

PIVOT

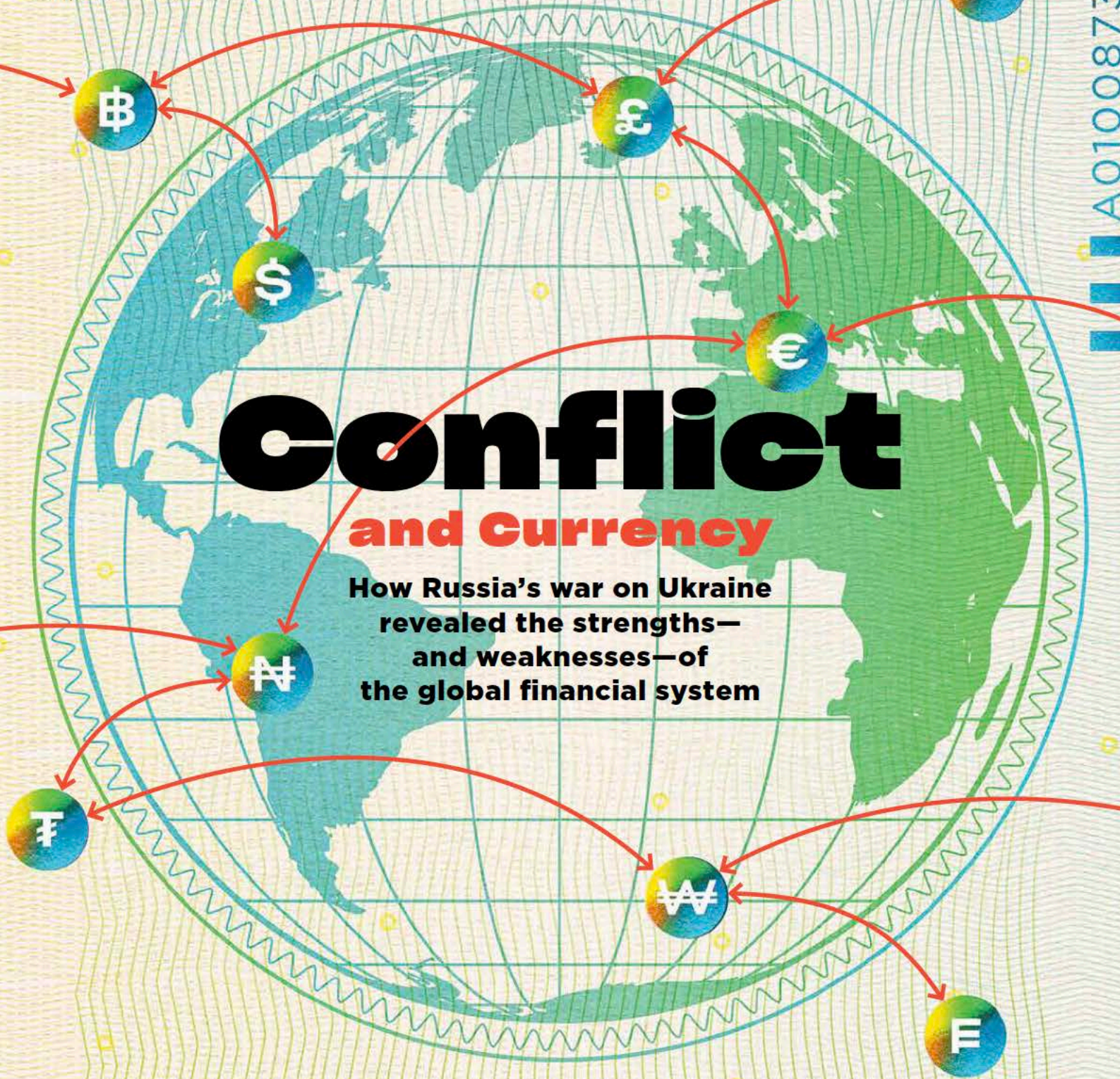


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Conflict **and Currency**

**How Russia's war on Ukraine
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+ THE CPA WHO HELPED REBUILD THE CFL // WHY ONLINE GROCERY SHOPPING IS HERE TO STAY // A SECOND LIFE FOR QR CODES

developed a line of refillable and biodegradable liquid soaps, shampoos and dishwasher soap, along with “crush and brush” toothpaste tablets and face mask powders that come in small water-soluble capsules.

“One of [our] biggest differentiators... is that we make our products on site [at our Scarborough location],” says co-founder Sarah Marcus. She develops them with her business partner, Laura Craig, a U.K.-trained formulator, along with a chemist.

According to Marcus, 98 to 99 per cent of eco+amour customers bring their own bottles to refill. The company also carries some two dozen local brands that share the same environmental ethos on developing low- to zero-waste products.

Bigger players, like B.C.-based Tru Earth, have already demonstrated the market demand for such eco-friendly products. Named Canada’s second-fastest-growing startup by *Canadian Business* in 2020, the company says it was serving 200,000 customers across 52 countries within 18 months of launch in 2018. Today, its products are sold by a range of retailers including Indigo, Sobeys and Home Hardware. Similar competitors, including Cleancult and Blueland, are also expanding their footprint into Canada.

For MYNI, a company that started in David’s kitchen, growth happened quickly, despite the pandemic. Her tablets are sold online and can be found in retail chains like the Quebec pharmacy Jean Coutu, along with 300 additional retailers across the Americas and various locations in the U.K., Japan and the United Arab Emirates. She has a goal of selling through 1,000 shops in Canada by summer.

Launching MYNI online wasn’t in David’s plan at first, but the pandemic forced her to change tack. The timing worked in the end; everyone was home and cleaning. And, with direct contact and feedback from online customers, the company was able to refine its formulations in the first year—all toward the goal of what David calls “a better balance” for her company and the cleaning market as a whole. ♦

TRAVEL

AROUND THE WORLD, FOR A MONTHLY FEE

Companies offering ultra-exclusive travel experiences to subscription-paying members are watching growth take flight **BY CHRIS JOHNS**



“Would you like to have dinner in the villa prepared for your family on the night of your arrival in Tuscany?” the email asks. It inquires what groceries and drinks I’d like the fridge and bar stocked with—everything from veal chops and mortadella to Chianti and vermouth—and tells me of options for in-villa massages, tours of local hilltop villages, truffle-hunting adventures and just about any other request I might have. My itinerary from soup to nuts was arranged in the weeks before I arrived by my personal “ambassador.” It’s one of the perks, I’m told, that I would regularly enjoy if I ponied up to be a private member of the travel club Exclusive Resorts.

Travel clubs have been around for decades, but recent events have seen their popularity rise during a time

when the travel industry at large struggled. “There’s definitely been a COVID tailwind throughout the industry,” says Exclusive Resorts’ CEO, James Henderson. “People who were used to staying in hotels were suddenly questioning whether they wanted to be in shared spaces and dining rooms.” At the private properties on his firm’s roster, he says, guests can experience a “fabulous vacation” without leaving their villa and never have to encounter another traveller, if that’s what they want.

With 400 residences and experiences in more than 75 destinations, Exclusive Resorts is one of the biggest such clubs. It’s just had its best year in more than a decade; it expects a 15 per cent increase in bookings in 2022 over 2021 and a five per cent increase in bookings

compared to 2019, up more than 100 per cent versus the previous year. But the price of privacy and white-glove service is steep. Memberships start at \$175,000 for a 10-year plan or \$275,000 for the 30-year. Most families opt to use their memberships between 15 and 30 nights per year, at \$1,465 a day. Despite the costs, the club is seeing growth among families, younger families in particular, with more than 70 per cent of new members fitting into that demographic. The next biggest segment is recent empty nesters who have children in college and in their 20s.

The type of growth Exclusive Resorts is seeing is happening across the travel-club space. Inspirato was founded as a luxury private travel club in 2010. It launched Inspirato Pass, a subscription travel service, in 2019, which offers access to more than a million trips to 100-plus destinations. The \$600-per-month level gives guests access to members-only rates during select travel dates, while the \$2,500-per-month (plus a \$2,500 enrolment fee) Inspirato Pass offers pre-selected

On the business side, he points out, “a lot of travel businesses are seeing the success of the subscription model in other verticals, like the Netflixes of the world. It costs travel companies a lot of money to acquire and retain customers, so creating an ongoing relationship is something that’s very appealing.” Not to mention it’s a model where the revenue comes in up front.

Some of the biggest hospitality loyalty programs—including IHG Rewards Club and Starwood Preferred Guest—derive fully half their income from repeat customers. That’s why there are now several travel companies dipping their toes into the subscription-based pool. There are private communities of women travellers like the El Camino Travel Clubhouse, which offers members trips designed by travel experts. And there are companies like Regenerative Travel, which, in return for a membership, provides a \$99 credit toward booking a stay at the company’s collection of hotels and resorts. Regenerative Travel aims to have a positive environmental

CREATING AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH CUSTOMERS IS VERY APPEALING TO TRAVEL COMPANIES

dates with no nightly rates, taxes or fees. Inspirato’s properties range from luxury vacation homes to five-star resorts and boutique hotels, and all come with dedicated staff on site. The company’s most recent financial filing shows it increased its number of paying subscribers by 12 per cent.

Sean O’Neill, senior hospitality editor at the travel industry news site *Skift*, attributes travel subscription growth, at least in part, to exposure. “Consumers have become used to having subscriptions for all sorts of services,” he says, referring to the likes of Netflix, Amazon Prime, Peloton and Instacart. “Since the pandemic especially, there’s been a lot more familiarity with subscriptions for some of the older demographic that have the discretionary income.”

and social impact on destinations and the people who live there. Travel + Leisure Group, a business line from the media brand Travel + Leisure Co., launched its own travel subscription service last year to capitalize on contacts in the industry and offer curated itineraries for its members.

Despite the oft-hefty price tag, O’Neill cites the convenience such services offer as a key lure for consumers. He also believes the trend harkens back to the more traditional vacation-club concept: time-shares or vacation ownership programs. “If you know you’re going to save for a travel vacation anyway, this gives you a sort of routine budget for putting away that money,” he explains. “It also opens you up, unlike owning a condo, to more options.” ♦

PIVOT RECOMMENDS

Off the clock

BY DAVE ZARUM



Watch

“There are some who make me out to be the villain of this here story,” says Tom Hanks as Colonel Tom Parker in the upcoming biopic, *Elvis*. Directed by Baz Luhrmann and starring Hanks and Austin Butler (who portrayed Tex Watson in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*) as Presley himself, the film looks at the rise and fall of the King and his complex relationship with Parker, who discovered Elvis and steered his career.

Listen

In the true crime podcast *Conviction: The Disappearance of Nuselba Hasan*, a Canadian woman who was adopted as a child begins the search for her birth parents only to learn that her birth mother has been missing for more than a decade. With the help of investigative journalist Habiba Nosheen, the woman seeks to unravel the mystery behind her mother’s disappearance.

Read

When author David Foster Wallace died in 2008, he left behind a 500-page unfinished manuscript that became *The Pale King*, eventually published in 2011. The transcript, Wallace fans may recall, included a completed novella titled *Something to Do with Paying Attention*, which is now being released on its own. It tells the story of an IRS employee who becomes dedicated to his work as a taxman and is what publisher Sarah McNally calls “the best complete example we have of Wallace’s late style.”