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The Next Chapter of Lifestyle: New Markets, New Models, New Assets

SPEAKERS

Judith Cartwright
CEO & Founder
Black Coral Consulting

Louis Abi Abboud
Group Chief Growth Officer & COO
Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific
Ennismore

OVERVIEW

This session at FHS World 2026 explored the evolving definition and future direction of lifestyle hospitality, with Judith Cartwright of Black Coral Consulting moderating a focused conversation with Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer at Ennismore. The discussion challenged the industry's loose use of the term 'lifestyle', arguing that true lifestyle destinations require genuine local relevance, curated F&B, meaningful collaborations, and a long-term investment mindset that extends well beyond opening day. Louis Abi Abboud drew on Ennismore's portfolio — including 25Hours Dubai and a first lifestyle all-inclusive property in Ras Al Khaimah — to illustrate how layering hotels with branded residences, elevated workspaces, and phased programming creates district-level value for developers. The session concluded with a rapid-fire agreement exercise that surfaced sharp principles around operator involvement in design, the primacy of neighbourhood over brand, and the critical importance of owner-operator alignment from the outset.

KEY THEMES

- Redefining 'lifestyle' beyond design aesthetics to encompass local relevance, storytelling, and community integration
- The shift from standalone hotels to mixed-use lifestyle districts combining F&B, branded residences, and workspaces
- Market expansion opportunities in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Abu Dhabi, and Ras Al Khaimah
- Phased programming and continuous investment to maintain long-term relevance after opening
- Resilience through diversified revenue streams within a single lifestyle asset
- Owner-operator alignment as a prerequisite for successful lifestyle development

TAKEAWAYS

- Do not open a lifestyle hotel at full capacity on day one — deliberately hold back an F&B outlet or collaboration and phase releases over three years to sustain buzz and justify ongoing investment.
- Evaluate lifestyle opportunities as district-creation exercises, not individual hotel projects: the highest-performing assets combine hotel, branded residences, elevated workspaces, and strong F&B within a coherent destination.
- Lifestyle brands must adapt their programming market by market — what works in Berlin will not automatically work in Dubai or Riyadh — making strong local resources non-negotiable.
- Owners must budget for post-opening capital expenditure; lifestyle hotels require continuous evolution to remain relevant, and operators should set this expectation explicitly during the deal stage.

- During downturns or geopolitical disruptions, diversified lifestyle assets are more resilient: when rooms soften, active lobbies and busy restaurants keep the asset alive and maintain brand energy.
- Never oversell your brand to an owner who is not genuinely connected to it — a misaligned owner-operator relationship will undermine the asset across its entire design, development, and operational life.

QUOTES

"A lifestyle hotel is significantly more than that. And in order to be able to do a lifestyle hotel, lifestyle destination, it requires to set up an entire organization resources and be able to really believe in it."

— **Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer& COO Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific, Ennismore**

"Never oversell one of our brands because if the owner is not automatically connected it will be a disaster for the next twenty years."

— **Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer& COO Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific, Ennismore**

"The best performing assets we have in our portfolio are assets that are part of a district. That are not limited to an individual building or vertical hotel."

— **Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer& COO Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific, Ennismore**

"The operator should drive the design from day one, not have a say."

— **Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer& COO Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific, Ennismore**

"You cannot expect to develop a design program lifestyle hotel and expect it to be relevant for the next ten years without doing changes."

— **Louis Abi Abboud, Group Chief Growth Officer& COO Middle East, Africa & Asia Pacific, Ennismore**