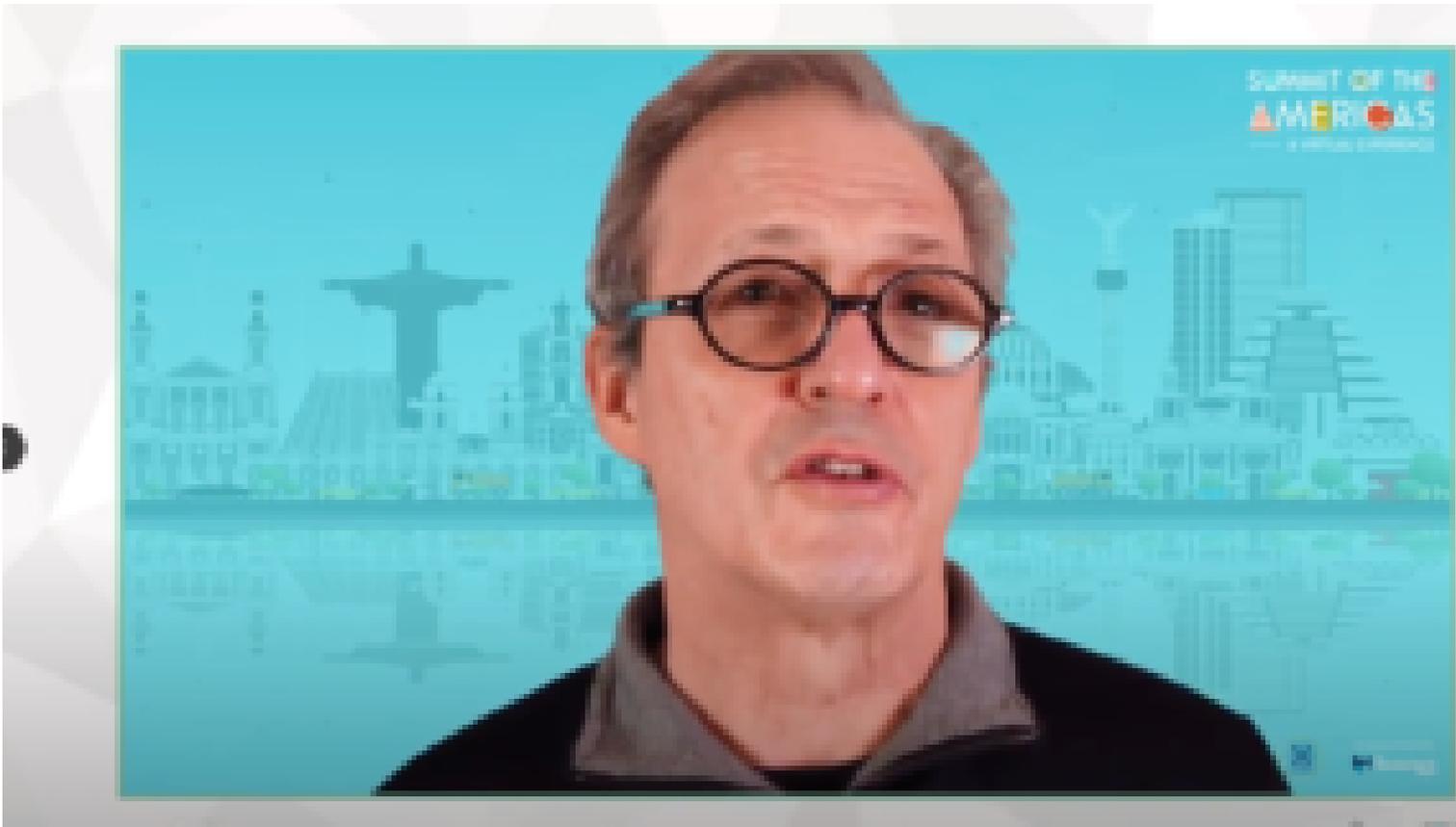


Designhouse's Peter Dobie on finding brand power and identity in a new travel retail world



“With every crisis lies opportunity” says Designhouse Creative Director Peter Dobie as he outlines how businesses can maximise brand power and identity in a changed travel retail landscape

AMERICAS. [Designhouse](#) Creative Director Peter Dobie delivered a strong address about the power of retail design and branding on day two of the Knowledge Hub at the [Summit of the Americas — A Virtual Experience](#).

Dobie leads the creative team at London brand and digital design agency Designhouse, which has helped create strong retail brand identities and retailtainment projects that add value to travel retailers' businesses.

Dobie illustrated how travel retail stakeholders can leverage brand power and identity in the rapidly-changing world of travel retail.



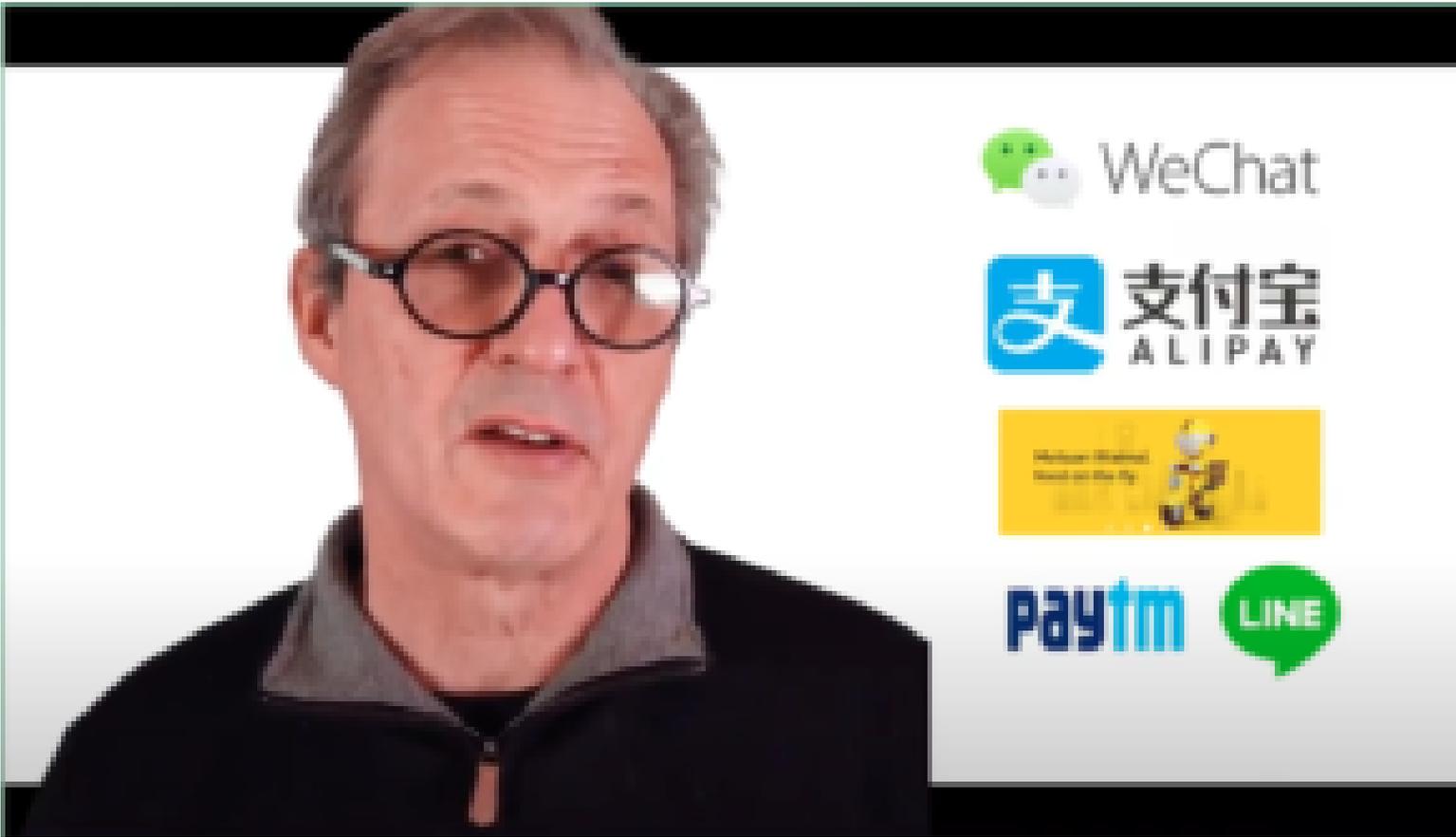
Designhouse was responsible for the successful rebrands of 3Sixty Duty Free, Heathrow Express, Beauty & You, Nuance Group and many more

Commenting on how the pandemic has changed the retail landscape, Dobie said: “When COVID-19 arrived, the music stopped. Or so we thought, before the penny dropped and we realised that in every crisis lies opportunity.”

“Now is the opportunity for brands to stop, assess their current setup and measure up for future innovations. 2020 was a transformative year for retail, offering a compelling case for a digital-first approach.”

While the embrace of all things digital certainly accelerated during the crisis, Dobie says that it is only half of the equation. “Technology is only half the story,” he said. “To successfully connect in the new digital channels, it’s not enough to simply have a presence. The brands that have seen the biggest benefit, have not only embraced new technologies but enhanced their brand through the user experience that they deliver.”

He also discussed the lasting influences of the pandemic crisis on consumer habits and how this will force the travel retail industry to evolve. He says, “The norm will be screen-based, and people will be reluctant to return to crowded shopping environments.”



Integration and collaboration: Dobie says that Super Apps are already gaining prominence in Asia Pacific and the travel retail stakeholders need to come together to develop an integrated ecosystem

“Airport retailers are still catching up to what’s happening with the rest of the world and the impact on the travel industry is huge. Whenever the ‘new norm’ does resume, the industry will need to do a huge catch-up. A wait-and-see approach will not work, because the new normal is here to stay — and for the long term.”

So, what can travel retail do to effectively navigate a necessary digital transformation? According to Dobie, it’s all about collaboration and integration. “Across the industry, joined-up thinking is required to make the benefits more than just the sum of its parts,” he said.

Some of the key strategies Dobie mentioned include driving customer experiences through data platforms and personalisation, tracking traveller interactions at every touchpoint and integration with enterprise systems to make data available at the point of sale.



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**Designhouse Creative Director
Peter Doble**

These strategies require a well-integrated ecosystem that embrace all travel retail stakeholders and Doble outlines the immense potential that a travel 'Super App' can provide. "If all these apps can be pulled together into one Super App, the benefits will be immense for everyone," Doble said. "Customers can use the same app to book their tickets, check flight status, purchase products, and track loyalty points. Super Apps like WeChat, AliPay, Line and PayTM are also gaining prominence in Asia Pacific."

"The call for a well-connected and integrated world is here to stay," he said. "This thinking might be a bit overwhelming, so it's worth focusing on where you can have the biggest impact."



The Heathrow Express brand refresh was the Gold Winner at the Transform Awards

Dobie suggests focusing on minimising contact and increasing personalisation in the short-term; updating the physical store space and digital presence in the long-term. Some examples Dobie highlighted include virtual mirrors, livestream, augmented reality, touchless cosmetic shopping and virtual reality.

While there are certainly many new technologies to explore, Dobie said that businesses need to be cautious and protect their brand identity amid a changing retail environment. “In adopting new channels, do not overlook the power of your brand,” he said. “Your brand is everything. It is differentiating and is the essential unique experience. It must not be lost in translation when moving to these new channels.”



So, what is the solution to balancing digital innovation with brand guardianship? Dobie said it's all about embedding the essence of the brand to deliver "an enhanced user experience wherever and however you trade," whether that's digital or in the real world.

He also underscored the importance of leveraging customer insights and quantitative design-metrics to develop an accurate and effective design approach. "The most successful businesses have combined design and business leadership to form a bold design-centric strategy."

Some of the case studies that Dobie highlighted include its rebrand of travel retailer The Nuance Group (now part of Dufry), the award-winning brand refresh of Heathrow Express, the successful rebrand of DFASS to 3Sixty Duty Free and the striking branding of The Shilla Duty Free's Beauty & You retail concept in Hong Kong International Airport.



Designhouse also developed the striking brand identity and in-store look of The Shilla Duty Free's Beauty & You concept at Hong Kong International Airport

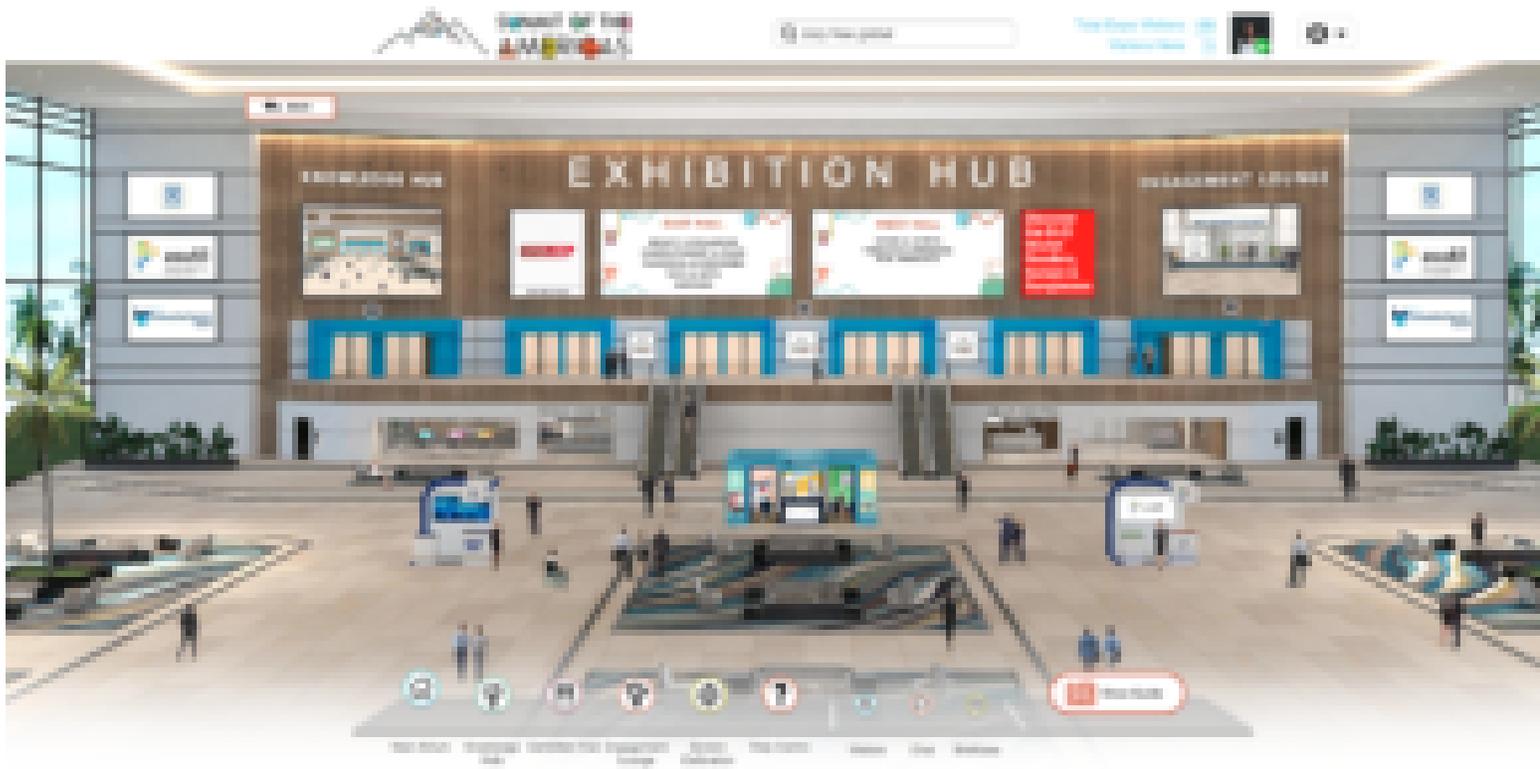


It doesn't matter how advanced technologies are, without the brand adding the personality, excitement and assurance – technology just remains a tool. Technology without branding is just technology, technology with branding creates a brand experience.

Designhouse Creative Director Peter Dobie

Finally, Dobie concluded by giving attendees one last insight on balancing branding and technology. He said, “Whatever new channels you do choose to explore, ask yourself this. Is your brand ready? Does it have the necessary ingredients to cut through the digital noise?”

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