The Jamestown Group

Yesterday morning in the historic Wolseley restaurant in Green Park, a truly amazing group of CEOs and Chief Creative Officers sat around the table in the upstairs private dining area of this iconic venue. I love holding events in this space, and this was my 5th breakfast event since the world once again re-opened for in person events.

For this roundtable, we were discussing the role of creative in a digital business. In keeping with the integrity of these events, we operated using Chatham House rules and, as always, I won't list, by name, any of the attendees to respect their privacy. But I will say that the table was jam packed and, of the 13 guests, 9 were CEOs and the other 4 were Chief Creative & Digital Officers from the luxury, hospitality, eyewear, apparel, leisure, and lifestyle industry sectors.
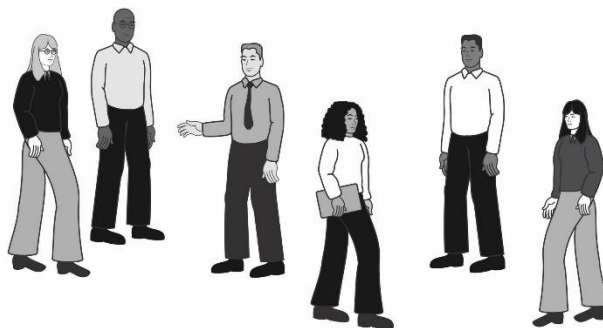
I was thrilled to be joined by Nabil Aliffi as my co-host. I've been very fortunate to know Nabil for 8 years now – initially as my colleague during our Urban Outfitters days, and most recently during his time at the Soho House Group.

After the eggs were ordered and the group introduced themselves, Nabil kick-started the event by outlining how he has spent the last two years as the Global Chief Creative Officer at Soho House and what role that digital based creativity has played, and could play, inside of an exclusive members club with 25 years of 'physical' heritage across clubs, restaurants, co-working spaces, hotels and cinemas.

There we so many interesting insights and items raised during the breakfast and below are a few ones that stick out in my memory:

- The importance on community within digital. One of the guests, who runs a large chain of pubs in the UK, mentioned that, even though a digital channel in his business is not easy to develop, he already has a built-in community of followers in each of locations. The ever so British reality of the pub as the central hub of the community. Building and creating this 'base' of followers should be the goal of any brand / business to communicate with their customers

- Communities within communities – micro communities around music, events, fitness etc… (ensuring that people who share common interests are connected). It's about connecting, not just for the sake of it, but because everyone gets something from it. This is key

- The metaverse is real and often misunderstood and seems to be much more than some PR stunt these days. It was pointed out that there is something like 2.9 billion active users in the metaverse and over 70% of Gen Z are active in this space. Fitness spaces inside of games and digital restaurants as well as the trading of clothes (digitally) are very real things today

- NFTs are real and one of the guests mentioned that something like 5% of all Gen Z purchases are made using them (Nike and other brands have already integrated digital token-based purchases with actual physical products) – this doesn't seem to be some fad that is going away anytime soon

- Commercially it's a fact that you need to give some margin away to get people's attention – this is the reality that must be accepted (and it's no different that trading your business online or offering loyalty cards – it all costs money to acquire customers). Building brand loyalty and giving people a reason to visit you digitally is no different

- Technology as the enabler for all of this – and specifically, testing the data, and if you don't measure it, you will lose it

All in all, from my perspective, it was an overwhelming success. The table was full, in fact the event was oversubscribed, and I had to resort to a waiting list (with a plan to revisit this at my next event on July 5th – sorry to all those who accepted too late). I would like to thank Nabil again for co-hosting this with me as well as to everyone who made the effort to attend and contribute to the very engaging discussion.