifted in the past 15 to 20 years from opulent, extravagant interiors to sleek, minimalist designs.

"In the '70s and '80s people said modern architecture was inhumane – who in their right mind would want to live in all-white interiors?, Dr de la Fuente said.

"But as the popularity of sleek, minimalist interiors has grown in the home and work environment over the past couple of decades, it's also extended to the luxury tourism trade," he said.

"Luxury hotels were traditionally associated with big chandeliers, gold taps and ornate drapes but that's all very much in retreat as an increasing number of modern hotels tap into the consumer's interest in sleek, minimalist styles."

Dr de la Fuente is presenting research on the changing aesthetics and design of 300-plus contemporary luxury hotels and resorts as a keynote speaker in the Thought Leaders Panel at Luxperience, a four-day luxury tourism trade fair which kicked off in Sydney on Sunday.

As part of his research, Dr de la Fuente has compared the exteriors and interiors of top hotels on-show at the trade fair based on the following categories: minimalist/cool; eco/rustic; ethnic/vernacular; classical/elegant; heritage/traditional; and grand/opulent.

He said more than 85 per cent of the interiors studied were sleek, modern and minimalist by design, including the Parkroyal on Pickering in Singapore, and, closer to home, the Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island.

"What surprised me is how widespread this trend is around the world – there are even hotels going up in Costa Rica's rainforests that are very sleek in style.

"You could see how [hotel](#) guests staying in a modern city like Singapore would prefer that style of interior but it's surprising that people who are retreating from urban areas to the rainforest, or the likes of Kangaroo Island, are seeking that experience too.

"Even heritage hotels are now gutting their interiors to make them more minimalist and contemporary."

Dr de la Fuente said old luxury décor was typically handcrafted by an artisan and used precious natural resources including marble, gold and polished wood.

Nowadays, he said, the world's best hotels are designed by top architects using high-tech, machine-produced materials such as stainless steel, polished concrete and high-grade laminex.

"Notions of good taste have shifted – we used to read glossy books about hotels that were called grand hotels but the new tastemakers are things like hip hotels, cool hotels or *Wallpaper* magazine and *Wallpaper City*

Guides.

"Even the Rolls-Royce of yesteryear has given way to a very sleek, new model."

Despite the rise of minimalist hotels, Dr de la Fuente said there will always be room for traditional opulence in the luxury accommodation industry.

"Wealthy traditionalists from old money will always prefer traditional opulence, and some new kids on the block have interests in the old trappings of luxury, but new wealth is increasingly being defined in a modern kind of way.

"Luxury still has a high degree of exclusivity and the connotation of quality but being modern, "hip" and "cool" isn't about showing off your wares anymore, it's much more subdued."

Provided by Flinders University

Citation: Less is more in lap of luxury (2014, September 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-09-lap-luxury.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.